

# **Northeast Georgia Regional Plan**

## **Update 2023**

**Planning & Government Services Division  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission**





Area Agency on Aging  
Planning & Government Services  
Workforce Development



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Burke Walker, Executive Director

March 16, 2023

Mr. Jon West  
Director of the Office of Planning  
Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
Office of Planning  
60 Executive Park South, NE  
Atlanta, GA 30329

**RE: Regional Plan Transmittal**

Dear Mr. West:

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission has completed an update of its Regional Plan and is transmitting 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 update in accordance with the Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning, Chapter 110-12-6. Evidence of the public hearings has been included with our transmittal.

I certify that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission has, at a minimum, reviewed the following plans for consistency: Georgia's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP); 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 adjacent regional commission's regional plans. These plans were taken into consideration in formulating our update.

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

Sincerely,

W.M. Palmer  
Chairman  
Council of the Northeast Georgia  
Regional Commission

BW/MB: jo

c. Burke Walker, Executive Director, NEGRC  
Mark Beatty, Director of Planning & Government Services, NEGRC



## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Executive Summary .....</b>                  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Regional Goals .....</b>                     | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Regional Needs &amp; Opportunities .....</b> | <b>24</b> |
| <b>Implementation Program.....</b>              | <b>28</b> |
| <b>Appendices.....</b>                          | <b>42</b> |





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Where are we now? .....6

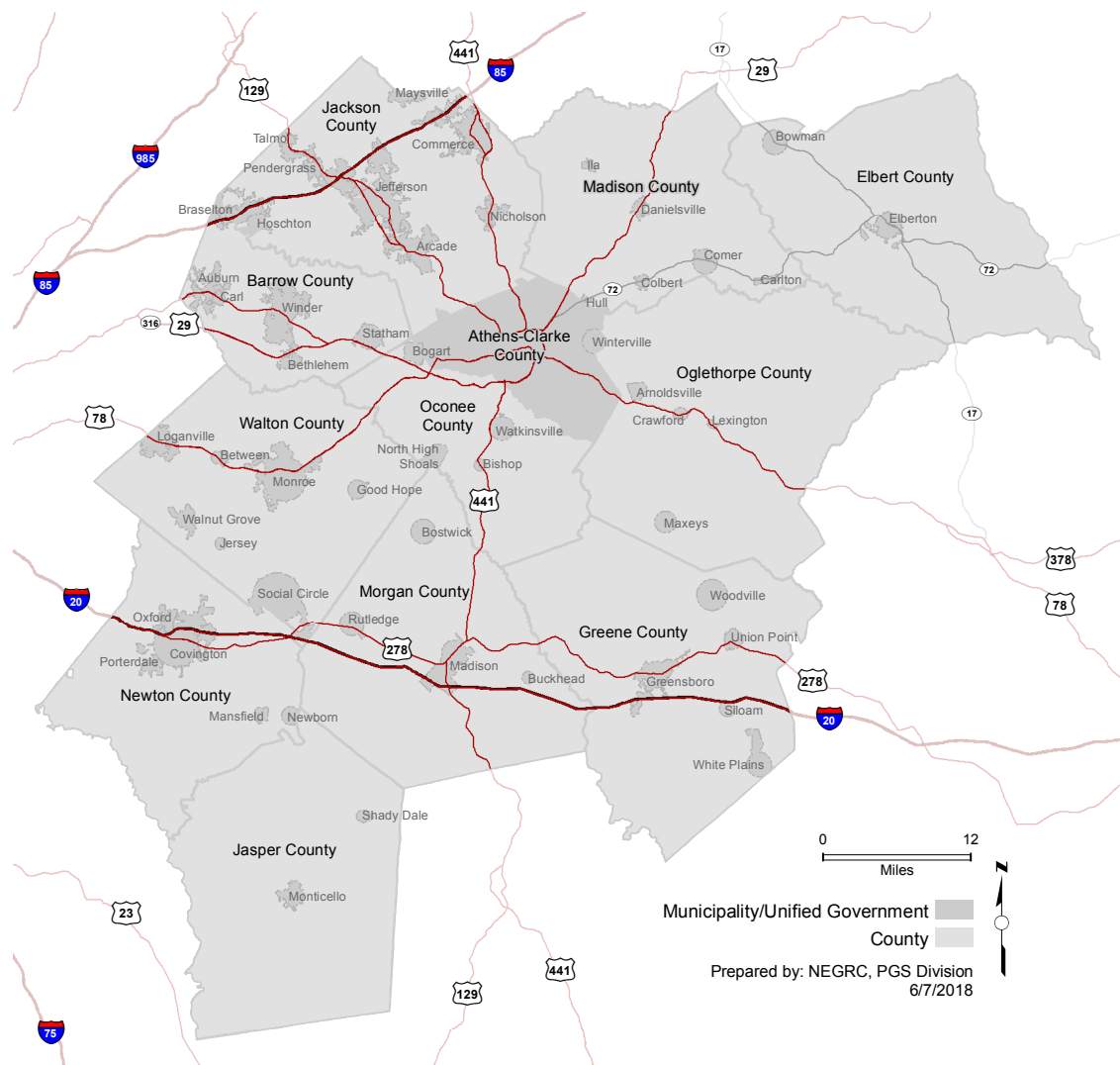
Where are we going? .....6

Where do we want to be? .....7

How do we get there? .....8



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.



**The Northeast Georgia region** includes the city and county governments of Barrow, Athens-Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton Counties. The 2023 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.



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 and forests dominate the landscape, while smaller, neighborly towns offer intimate experiences and stakeholders feel that life moves more slowly.

**Priority Needs**

- ▶ Provide resources to support local and regional transportation infrastructure improvements
- ▶ Address needs associated with population growth and changing demographics
- ▶ Enhance economic mobility and competitiveness

# 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 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 Opportunities**

- ▶ Facilitate cooperative management of natural and cultural resources
- ▶ Share information and resources to enhance planning capabilities



### 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 served as the Steering Committee for the plan update and were 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 public, and other interested parties provided additional guidance. Feedback about the plan's contents was captured through a series of public hearings, three listening sessions, and an online survey. The NEGRC website served as an information portal by providing updates, schedule notices, input options, 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 in the Appendices (page 48).

#### Stakeholder Involvement Activities

- ▶ Identified key stakeholders in addition to the public, designated the NEGRC's Council as the plan's Steering Committee and 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 three public listening sessions to generate discussion, conduct a SWOT analysis, generate goals, and review land use
- ▶ 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 in the Regional Goals chapter (page 10).

#### Regional Goals

1. Enhance economic mobility and competitiveness
2. Elevate public health and equity for all residents and visitors
3. Support and add value to existing communities
4. Promote adequate, equitable, and affordable housing
5. Improve connectivity and transportation choices
6. Develop a regional approach to natural and historic resource protection
7. Enhance planning and decision-making capabilities for local governments in the region



## 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.

### Key Strategies and Actions to be Pursued

Each strategy below broadly describes actions that will be taken to address priorities identified during the planning process. More specific details on how each strategy will be implemented are listed within this plan's Work Program (page 38) as action items.

| Priority  | Strategies   |
|---|--|
| <b>Provide resources to support local and regional transportation infrastructure improvements</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Provide local governments with tools to help plan and budget for complete streets infrastructure</li><li>▶ Support development and use of public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure</li><li>▶ Analyze feasibility of regional water trails and facilities</li></ul> |
| <b>Facilitate cooperative management of natural and cultural resources</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Identify and make available information about cultural and historic resources within the region</li><li>▶ Develop guidance for addressing water and climate challenges during comprehensive planning</li></ul>   |
| <b>Address needs associated with population growth and changing demographics</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Explore options for expanding water supply capacity for growing communities</li><li>▶ Share tools and information to help address development and housing needs</li><li>▶ Develop guidance on accessible, inclusive design of public spaces</li></ul>                          |
| <b>Share information and resources to enhance planning capabilities</b>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Create tools and guidance to enhance the Region's planning capabilities, including spatial analysis, public participation, and awareness of funding opportunities</li></ul>  |
| <b>Enhance economic mobility and competitiveness</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Implement the economic development roadmap laid out in the Northeast Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2022–2026</li><li>▶ Connect employers with skilled and dedicated employees</li></ul>   |

## Other Current Regional Plans

The following existing regional plans apply to all or part of the Northeast Georgia region. Their goals, policies, and objectives overlap with those of the Regional Plan, and they should be considered alongside the Regional Plan when making land use or management decisions within the applicable jurisdictions. The current version of each plan, as of the time of Regional Plan adoption, is listed below.

### Regional Economic Development Plans

- ▶ **Appalachia Envisioned: A New Era of Opportunity: ARC Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2022–2026** (2021), Appalachian Regional Commission; *applies to Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, and Madison Counties*
- ▶ **Northeast Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022–2026** (2022), Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (Northeast Georgia Economic Development District); *applies region-wide*
- ▶ **Northeast Georgia COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan** (2021), Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (Northeast Georgia Economic Development District); *applies region-wide*

### Regional Resource Plan

- ▶ **Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources** (2018), Northeast Georgia Regional Commission; *applies region-wide*

### Regional Solid Waste Plan

- ▶ **2021–2031 Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Plan** (2022), Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority; *applies to Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton Counties*

### Regional Transportation Plans

- ▶ **The Atlanta Region’s Plan: Regional Transportation Plan** (2022), Atlanta Regional Commission; *applies to the portions of Barrow, Newton, and Walton Counties within the Atlanta Regional Commission Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)*
- ▶ **Regional Transportation Plan: 2020 Update** (2020), Gainesville-Hall MPO; *applies to the portions of Jackson County located within the Gainesville-Hall MPO*
- ▶ **2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update** (2019 and amendments), Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS); *applies to Clarke County and the portions of Madison and Oconee Counties within MACORTS’s boundaries*

### Regional Water Plans

- ▶ **Middle Ocmulgee Regional Water Plan** (2017)\*, Middle Ocmulgee Regional Water Planning Council; *applies to Jasper and Newton Counties*
- ▶ **Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Plan** (2017)\*, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Planning Council; *applies to Elbert, Madison, and Oglethorpe Counties*
- ▶ **Upper Oconee Regional Water Plan** (2017)\*, Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council; *applies to Barrow, Clarke, Greene, Jackson, Morgan, Oconee, and Walton Counties*

\*2023 updates of all three Regional Water Plans are nearing completion





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# REGIONAL GOALS

**Regional Goals & Supporting Policies.....12**

**Regional Development Maps .....13**

**Defining Narratives  
(Areas Requiring Special Attention).....17**

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 as follows:

**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 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 and analysis of current conditions, the regional development maps illustrate the projected pattern of development for the next 20 years.

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

A map of the region highlighting areas where there are conditions that could lead to development conflicts and areas with opportunity for economic growth. The accompanying narrative identifies 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 the Regional Vision or to address regional issues and opportunities.

## Goal 1: Enhance economic mobility and 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
- ▶ Capture opportunities involving broadband improvement and expansion

## Goal 2: Elevate public health and equity for all residents and visitors

- ▶ Incorporate the effects on public health into decision-making regarding infrastructure, transportation, and future development
- ▶ Ensure that all residents have reasonable access to essential goods and services including food, utilities, healthcare, greenspace, and other essential services
- ▶ Improve the representation of marginalized groups in local government positions, steering committees, and other avenues for public participation, input, and engagement

## Goal 3: Support and add value to existing communities

- ▶ Encourage communities to focus on land use efficiency, urban infill, and infrastructure investment within existing community clusters
- ▶ Encourage new development that will contribute to the region's character and sense of place
- ▶ Pursue redevelopment and infill projects if they complement surrounding areas and add value to the community
- ▶ Ensure the use of context-sensitive design principles and science-based approaches when addressing infrastructure needs for solid waste management, water resources, air quality, and food systems
- ▶ Ensure that growth and new development do not place burden on existing levels of service for the community's residents and employers

## Goal 4: 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
- ▶ Provide a suitable balance of regional housing stock growth with population growth

## Goal 5: Improve connectivity and transportation choices

- ▶ Support transportation investments and initiatives that consider all modes of transportation, including automobiles, public transit, walking, biking, scooters, golf carts, ride-sharing, and ADA accessibility
- ▶ Consider context-sensitive design considerations to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts for new and reconstructed transportation projects
- ▶ Encourage new development that supports and complements existing and planned transportation options in the community
- ▶ Reinforce the desired development patterns for communities through transportation improvements
- ▶ Support the creation of community-wide pedestrian/bike path networks

## Goal 6: Develop a regional approach to natural and historic resource protection

- ▶ Work on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management and watershed protection)
- ▶ Work to address Regional Water Plan priorities and objectives through comprehensive planning when and where appropriate
- ▶ Encourage the rehabilitation and preservation of historic resources using grant opportunities
- ▶ Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making regarding natural and historic resources
- ▶ Increase awareness of Regionally Important Resources and Conservation lands and their value to the region
- ▶ Support comprehensive surveys of historic resources to ensure the protection and promotion of cultural and historic resources of the region

## Goal 7: Enhance planning and decision-making capabilities for local governments in the region

- ▶ Provide information and training as a shared resource
- ▶ Explore public-private GIS data collaboration possibilities with communities across the region
- ▶ Enhance intergovernmental communication networks
- ▶ Improve and expand GIS data of resources and infrastructure across the region

## 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. This section illustrates the projected patterns of development and areas requiring special attention across the region for the next 20 years.

### Regional Land Use Map (page 14)

Identifies the regional development patterns projected, based on current and expected conditions over the next 20 years, using three general land use categories: Developed, Developing, and Rural. The Regional Land Use Map was created utilizing remote sensing analysis of Landsat 8 satellite data to determine Developed land use areas. Review of the twelve counties' comprehensive plans and other local development data was used to identify areas with Developing and Rural land use.

### Conservation and Development Map (page 15)

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. The "Conservation" areas include:

- ▶ Georgia conservation land (not including land trust or private easements)
- ▶ U.S. Forest Service Administration boundaries
- ▶ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service land
- ▶ Lakes, wetlands, & 100-year floodplain
- ▶ Water recharge areas
- ▶ Prime Farmland (excluding within city limits and Athens-Clarke County's Urban Service District)
- ▶ NEGRC Green Infrastructure Network as identified in the Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources

### Areas Requiring Special Attention Map (page 16)

Considers the Regional Development Maps and other sources and evaluates the land use trends within the region to identify and map areas requiring special attention.

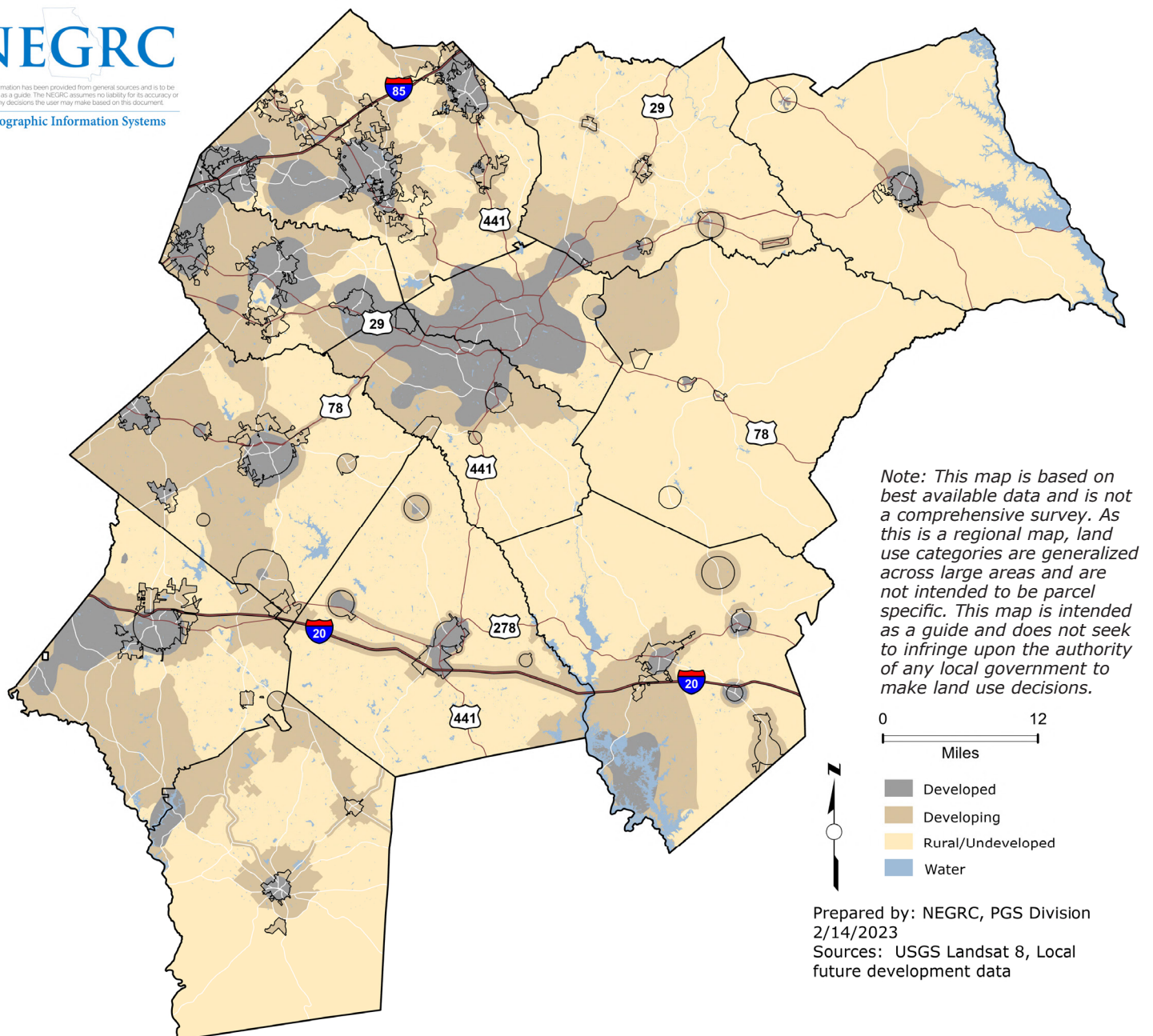
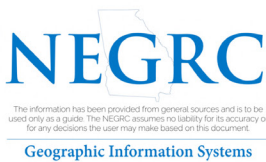
- ▶ Areas for potential rapid development include areas within 1-mile of an Interstate, area within a half a mile of Lake Oconee, areas within an MPO boundary (excluding Athens-Clarke County), and areas within certain municipalities.



## Regional Land Use Map

As opposed to traditional land use maps, which can feature upwards of ten categories, the Regional Land Use Map classifies the type of future development 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: NEGRG, PGS Division  
2/14/2023  
Sources: USGS Landsat 8, Local  
future development data

## Conservation and Development Map

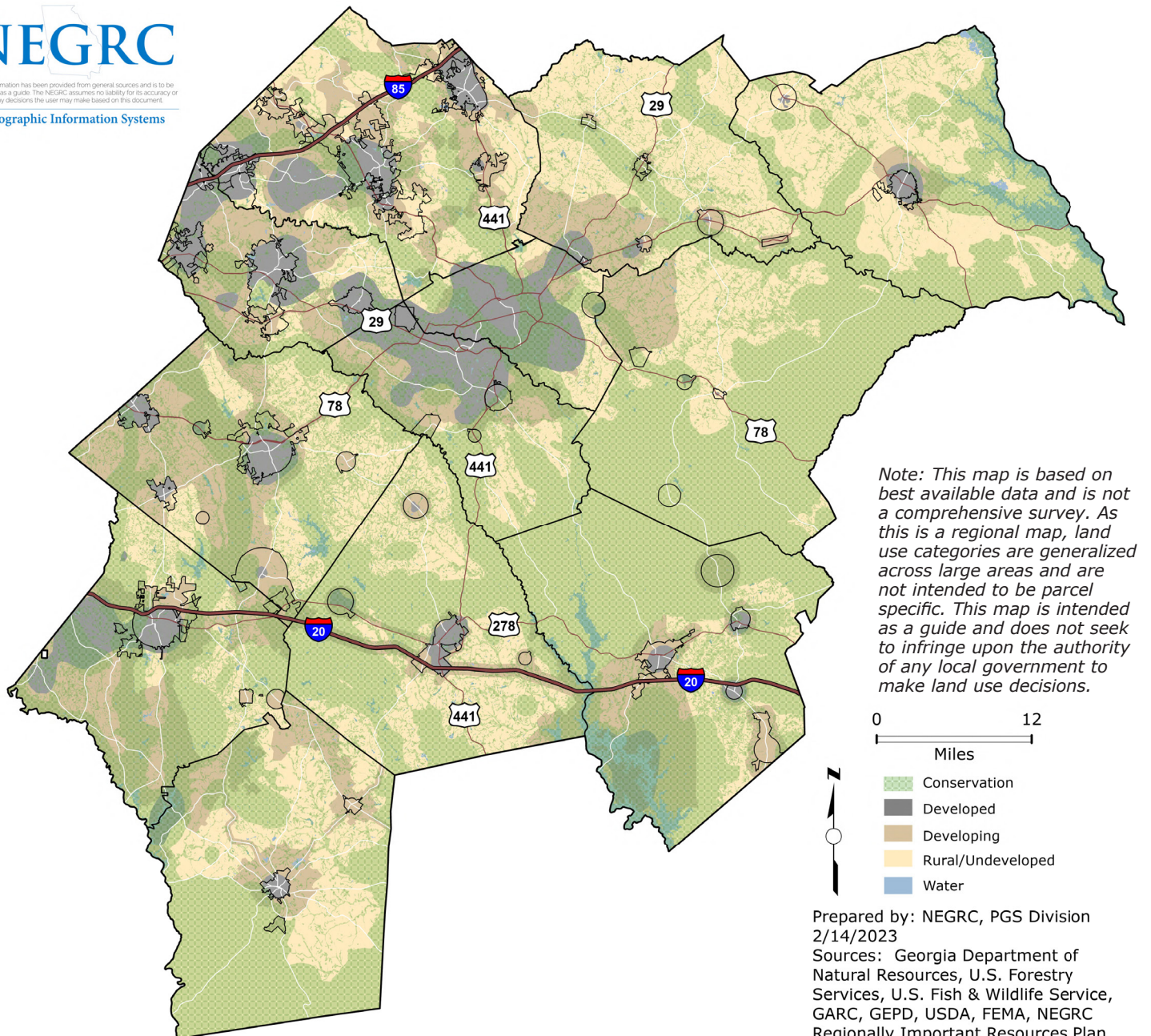
As a supplement to the Regional Land Use map, the Conservation and Development Map identifies areas to be preserved in order to protect environmentally sensitive areas and resources of regional importance.

- ▶ Note: Areas where Conservation overlaps the Developed or Developing land use categories are included in the "Threatened Regionally Important Resources" category on the Areas Requiring Special Attention Map (page 16).

**NEGRC**

The information has been provided from general sources and is to be used only as a guide. The NEGRC assumes no liability for its accuracy or for any decisions the user may make based on this document.

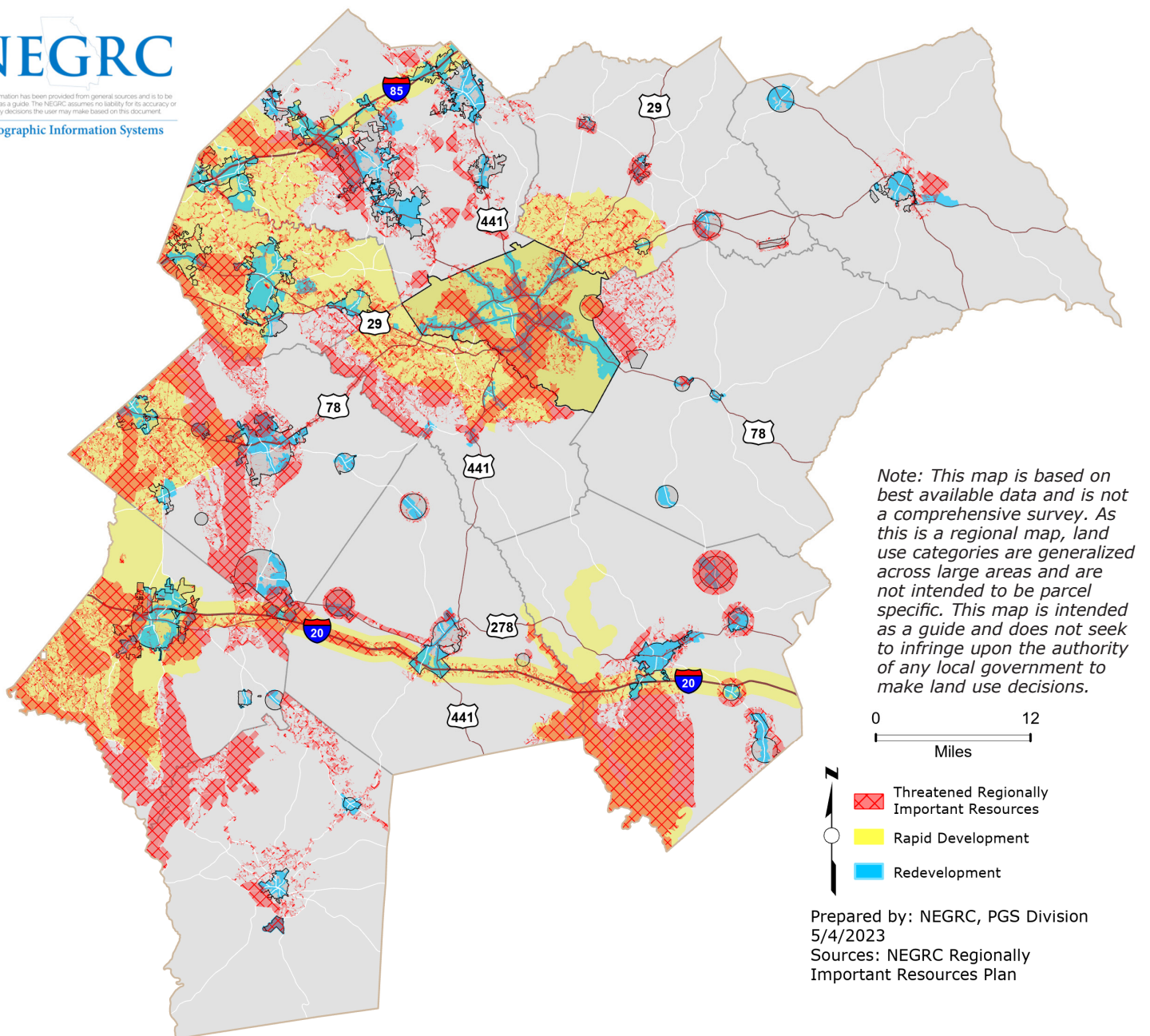
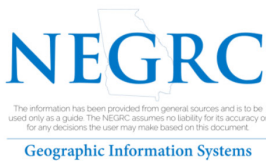
Geographic Information Systems





## Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map

The ARSA Map illustrates 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.



## Defining Narratives (Areas Requiring Special Attention)

This section provides context and meaning to the development patterns displayed on the ARSA map (previous page). The following defining narratives provide a general definition (below), development pattern descriptions (page 18), a list of compatible land uses (page 20), an inventory of Regional Quality Community Objectives (page 21), and a menu of implementation measures that may be useful to achieve the desired development patterns for each ARSA Map category (page 22).

### ARSA Definitions

#### ***Threatened Regionally Important Resources***

This area represents the intersection between Conservation areas (identified on the Conservation and Development Map, page 15), adopted Regionally Important Resources (RIR), and “Developed” and “Developing” Regional Land Use areas (identified on the Regional Land Use Map, page 14).



**Big Haynes Creek, a Threatened RIR**

#### ***Rapid Development***

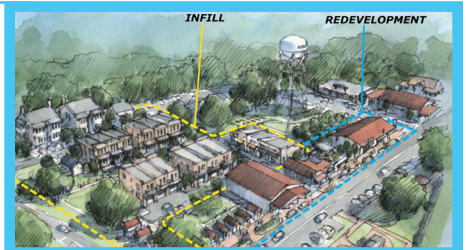
The western portion of Northeast Georgia has exhibited tremendous growth in recent years. Potential Rapid Development areas are the most likely locales in western and central sections of the region in which significant growth is likely to take place. In some cases, it is possible that development could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



**Multi-family housing construction in an area of rapid development**

#### ***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. Residential areas in redevelopment areas should be targeted for revitalization efforts and quality of life improvements.



**Potential redevelopment project (image modified from Auburn’s Downtown Master Plan)**

## Development Patterns

The table below summarizes desired development patterns for each ARSA. Note that the indicated patterns are generalized across the entire ARSA and that each listed pattern may not be suitable for all sites within an ARSA.

| Development Pattern   | Threatened RIR | Rapid Development | Redevelopment |
|---|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Preservation of environmentally sensitive or historically significant areas by setting them aside as public parks, trail corridors, greenbelts, or landmarks  | ●              |                   |               |
| Parking lots that incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavement  | ●              |                   |               |
| Site plans, building design, and landscaping that are sensitive to natural features of the site, including topography and views   | ●              |                   |               |
| Incentives and infrastructure used to steer development away from threatened areas and areas of natural, cultural, and environmentally sensitive resources  | ●              |                   |               |
| Development clustered to preserve open space within the development site  | ●              | ●                 |               |
| Significant site features (e.g., view corridors, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc.) enlisted as amenities that shape identity and character of the development                                     | ●              | ●                 |               |
| Infill development prioritized in developed areas instead of greenfield development   | ●              |                   | ●             |
| Consideration of qualitative and quantitative measures during the planning and design of infrastructure and other public projects   | ●              | ●                 | ●             |
| Facilities for bicycles, including bikeways or bike lanes, parking racks, etc.  | ●              | ●                 | ●             |
| Restricted number and size of signs and billboards  | ●              | ●                 | ●             |
| Parking areas landscaped 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   | ●              | ●                 | ●             |
| Shared parking allowed for and encouraged by parking regulations  |                | ●                 | ●             |
| Affordably priced homes distributed throughout locality/region  |                | ●                 |               |
| Promotion of mixed-income communities with a variety of housing sizes and configurations  |                | ●                 | ●             |
| Town-centers created that anchor local identity instead of sprawling developments   |                | ●                 | ●             |
| Residential development that offers a mix of housing types (e.g., 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 (e.g., corner groceries, barber shops, drugstores) within easy walking distance of residences  |                | ●                 | ●             |
| Appropriate mixed-use and/or housing development integrated with new school construction to increase walkability and reduce trip generation   |                | ●                 | ●             |
| Improved sidewalk and street appearance and amenities of commercial centers   |                | ●                 | ●             |
| Use of landscaped tree islands and medians to break up large expanses of paved parking  |                | ●                 | ●             |

(continued on next page)



(Development Patterns, continued)

| Development Pattern  | Threatened RIR | Rapid Development | Redevelopment |
|--|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Commercial structures (shopping, warehouses, offices, etc.), sidewalks, and bicycle lanes located along the street frontage, with on-street parking and/or with parking and connective alleyways in rear of buildings, making the corridor more attractive and pedestrian-friendly while alleviating some traffic congestion |                | ●                 | ●             |
| 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   |                | ●                 | ●             |
| "Big-box," "medium-box," and strip-style retail accommodated in a way that complements surrounding uses, such as breaking up the façade to look like a collection of smaller stores  |                | ●                 | ●             |
| New development located in areas with easy access to nearby transit, shopping, schools, and other areas where residents travel daily   |                | ●                 | ●             |
| Neighborhood commercial centers added on appropriate infill sites to serve surrounding neighborhoods   |                | ●                 |               |
| Developments within walking or biking distance to transit, shopping, schools, and other areas where residents travel daily   |                | ●                 |               |
| New uses added to existing 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  |                | ●                 |               |
| Existing commercial centers rehabilitated, in lieu of new construction   |                |                   | ●             |
| Infill development on vacant sites in developed areas with existing infrastructure within community centers  |                |                   | ●             |
| Consolidated driveways and inter-parcel connections between parking lots   |                |                   | ●             |
| Existing neighborhood commercial centers rehabilitated 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  |                |                   | ●             |



The Athens Line



The Yellow River



Oconee Hill Cemetery

## Compatible Land Uses

Land use categories that are compatible with each ARSA are summarized in the table below. Note that the indicated compatibilities are generalized across the entire ARSA and that each listed land use may not be compatible with all sites within an ARSA.

| Land Use                        | Threatened RIR* | Rapid Development | Redevelopment |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Agriculture (small-scale)       |                 |                   |               |
| Commercial (office and retail)  |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| Light industrial/warehouses     |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| Mixed-use                       |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| Multi-family Residential        |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| Natural, Cultural, and Historic |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| Parks areas                     |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| Public/institutional            |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| Residential                     |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| Trails, Greenways, Blueways     |                 | ●                 | ●             |

\* The Threatened RIR 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 any of the land uses listed above could be applicable within Threatened RIR 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.



Transportation options for bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles in Athens



Town centers and squares, like Covington's downtown, use land efficiently and can help create a sense of place

## Regional Quality Community Objectives

Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) that apply to each ARSA are listed in the table below. Note that the indicated objectives are generalized across the entire ARSA and that each listed objective may not apply to all sites within an ARSA.

| QCO                              | Description  | Threatened RIR | Rapid Development | Redevelopment |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <b>Community Health</b>          | 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.                               |                |                   | ●             |
| <b>Economic Prosperity</b>       | Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community.   |                | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Educational Opportunities</b> | 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. |                | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Efficient Land Use</b>        | Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community.  | ●              | ●                 |               |
| <b>Housing Options</b>           | Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community.   |                | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Local Preparedness</b>        | Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve.   | ●              | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Regional Cooperation</b>      | Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs.  | ●              | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Resource Management</b>       | Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community.  | ●              | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Sense of Place</b>            | Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities.  | ●              | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Transportation Options</b>    | Address the transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents.  | ●              | ●                 | ●             |



Example of a potential redevelopment area



Example of positive redevelopment attributes, from Redevelopment Master Plan for Bethel Village, Athens (March 2021, image courtesy of JHP Architecture)



## Implementation Measures

The implementation measures listed in the table below may be helpful in achieving the desired development patterns for each ARSA. Note that the indicated implementation measures are generalized across the entire ARSA and that each listed measure may not be suitable for all sites within an ARSA.

| Implementation Measure                                 | Details  | Threatened RIR* | Rapid Development | Redevelopment |
|--|--|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <b>Environmental due diligence</b>                     | Take steps during and after construction to mitigate environmental degradation   | ●               |                   |               |
| <b>Recreational and educational experiences</b>        | Enable experiences that encourage public awareness and stewardship of resources  | ●               |                   |               |
| <b>Water quality protection</b>                        | Identify and improve waterways that do not meet established standards  | ●               |                   |               |
| <b>Environmental Impact Review ordinance</b>           | Requires analysis of effects of proposed development; may suggest mitigation (DCA Model Code 6-5)  | ●               | ●                 |               |
| <b>Land and water conservation</b>                     | Use tools such as easements, acquisition, land trusts, farmland protection, purchase/transfer of development rights, etc.  | ●               | ●                 |               |
| <b>Low-impact development and green infrastructure</b> | Protect natural systems and reduce infrastructure costs  | ●               | ●                 |               |
| <b>Noise and lighting regulations</b>                  | Control the impact of development adjacent to natural, historic, residential, and/or less-intensely developed areas  | ●               | ●                 |               |
| <b>Planning for smart growth</b>                       | Implement compact development, efficient infrastructure investment, design guidelines, infill development, cluster development, etc.   | ●               | ●                 |               |
| <b>Strategic investment in infrastructure</b>          | Install stormwater and sewer infrastructure to steer development where development is anticipated and desired and away from areas of natural, cultural, and environmentally sensitive resources  | ●               | ●                 |               |
| <b>Overlay districts</b>                               | Designate mapped areas where special regulations on development are applied  | ●               | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Sign regulations</b>                                | Control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)   | ●               | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Effective, intentional recruitment and planning</b> | Recruit businesses that suit the community; match training to workforce needs (current and future); thoughtfully manage "big-box," "medium-box," and strip style development to include multiple uses and/or facilitate an urban neighborhood character with surrounding uses; form a business incubator; etc. |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Existing economic programs and opportunities</b>    | Apply for economic development funding and incentive programs such as Regional Economic Assistance Projects (REAP), Urban Redevelopment/Downtown Development tools (DCA Model Code 5-5), Revitalization Area Strategies (RAS), Enterprise Zones (EZs), and Opportunity Zones (OZs, state & federal)            |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Intergovernmental coordination</b>                  | Use coordinated development review processes, Intergovernmental Service Agreements (DCA Model Code 7-5), service delivery strategies, etc.   |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Multimodal transportation</b>                       | Carry out 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.  |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Quality, diverse housing stock</b>                  | Provide housing options for all income levels and ages, allow accessory dwelling units, establish Urban Redevelopment Areas (OCGA 36-61-1), etc.   |                 | ●                 | ●             |

(continued on next page)

(Implementation Measures, continued)

| Implementation Measure   | Details  | Threatened RIR* | Rapid Development | Redevelopment |
|--|--|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <b>Shared parking</b>  | Lower parking requirements in mixed-use developments in which different uses have different peak parking requirement times   |                 | ●                 | ●             |
| <b>Public facilities and services</b>  | Implement adequate public facilities standards, appropriate school siting, "Fix it First" policy, strategic location of public facilities, urban service areas   |                 | ●                 |               |
| <b>Subdivisions and land development regulations</b>                             | Adopt regulations requiring high levels of community connectivity in new development, internally (e.g., small block sizes, mid-block alleys, limited use of cul-de-sacs) and externally (e.g., multiple external vehicular access points, street stubs to adjacent properties) |                 | ●                 |               |
| <b>Prioritization of education</b>   | Remove barriers to children and adults from furthering their education and invest in education and training programs   |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>Public nuisance ordinance</b>   | Control nuisances such as loud noises, stagnant water, abandoned vehicles, accumulation of junk, and uncontrolled vegetation   |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>Rehabilitation codes</b>  | Reuse older buildings, leading to reinvestment in blighted areas   |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>State and federal grant programs</b>  | Apply for funding sources such as Community Development Block Grants, Community HOME Investment Program, etc. to build public facilities, expand or repair infrastructure, rehabilitate existing housing, or construct new affordable housing                                  |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>Targeted corridor redevelopment</b>   | Use public incentives or urban redevelopment powers to encourage revitalization of underutilized properties such as declining shopping centers or abandoned big-box stores   |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>Utility relocation</b>  | Remove overhead utilities from public view, either below ground or at the rear of lots   |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>Access control measures</b>   | Restrict entry/exit to sites to increase safety and attractiveness   |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>Adaptive reuse</b>  | Convert existing buildings for new uses  |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>Brownfield site remediation</b>   | Clean-up of contaminated properties; can be initiated by property owners or local governments  |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>Business Improvement District (BID)/ Community Improvement District (CID)</b> | Form self-taxing entities consisting of property owners and/ or businesses within a specific geographic area to provide additional services, increase safety and attractiveness, etc.  |                 |                   | ●             |
| <b>Conversion of greyfields</b>  | Reuse sites such as abandoned shopping centers for transit oriented, mixed-use development   |                 |                   | ●             |

\* Specific implementation measures for each Threatened RIR are described in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources.



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# REGIONAL NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

Economic & Workforce Development .....26

Housing & Community Development.....26

Transportation .....27

Natural & Cultural Resources .....27



This section, organized by topics relating to classical planning analysis such as housing and transportation, presents a final catalog of focal points to guide the 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 the Needs and Opportunities. Additional needs and opportunities were identified by synthesizing input received during the planning process.

Each Need or Opportunity that is called out in **blue** text in this section is considered a priority and has a corresponding strategy and Action Item(s) in the Work Program.

Note that some priority Needs and Opportunities are repeated, because they are applicable to more than one area of focus.

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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.

### Needs:

- ▶ **Address needs associated with population growth and changing demographics**
  - ▶ Repair and expand essential infrastructure to serve a growing population
- ▶ **Enhance economic mobility and competitiveness**
  - ▶ Attract and retain qualified government staff
  - ▶ Train existing residents and recruit outside workers to fill job positions within the region
  - ▶ Expand access to broadband internet and prepare for future increases in energy needs
- ▶ Build fiscal resources for local governments to continue providing services
- ▶ Prioritize expanding broadband service to the “last mile” in rural areas, extending it from major corridors to where people live

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

### Opportunities:

- ▶ **Share information and resources to enhance planning capabilities**
  - ▶ Actively pursue local, state, and federal funding to improve and expand essential infrastructure and broadband
  - ▶ Prioritize the retainment of government staff and build institutional knowledge at the local government level
- ▶ Make a regional effort to provide education and workforce training opportunities for residents

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## Housing & Community Development

An assessment of the built environment included an analysis of current housing stock, development and redevelopment trends, and 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. A range of housing options benefit individuals and families of all incomes and life stages and support healthy neighborhoods.

### Needs:

- ▶ **Address needs associated with population growth and changing demographics**
  - ▶ Build public facilities that improve the quality of life for all residents
  - ▶ Increase the variety of housing stock across the region
  - ▶ Limit infrastructure costs by focusing new development in developed areas
- ▶ Continue to improve quality of life related to public safety, access to public facilities, etc.

Northeast Georgia has established communities and neighborhoods at every scale—all of which serve as a foundation for the region’s future development and growth.

### Opportunities:

- ▶ **Share information and resources to enhance planning capabilities**
  - ▶ Create sustainable infrastructure funding sources through pursuing grant funding or instituting local impact fees
  - ▶ Cooperate with surrounding local governments to deliver essential services to residents
- ▶ Cooperate regionally to allocate appropriate affordable housing stock across the region and ensure all communities are equipped to provide emergency shelter for those in need
- ▶ Create public facilities that increase the quality of life of residents and strengthen pride in local communities

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# Transportation

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

## Needs:

- ▶ **Provide resources to support local and regional transportation infrastructure improvements**
  - ▶ Provide transportation choices throughout the region
  - ▶ Enable people without automobiles to access employment opportunities
  - ▶ Limit the impact of heavy truck transportation on downtown areas across the region
  - ▶ Pursue funding for necessary repair and expansion of existing transportation infrastructure

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

## Opportunities:

- ▶ **Share information and resources to enhance planning capabilities**
  - ▶ Create a regional framework for corridor preservation for rail, freight, bicycle and pedestrian, and automobile needs
  - ▶ Pursue local, state, and federal funding to repair existing roads and to build alternative transportation methods that limit wear-and-tear on transportation infrastructure
- ▶ Prioritize the development of pedestrian, bicycle, ride-sharing, and public transportation options for residents
- ▶ Develop compact, pedestrian-oriented areas in which jobs and essential goods and services are accessible without an automobile
- ▶ Create a comprehensive network of truck transportation routes that bypass downtown areas

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# Natural & Cultural Resources

Intact environmental resources are the cost-effective complement to the region's physical infrastructure, cleansing air and water and reducing environmental risks. Most natural systems, including watersheds and wetlands, are complex critical resources that cross jurisdictional boundaries and need to be managed through intergovernmental coordination.

Water resources are finite and require coordinated decision making to ensure access to a clean, long-

term supply, which is vital to the region's health and prosperity. Also, protection of Prime Farmland will ensure the region's ability to contribute to food systems.

Cultural and historical resources contribute to Northeast Georgia's regional identity. Preservation, education, and interpretation of these resources is vital for maintaining the region's character and connections with the past.

## Needs:

- ▶ **Address needs associated with population growth and changing demographics**
  - ▶ Preserve agricultural and historic heritage while facilitating population increases
  - ▶ Secure drinking water to account for the region's expected growth in population
- ▶ Prepare for disruptions expected due to climate change, including large storms, drought, and extreme heat events
- ▶ Limit destruction of natural and cultural resources due to suburban sprawl

## Opportunities:

- ▶ **Facilitate cooperative management of natural and cultural resources**
  - ▶ Create strategic plans for natural resources conservation
  - ▶ Create regional plans that anticipate potential impacts of natural disasters
  - ▶ Institute design guidelines that promote sensitive land use practices that limit impacts on the environment
- ▶ Limit waste of water on unessential uses and preserve water quality
- ▶ Encourage agricultural and nature tourism enterprises that both provide economic benefits and facilitate stewardship of natural resources





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# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Performance Standards.....29

Local Government Performance Standards Update...32

Regional Work Program .....34

## **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 Federal Work Authorization Program (E-Verify, 13-10-91(b)(7)).
- ▶ Comply with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Part V. Environmental planning Criteria of the Georgia Planning Act by adopting appropriate ordinances for water supply watersheds, 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.
- ▶ Report annexations and deannexations to the Department of Community Affairs, and forward the GIS shapefiles to the Department of Community Affairs and Reapportionment Office.

## 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.
- ▶ 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.



## Excellence Standards, Continued

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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 Entrepreneur-Friendly Community designation from the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDECD).
- ▶ 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 (TCSG).
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Actively pursue "last-mile" broadband connectivity, extending it from major corridors to the areas where people live.
- ▶ Seek designation from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs PlanFirst program.
- ▶ Seek designation from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) WaterFirst program.

# Local Government Performance Standards Update

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

| Local Government            | Minimum Performance Standards Status  | Specific Action Step Taken to Assist Government |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Athens-Clarke County</b> | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Winterville                 | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| <b>Barrow County</b>        | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Auburn                      | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Bethlehem                   | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Carl                        | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Statham                     | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Winder                      | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| <b>Elbert County</b>        | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Elberton                    | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Bowman                      | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| <b>Greene County</b>        | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Greensboro                  | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Siloam                      | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Union Point                 | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| White Plains                | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Woodville                   | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| <b>Jasper County</b>        | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Monticello                  | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Shady Dale                  | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| <b>Jackson County</b>       | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Jefferson                   | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Arcade                      | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Braselton                   | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Commerce                    | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Hoschton                    | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Maysville                   | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Nicholson                   | All minimum performance standards met |   |
| Talmo                       | All minimum performance standards met |   |

(continued on next page)

(Local Government Performance Standards Update, continued)

| Local Government         | Minimum Performance Standards Status  | Specific Action Step Taken to Assist Government            |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Madison County</b>    | Update SDS                            | Offered to assist county staff with required updated forms |
| Danielsville             | Update SDS                            | Offered to assist city staff with required updated forms   |
| Carlton                  | Update SDS                            | Offered to assist city staff with required updated forms   |
| Colbert                  | Update SDS                            | Offered to assist city staff with required updated forms   |
| Comer                    | Update SDS                            | Offered to assist city staff with required updated forms   |
| Hull                     | Update SDS                            | Offered to assist city staff with required updated forms   |
| Ila                      | Update SDS                            | Offered to assist city staff with required updated forms   |
| <b>Morgan County</b>     | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Madison                  | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Bostwick                 | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Buckhead                 | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Rutledge                 | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| <b>Newton County</b>     | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Covington                | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Mansfield                | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Newborn                  | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Porterdale               | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Oxford                   | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| <b>Oconee County</b>     | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Bishop                   | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Bogart                   | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| North High Shoals        | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Watkinsville             | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| <b>Oglethorpe County</b> | Update Comprehensive Plan             | NEGRC currently assisting County and Cities with plan      |
| Arnoldsville             | Update Comprehensive Plan             | NEGRC currently assisting County and Cities with plan      |
| Crawford                 | Update Comprehensive Plan             | NEGRC currently assisting County and Cities with plan      |
| Lexington                | Update Comprehensive Plan             | NEGRC currently assisting County and Cities with plan      |
| Maxey's                  | Update Comprehensive Plan             | NEGRC currently assisting County and Cities with plan      |
| <b>Walton County</b>     | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Monroe                   | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Good Hope                | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Loganville               | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Social Circle            | All minimum performance standards met |  |
| Walnut Grove             | All minimum performance standards met |  |



## **Regional Work Program**

This portion of the Implementation Program includes a Report of Accomplishments (page 35), summarizing activities and achievements since the last Regional Plan update (2018), and an updated Work Program (page 38) that identifies the specific actions the Regional Commission plans to undertake during the next five years to address the priority Needs and Opportunities.

## Report of Accomplishments (2018–2022)

| Action   | Status    | Notes  |
|--|-----------|--|
| <b>Priority:</b><br><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> |           |  |
| <b>Strategy:</b><br><b>Promote a Northeast Georgia web presence</b>  |           |  |
| Create and manage a Northeast Georgia promotional website  | Completed |  |
| Create feasibility study for potential impacts of a Northeast Georgia promotional and social media presence and/or smart phone app   | Canceled  | Each NEGRC Division implemented a social media platform; also, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, most local communities boosted/developed social media and web presence  |
| 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)                          | Completed |  |
| Conduct audit of and recommend improvements to local and regional online materials (ex: JDANEG website and ED Pros Trails Connectivity Project)  | Completed |  |
| 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                                | Canceled  | This is currently being accomplished by local Development Authorities and relevant local needs should be reassessed in regard to this topic  |
| Create and manage a list of funding and other opportunities for local entrepreneurs and artists  | Completed |  |
| Create section of the NEGRC website to feature local government resources  | Completed |  |
| <b>Strategy:</b><br><b>Comprehensive and accessible regional tourism database</b>  |           |  |
| Create, manage, and promote a publicly accessible inventory of historic landmarks, festivals and events, tours, and other visitor attractions  | Postponed | As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, most local communities boosted/developed social media and web presence to attract visitors. This effort has been refocused on historic resources and carried over to the 2023–2027 Work Program                  |
| Survey local, regional, and state stakeholders about whether to reconvene regular or as-needed meetings of the dormant regional tourism group  | Canceled  | To be initiated in as part of the regional CEDS for economic development purposes.   |
| <b>Priority:</b><br><b>Resources to support and encourage local entrepreneurial development</b>  |           |  |
| <b>Strategy:</b><br><b>Support entrepreneurial development</b>   |           |  |
| 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  | Canceled  | WorkSource Northeast Georgia and other regional entities, such as the University of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia are creating and promoting entrepreneurial resources and opportunities. Item would be a duplication of efforts |

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(Report of Accomplishments, continued)

| Action   | Status                                 | Notes  |
|--|--|--|
| 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  | Completed                              |  |
| Create feasibility study for regional business incubation facilities, and the potential role of local educational institutions in supporting the effort  | Canceled                               | The University of Georgia and Athens-Clarke County are undergoing separate but similar efforts in analyzing and addressing the needs of a business incubation facility to serve the area. UGA has opened an Innovation Hub entrepreneur incubator in downtown Athens   |
| Priority:<br><b>Greater alignment of workforce skills with current and emerging jobs</b>   |  |  |
| Strategy:<br><b>Connect employers with skilled and dedicated employees</b>   |  |  |
| Produce region-wide report on link between educational preparation/attainment and existing/future employment opportunities   | Scheduled for long-term implementation | Carried over to the 2023–2027 Work Program   |
| Develop educational program (materials and workshop) to educate local governments about diverse housing types for people of all incomes  | Scheduled for long-term implementation | Refocused to workforce training and development and carried over to the 2023–2027 Work Program   |
| Priority:<br><b>Connections to employment by method other than automobile are extremely limited</b>  |  |  |
| Strategy:<br><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</b>   |  |  |
| 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 | Canceled                               | Due to the evolving nature of the programs being offered in response to the effects of COVID-19, a static report would quickly become obsolete; these needs are being addressed in the form of day-to-day assistance and education efforts by NEGRC, DCA, and local Housing Authority staff and other entities; needs/opportunities with regard to housing have been re-assessed during the Regional Plan and CEDS updates |
| Develop region-wide Housing + Transportation Affordability analysis and recommendations  | Completed                              |  |
| Strategy:<br><b>Develop, implement, and sustain viable housing projects that meet market demands and needs</b>   |  |  |
| 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  | Completed                              |  |
| 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  | Canceled                               | Resources are already available pertaining to this work item and it was determined that NEGRC work would be duplicative  |

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(Report of Accomplishments, continued)

| Action   | Status    | Notes  |
|--|-----------|--|
| Host regional housing collaborative forum, such as a housing roundtable, to promote information sharing and identification of partnership opportunities  | Postponed | Carried over to the 2023–2027 Work Program   |
| Priority:<br><b>Few transportation choices region wide</b>   |           |  |
| Strategy:<br><b>Provide communities with bicyclist- and pedestrian-friendly “Complete Streets” best practices to increase community appeal, safety, and provide access to all users</b>  |           |  |
| Develop Complete Streets design guidelines for various settings (neighborhood- and community-level)  | Completed |  |
| 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)  | Canceled  | Due to existing resources already available through other regional and national entities, this work would be duplicative and is no longer a priority of NEGRC  |
| Complete a study to identify and establish protection and maintenance standards for regionally significant multi-modal transportation corridors  | Completed |  |
| Priority:<br><b>Aging physical infrastructure replacement</b>  |           |  |
| Strategy:<br><b>Address aging infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and water and wastewater systems</b>   |           |  |
| Develop guide to maximizing longevity and flexibility of infrastructure improvements for local governments   | Canceled  | Due to the dynamic nature of infrastructure improvements and federal infrastructure funding, focus shifted to NEGRC staff providing this guidance while assisting local governments with project development |
| Develop best-practices document for capital improvements programming. Examples could include an Asset Management Program that: Conducts ongoing condition assessment that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Evaluates the existing condition of all assets</li> <li>▸ Establishes Level of Service (LOS)</li> <li>▸ 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)</li> <li>▸ Performs life cycle costing</li> <li>▸ Identifies long term funding needs and strategies</li> </ul> | Canceled  | Due to the limited timeframe for ARPA and other federal infrastructure funding, focus shifted to NEGRC staff providing this guidance while assisting local governments with project development              |
| Publish how-to guide to conducting comprehensive infrastructure inventories and assessments for local governments  | Completed |  |
| Strategy:<br><b>Allocate resources efficiently</b>   |           |  |
| Conduct feasibility study to analyze potential for publishing measures, benchmarks, and/or asset assessment processes to evaluate transportation system improvements and project prioritization.   | Completed |  |

## Work Program (2023–2027)

| #   | Action  | Partners   | Short-Term<br>(1–5 years)                     | Ongoing  | Aligns<br>With    |
|---|---|--|---|--|-------------------|
| <b>Priority:</b><br><b>Provide resources to support local and regional transportation infrastructure improvements</b>       |   |  |   |  |                   |
| <b>Strategy:</b><br><b>Provide local governments with tools to help plan and budget for complete streets infrastructure</b> |   |  |   |  |                   |
| 1   | Update NEGRRC Complete Streets Guide to include cost-breakdowns for complete streets infrastructure improvements  | GDOT, local governments  | Year 2–3<br>\$8,000                           |  | Goals 5 and 7     |
| <b>Strategy:</b><br><b>Support development and use of public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure</b>              |   |  |   |  |                   |
| 2   | Develop a plan for public EV charging station locations throughout the Region   | GDOT, local governments, local development authorities   | Years 3–4<br>\$15,000                         |  | Goals 5 and 7     |
| <b>Strategy:</b><br><b>Analyze feasibility of regional water trails and facilities</b>                                      |   |  |   |  |                   |
| 3   | Complete a feasibility study identifying public access along the Region’s major rivers and lakes, outline the feasibility of the network, and outline any federal, state, or local policy barriers to implementation  | DCA, GDOT, DNR, local governments, recreation departments, land trusts                             | Years 2–4<br>\$25,000                         |  | Goals 6 and 7     |
| 4   | Create an online map of potential future public access point locations identified in regional water trail feasibility study   | DCA, GDOT, DNR, local governments, recreation departments, land trusts                             | Year 5<br>\$2,000                             |  | Goals 6 and 7     |
| <b>Priority:</b><br><b>Facilitate cooperative management of natural and cultural resources</b>                              |   |  |   |  |                   |
| <b>Strategy:</b><br><b>Identify and make available information about cultural and historic resources within the Region</b>  |   |  |   |  |                   |
| 5   | As a foundation for future research by others in the Region, conduct and publish a regional historic Native American resource analysis, identifying historic trading routes and settlements   | Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, local governments, local historic preservation boards, SHPO | Years 3–5<br>\$15,000                         |  | Goal 6            |
| 6   | Create an online map of locations identified during the historic Native American resource analysis  | Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, local governments, local historic preservation boards, SHPO | Year 5<br>\$2,000                             |  | Goals 6 and 7     |
| 7   | Develop GIS inventory delineating the boundaries of local and national historic districts and resources within the region   | Local governments, local historic preservation boards, SHPO  | Years 1–2<br>\$5,000                          |  | Goals 6 and 7     |
| 8   | Create, manage, and promote a publicly accessible inventory of historic landmarks, festivals and events, tours, and other visitor attractions   | JDANEGA and other development authorities, chambers of commerce, local governments                 | Years 1–2<br>(initial development)<br>\$5,000 | Years 1–5<br>(maintenance)<br>\$1,000 annually | Goals 3, 6, and 7 |
| <b>Strategy:</b><br><b>Develop guidance for addressing water and climate challenges during comprehensive planning</b>       |   |  |   |  |                   |
| 9   | Following adoption of updated Regional Water Plans for the Middle Ocmulgee, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee, and Upper Oconee regions (expected 2023), develop guidance identifying opportunities for aligning comprehensive plans with regional water management planning objectives | Local governments, local water authorities, State Water Council, Regional Water Planning Councils  | Years 1–2<br>\$10,000                         |  | Goals 6 and 7     |

(continued on next page)

(Work Program, continued)

| #   | Action  | Partners   | Short-Term<br>(1–5 years) | Ongoing | Aligns<br>With    |
|---|---|--|---------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| 10  | Develop a guide local governments can refer to for ideas about how to incorporate climate resilience into local plans   | Local governments, Georgia Initiative for Climate and Society (UGA)                                    | Years 3–4<br>\$3,000      |         | Goals 2, 3, and 7 |
| Priority:<br><b>Address needs associated with population growth and changing demographics</b>   |   |  |                           |         |                   |
| Strategy:<br><b>Explore options for expanding water supply capacity for growing communities</b>   |   |  |                           |         |                   |
| 11  | Evaluate and publish a report on the feasibility, options, and costs of county groundwater surveys  | EPD, Regional Water Planning Councils  | Years 2–3<br>\$15,000     |         | Goal 6            |
| 12  | Develop a presentation for decision-makers summarizing groundwater survey options, including costs, benefits, justification, methodological considerations, and other relevant considerations   | Local governments, local water authorities, State Water Council, Regional Water Planning Councils, EPD | Year 3<br>\$2,000         |         | Goals 6 and 7     |
| Strategy:<br><b>Share tools and information to help address projected development and housing needs</b>   |   |  |                           |         |                   |
| 13  | Create growth-scenario projections of a major urban center or centers in the region   | Local governments, development authorities, chambers of commerce                                       | Years 3–4<br>\$10,000     |         | Goals 3 and 7     |
| 14  | Host regional housing collaborative forum(s), such as a housing roundtable, to promote information sharing and identification of partnership opportunities  | Local housing authorities, land trusts, local governments, DCA   | Year 1–5<br>\$4,000       |         | Goal 4            |
| Strategy:<br><b>Develop guidance on accessible, inclusive design of public spaces</b>   |   |  |                           |         |                   |
| 15  | Develop and publish a collaborative report providing guidance on designing public spaces that are accessible and inclusive for all ages and physical abilities  | Local governments, NEGRC Aging Division  | Years 3–4<br>\$15,000     |         | Goals 2 and 7     |
| Priority:<br><b>Share information and resources to enhance planning capabilities</b>  |   |  |                           |         |                   |
| Strategy:<br><b>Create tools and guidance to enhance the region’s planning capabilities, including spatial analysis, public participation, and awareness of funding opportunities</b> |   |  |                           |         |                   |
| 16  | Create and publish a Geospatial Strategy to serve as a business-oriented plan defining how the PGS Division of NEGRC will use GIS to increase efficiency, productivity, and collaboration for spatial analysis projects across the region | GARC, local governments, local GIS consultants   | Year 1–2<br>\$12,000      |         | Goal 7            |
| 17  | Hold a manager roundtable featuring examples of public input and engagement best practices from around the region   | Local governments  | Years 4–5<br>\$1,000      |         | Goal 7            |

(continued on next page)



(Work Program, continued)

| #   | Action  | Partners   | Short-Term<br>(1–5 years)               | Ongoing  | Aligns<br>With             |
|---|---|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| 18  | Develop a working inventory of state and federal funding opportunities, categorized by program activity, for internal use and to share with local governments in the region when needed; use this information to publish an annual report summarizing funding opportunities by type | State and Federal agencies   | Year 1 (initial development)<br>\$1,000 | Years 1–5<br>(annual report; inventory updates)<br>\$1,000 | Goals 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 |
| Priority:<br><b>Enhance economic mobility and competitiveness</b>   |   |  |   |  |                            |
| Strategy:<br><b>Implement the economic development roadmap laid out in the Northeast Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2022–2026</b> |   |  |   |  |                            |
| 19  | As part of the CEDS Action Plan for Item 1: Transportation, complete a study to determine the feasibility of a regional transit authority   | CEDS Committee, local development authorities, local governments   | Year 1                                  |  | Goals 1 and 5              |
| 20  | As part of the CEDS Action Plan for Item 2: Technology & Energy, offer at least one targeted managers roundtable or educational program on renewable energy   | CEDS Committee, local development authorities, local governments   | Year 4                                  |  | Goals 1 and 7              |
| 21  | As part of the CEDS Action Plan for Item 3: Broadband, host one or more broadband education events, including knowledgeable guest speaker(s)  | CEDS Committee, local development authorities, local governments   | Year 2                                  |  | Goals 1 and 7              |
| 22  | As part of the CEDS Action Plan for Item 4: Education, perform regional SWOT analysis regarding workforce education and training in the construction and manufacturing sector   | CEDS Committee, local development authorities, local governments   | Year 3                                  |  | Goal 1                     |
| 23  | As part of the CEDS Action Plan for Item 5: Equity, perform a regional brownfields analysis as a strategy to reduce greenfield development  | CEDS Committee, local development authorities, local governments   | Year 5                                  |  | Goals 1 and 2              |
| Strategy:<br><b>Connect employers with skilled and dedicated employees</b>  |   |  |   |  |                            |
| 24  | Produce region-wide report on link between educational preparation/attainment and existing/future employees   | WIB, local governments, TCSG                                       | Year 5<br>\$10,000                      |  | Goal 1                     |
| 25  | Develop educational program (materials and workshop) to educate local governments about workforce training programs, internship resources, and incentives for public-private partnerships   | Local governments, TCSG, NEGRC WIOA, local employment centers, DOL | Year 2<br>\$7,500                       |  | Goals 1 and 4              |

***Abbreviations used in Work Program table on preceding pages:***

- ▶ CEDS Committee: Northeast Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee
- ▶ DCA: Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- ▶ DOL: Georgia Department of Labor
- ▶ DNR: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- ▶ GARC: Georgia Association of Regional Commissions
- ▶ GIS Consultants: Geographic Information Systems consultants
- ▶ GDOT: Georgia Department of Transportation
- ▶ EPD: Georgia Environmental Protection Division
- ▶ JDANEGA: Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia
- ▶ WIOA: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program
- ▶ SHPO: State Historic Preservation Office
- ▶ TCSG: Technical College System of Georgia
- ▶ UGA: University of Georgia
- ▶ WIB: Workforce Investment Board



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# APPENDICES

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| SWOT Analysis Summary .....          | 44 |
| QCO Analysis Summary .....           | 46 |
| Stakeholder Involvement Report ..... | 48 |
| Supporting Data .....                | 55 |



The appendices that follow include a summary of SWOT analysis responses, a generalized regional assessment of Quality Community Objectives (QCOs), a report on stakeholder involvement in the planning process, and a summary of data considered during plan development.

## SWOT Analysis Summary

During the stakeholder engagement process, the NEGRC hosted two public hearings, three 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

- ▶ Growth opportunities afforded by population growth
- ▶ Abundant natural resources
- ▶ Outdoor recreation opportunities
- ▶ Charming historic downtowns throughout the region
- ▶ Proximity to urban amenities in Athens and Atlanta
- ▶ Strong rural character
- ▶ Pace of economic development across the region for many industries
- ▶ Community pride and identities at the local level
- ▶ Education institutions (UGA & extensions)
- ▶ Economic diversity
- ▶ Trails (Firefly trail, Athens Line, etc.)
- ▶ Historic resources (sites, housing, markers, etc.)
- ▶ Passion in local communities

### Weaknesses

- ▶ Aging infrastructure
- ▶ Unaffordable housing
- ▶ Lack of cellular and broadband access in rural areas
- ▶ Lack of opportunities for state laws & procedures for reporting
- ▶ Lack of intercounty decision-making regarding land use
- ▶ Low oversight on water resources and lack of consistent regional planning
- ▶ Not enough housing stock for population in many counties, specifically multifamily and affordable housing
- ▶ Low ability to influence positive change in equity
- ▶ Low public Wi-Fi access area
- ▶ Lack of public transit
- ▶ Lack of adequate pedestrian infrastructure in many areas
- ▶ Sewer infrastructure unavailable in many areas
- ▶ Lack of opportunities for individuals to climb economic ladder
- ▶ Fear of growth among many community members
- ▶ Current zoning and governance in many areas leads to suburban sprawl and cookie cutter development
- ▶ Loss of institutional knowledge among local government staff and officials due to frequent turnover
- ▶ Lack of connectivity of roads, making it hard to get to destinations
- ▶ Environmental impacts of development not taken seriously enough
- ▶ Lack of consistent resource management throughout the region

## Opportunities

- ▶ Designate regional commission point person to be liaison for tech colleges & educational institutions
- ▶ Expanding transportation opportunities
- ▶ Upgrading infrastructure
- ▶ Better communication and cooperation between local governments
- ▶ Training and education opportunity for community leaders
- ▶ Host educational seminars on regular basis for local governments (lunch & learns, etc.)
- ▶ Enhancing alternative transportation options proactively
- ▶ Improving sustainability initiatives
- ▶ Continue expanding bike/multiuse trail infrastructure
- ▶ Expansion of renewable energy and EV charging infrastructure
- ▶ Public service campaign region-wide about reducing solid waste through reusing and recycling
- ▶ Adding sustainability & climate change sections to comprehensive plans and developing adaptation toolkits
- ▶ Broadband expansion
- ▶ Leverage UGA resources for regional economic growth
- ▶ Leveraging historic downtowns for economic growth and cultural enhancement
- ▶ Capitalizing on conserved natural resources
- ▶ Building & preserving affordable housing throughout the region
- ▶ Building more mixed-use development across the region

## Threats

- ▶ Poor planning response to fast population growth
- ▶ Lack of consistent approach to growth management
- ▶ Loss of natural resources
- ▶ Gentrification
- ▶ Increased energy needs vs. system output
- ▶ Overcapacity of water, sewer, electricity, and solid waste capacity due to population growth
- ▶ Many food deserts in region and limited infrastructure for access
- ▶ Rapid development without adequate protection of greenspaces & important environmental resources
- ▶ Community resistance & opposition to multifamily and affordable housing
- ▶ Loss of individuality as Atlanta spreads
- ▶ Future conflict between rural and urban areas
- ▶ Insufficient tax revenues to pay for infrastructure.



## 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.

### **Efficient Land Use:**

While most of the region maintains inventories of areas available for potential redevelopment, few areas allow small-lot development (5,000 square feet or less). Also, infill opportunities associated with previously-developed or contaminated sites such as brownfields and greyfields are not broadly promoted. Communities have begun to plan for nodal development that focuses growth at intersections rather than allowing it to spread along major roads; however, zoning ordinances typically rely on generalized Planned-Development categories for more dense development patterns instead of catering to more descriptive zoning categories or form-based codes.

### **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 developed a plan for protection of Regionally Important Resources.

### **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 access. Nine of the regional communities have a Capital Improvements Program that supports growth with plans, and many noted that zoning and GIS assistance would be helpful for decision-making or operational purposes moving forward. Additionally, pre-disaster mitigation plans could be updated to better account for the effects of climate change.

## **Sense of Place**

Northeast Georgia's communities value sense of place. Most cite having distinct characteristics, protecting history and heritage, and enjoying the small-urban and rural dynamic. Local governments are increasingly regulating or offering guidance to developers on aesthetics. Farmland protection and general conservation are 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 and desire for more region-wide coordination exists. Several communities have struggled with tax-incentive program negotiations.

## **Housing Options**

Housing diversity throughout the region has lagged to meet residents' needs, including single-family, multi-family, and alternative living solutions such as ADUs. 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. However, senior housing options are increasing in many of the counties. The need for senior housing options is also growing, as median age in most communities in the Northeast Georgia region has been steadily increasing.

## **Transportation Options**

The regional road network is robust with access to two major interstates and dozens of state highways. However, intra-community connectivity could be improved in many communities. Non-automobile transportation is not well established in most of Northeast Georgia. Public transportation, walking, and bicycling do not play a significant role beyond recreation in most areas. Five out of twelve counties have public transit systems available. Overall, transportation options throughout the region are limited.

## **Educational Opportunities**

Workforce training is available throughout the region related to locally-available employment opportunities through regional and local entities. Higher education opportunities are prevalent throughout Northeast Georgia. With significant private investments in the technology sector, specialized job opportunities are increasing region wide.

## **Community Health**

The social safety net within the region is fair. Emergency response services are held in high regard in most communities. A network of both public and private providers serves the most basic needs of the disadvantaged. Also, most counties have some degree of emergency housing present. Safe walking and biking options are limited throughout the region, hindering communities' ability to foster better health and fitness. Additionally, public transit is limited to less than half of the region's communities, limiting disadvantaged residents access to improve their circumstances.

# 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 and Organizations***

- ▶ Council of the Northeast Georgia
- ▶ Regional Commission
- ▶ Planning and Government Services Advisory Committee of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
- ▶ Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging
- ▶ WorkSource Northeast Georgia
- ▶ Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Board
- ▶ Northeast Georgia Health District
- ▶ Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority
- ▶ Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS)
- ▶ Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia
- ▶ Joint Development Authority of Jasper, Morgan, Newton, and Walton Counties
- ▶ Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority

### ***Federal, State, and Local Partners***

- ▶ Northeast Georgia’s 12 Counties, 54 Municipal Governments, and Residents
- ▶ Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- ▶ Georgia Department of Transportation
- ▶ Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- ▶ Appalachian Regional Commission
- ▶ Southern Crescent Regional Commission
- ▶ Georgia Forestry Commission
- ▶ Development Authorities and Chambers of Commerce
- ▶ Convention and Visitor Bureaus

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

### ***Fields and Disciplines***

- |                                    |                                |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ▶ Community & Economic Development | ▶ Human Services               |
| ▶ Community & Regional Planning    | ▶ Natural & Cultural Resources |
| ▶ Education                        | ▶ Tourism                      |
| ▶ Historic Preservation            | ▶ Transportation               |
| ▶ Housing                          |                                |



## 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:*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Bill Palmer, Chairman, Elbert County        | Michael Coile, Madison County                                 |
| Linda Blechinger, Vice Chair, Barrow County | Jill Parham, Madison County                                   |
| John Daniell, Secretary, Oconee County      | Blake McCormack, Morgan County                                |
| Pat Graham, Barrow County                   | Fred Perriman, Morgan County                                  |
| Linda Blechinger, Barrow County             | Wendell McNeal, Morgan County                                 |
| Bill Ritter, Barrow County                  | Marcello Banes, Newton County                                 |
| Kelly Girtz, Athens-Clarke County           | Steve Horton, Newton County                                   |
| Dodd Ferrelle, Athens-Clarke County         | Louise Adams, Newton County                                   |
| Amy Stone, Athens-Clarke                    | Flemie Pitts, Newton County                                   |
| Lee Vaughn, Elbert County                   | Janet Jones, Oconee County                                    |
| Daniel Graves, Elbert County                | Brad Tucker, Oconee County                                    |
| Joel Seymour, Elbert County                 | Jay Paul, Oglethorpe County                                   |
| Byron Lombard, Greene County                | Craig Snow, Oglethorpe County                                 |
| Phil Brock, Greene County                   | Ronnie Boggs, Oglethorpe County                               |
| Terry Lawler, Greene County                 | David Thompson, Walton County                                 |
| Tom Crow, Jackson County                    | John Howard, Walton County                                    |
| Doug Haynie, Jackson County                 | Shane Short, Walton County                                    |
| Jim Shaw, Jackson County                    | Cary Fordyce, Gubernatorial Appointee (Governor's Office)     |
| Don Jernigan, Jasper County                 | Roy Roberts, Gubernatorial Appointee (Lt. Governor's Office)  |
| David Dyer, Jasper County                   | Billy Pittard, Gubernatorial Appointee (Speaker of the House) |
| Todd Higdon, Madison County                 |   |

### ***Technical Advisory Committee***

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

#### *Technical Advisory Committee Members:*

John Howard, Chair, Walton County  
Pat Graham, Barrow County  
Linda Blechinger, Barrow County  
John Daniell, Oconee County  
Brad Tucker, Oconee County  
David Dyer, Jasper County  
Cary Fordyce, Oglethorpe County  
Steve Horton, Newton County  
Blake McCormack, Morgan County  
Bill Palmer, Elbert County  
Lee Vaughn, Elbert County

#### *Regional Commission Staff:*

Mark Beatty, Director of Planning and Government Services  
Carol Flaute, Community Planner  
Jon McBrayer, GIS Planner  
Sara Kaminski, Community Planner  
Phillip Jones, Community Planner  
Lydia Joffray, Historic Preservation Planner  
Joyce Okoth, Program Assistant

## 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; both were held at the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's headquarters. NEGRC staff hosted both hearings to review plan elements and receive input from attendees. Public hearings were held on the following dates:

- ▶ September 9, 2022, 4:00 p.m. – NEGRC Headquarters, 305 Research Drive, Athens GA 30605

## Press Release

For Immediate Release — August 17, 2022

### REGIONAL PLAN – PUBLIC HEARING

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) announces a regional hearing for the update to the 12-county area's regional 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 4:00 p.m. on Friday, September 9, 2022 at the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (305 Research Dr., Athens, GA 30605). For questions, please contact Mark Beatty, Director of Planning and Government Services, at [mbeatty@negrc.org](mailto:mbeatty@negrc.org) or (706) 369-5650.

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

08/17/2022

Area Agency on Aging Development  
Local Government Services  
Planning  
Workforce



305 Research Drive  
Athens, GA 30605-2795  
Phone 706.369.5650  
Burke Walker, Executive Director

### Regional Plan Update – Public Hearing

September 9, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. | Main Atrium  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission | 305 Research Drive, Athens, GA 30605

#### Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Announcement of Regional Plan Update
3. Overview of Contents
4. Schedule of Public Involvement
5. Estimated Adoption Schedule
6. Public Comments  
*Note: Attendees will be provided with a single, two-minute period for public comment. All public comments received will be recorded for the Regional Plan update.*
7. Adjournment

Area Agency on Aging Development  
Local Government Services  
Planning  
Workforce



305 Research Drive  
Athens, GA 30605-2795  
Phone 706.369.5650  
Burke Walker, Executive Director

### Regional Plan Update – Public Hearing

September 9, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. | Main Atrium  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission | 305 Research Drive, Athens, GA 30605

#### Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order: 4:01 p.m.
2. Announcement of Regional Plan Update
3. Overview of Contents
  - a. Chapter 110-12-6 Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning
    - i. Executive Summary
    - ii. Regional Goals
    - iii. Needs and Opportunities
    - iv. Implementation Program
    - v. Appendices:
      1. SWOT Analysis, Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives, Data and Mapping Supplement, Stakeholder Involvement Report
4. Schedule of Public Involvement
  - a. All public input opportunities will be posted to the NEGRC website once dates and venues are finalized.
  - b. Public Hearing 1 – September 9, 2022
  - c. Online Survey (available to targeted stakeholders from September 9, 2022 – October 14, 2022)
  - d. Input Meetings
    - i. Athens Clarke County – Late October
    - ii. City of Monroe – Mid-November
    - iii. City of Greensboro – Early December
  - e. Public Hearing 2 – Spring 2023
5. Estimated Adoption Schedule
  - a. Kickoff Public Hearing – September 9, 2022
  - b. Public Input & Involvement – September 2022 to December 2022
  - c. Final Public Hearing – February/March 2023
  - d. DCA Review – March – April 2023
  - e. Adoption by NEGRC Council – May/June 2023
  - f. Due Date – June 30, 2023
6. Public Comments (continued on next page)
  - a. Tonya Bechtler, City of Rutledge – Morgan County
    - i. Would like to report that there has been a disregard of regional planning at the local level (county/city) and that recommendations for Development of Regional Impact (DRI) reviews have not been considered appropriately at local level (county/city) appropriately.
    - ii. Expressed concerns for the health of community in regard to large industrial projects. Inquired about DRI reviews and how they are used.
    - iii. Expressed concerns of over-burdening local resources and infrastructure for solid waste management, water resources, and hazardous/industrial waste, etc.
    - iv. Inquired about how water resource management plans are used or referenced in the regional plan.
    - v. Stated that work that the Regional Commission does is extremely important.
7. Adjournment: 4:34 p.m.



| NEGRC: Regional Plan Update<br>Public Hearing #1: September 9, 2022 – 4:00 p.m.<br>305 Research Drive, Athens, GA 30605 |                             |                         |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| NAME  | County or City of Residence | EMAIL                   |
| Mark Beatty   | Clarke                      | mbeatty@negrc.org       |
| Tonya Bechtler  | Morgan                      | tonyabechtler@gmail.com |
|   |                             |                         |
|   |                             |                         |

- March 15, 2023, 4:00 p.m. – NEGRC Headquarters, 305 Research Drive, Athens GA 30605

Area Agency on Aging Development  
Local Government Services  
Planning  
Workforce



305 Research Drive  
Athens, GA 30605-2795  
Phone 706.369.5650  
Burke Walker, Executive Director

## Press Release

Northeast Georgia Regional Commission  
Planning & Government Services Division

For Immediate Release — February 21, 2023

### REGIONAL PLAN – PUBLIC HEARING #2

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) announces a regional hearing for the update to the 12-county area's regional plan. The purpose of the regional hearing is to provide interested parties an opportunity to review the final draft of plan content prior to transmittal to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review. The hearing will also provide an opportunity for public comment on the Regional Plan draft.

The regional hearing will take place at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Main Atrium (305 Research Dr., Athens, GA 30605). For questions, please contact Mark Beatty, Director of Planning and Government Services, at [mbeatty@negrc.org](mailto:mbeatty@negrc.org) or (706) 369-5650.

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

02/21/2023

Area Agency on Aging Development  
Local Government Services  
Planning  
Workforce



305 Research Drive  
Athens, GA 30605-2795  
Phone 706.369.5650  
Burke Walker, Executive Director

### Regional Plan Update – Public Hearing #2

March 15, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. | Main Atrium  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission | 305 Research Drive, Athens, GA 30605

#### Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Overview of Regional Plan Contents
3. Estimated Schedule of DCA Transmittal and NEGRC Adoption
4. Public Comments  
*Note: All public comments received will be recorded for the Regional Plan update.*
5. Adjournment

| NEGRC: Regional Plan Update<br>Public Hearing #2: March 15, 2023 – 4:00 p.m.<br>305 Research Drive, Athens, GA 30605 |                             |                     |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| NAME   | County or City of Residence | EMAIL               |
| Jon McBrayer   | ALL                         | jmcbrayer@negrc.org |
| Phillip Jones  | ALL                         | pjones@negrc.org    |
| Burke Walker   | NEGRC                       | bwalker@negrc.org   |
|  |                             |                     |
|  |                             |                     |

NEGRC  
NORTHEAST GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

HOME ADMINISTRATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGING PLANNING & GOVERNMENT SERVICES MORE INFO

Planning & Government Services Dept Home Regional Plan Public Hearing #2 - Draft Review

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National Association of Development Organizations

Georgia Municipal Association

Advancing Georgia's Counties

Georgia Association of Regional Commissions

Regional Plan Public Hearing #2 – Draft Review

Feb 21, 2023

NEGRC  
NORTHEAST GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Regional Plan Update

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) announces a second and final public hearing for the update to the 12-county area's regional plan. The purpose of the public hearing is to provide interested parties an opportunity to review and comment on the final draft of plan content prior to transmittal to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review.

The public hearing will take place at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Main Atrium (305 Research Dr., Athens, GA 30605). For questions, please contact Mark Beatty, Director of Planning and Government Services, at [mbeatty@negrc.org](mailto:mbeatty@negrc.org) or (706) 369-5650. The public hearing agenda can be accessed here: [Regional Hearing #2 – Agenda](#).

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

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Transportation August 2020



negrc\_pggs  
Northeast GA Regional Commission

negrc\_pggs The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) announces a public hearing for the update to the 12-county area's regional plan. The purpose of the public hearing is to provide interested parties an opportunity to review the final draft of plan content prior to transmittal to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review. The hearing will also provide an opportunity for public comment on the Regional Plan draft.

The regional hearing will take place at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Main Atrium (305 Research Dr., Athens, GA 30605). For questions, please contact Mark Beatty, Director of Planning and Government Services, at [mbeatty@negrc.org](mailto:mbeatty@negrc.org) or (706) 369-5650.

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

#planning #regionalplanning #publichearing #localgovernment #negrcplanning

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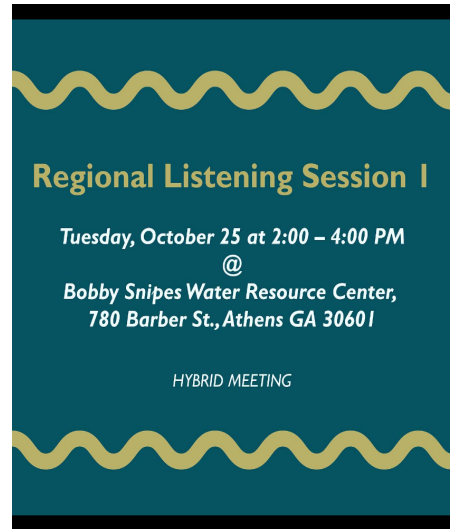
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## Public Listening Sessions

Three listening sessions for the update of the Regional Plan were held to ask invited stakeholders about their general impressions of the region, how they see it evolving over the next 20 years, and to receive input regarding various elements of the regional plan update. All meetings were held in a hybrid format, offering both an in-person and virtual option for attendees. Information to access the virtual option was shared on the NEGRC website in advance of each meeting. Attendees were asked to participate in a SWOT analysis and vision and goals worksheet. Virtual and in-person options were available for both. Results of these inputs factored into the formulation and prioritization of the Needs and Opportunities. Listening Sessions were held as follows:

- ▶ October 25, 2022, 2:00 p.m. – Bobby Snipes Water Resource Center, 780 Barber Street, Athens GA 30601

| <div>  <div> <b>NEGRC</b><br/>           NORTH EAST GEORGIA<br/>           REGIONAL COMMISSION         </div> </div> <div>           NEGRC: Regional Plan Update<br/>           Listening Session #1: October 25, 2022 – 2:00 p.m.<br/>           Bobby Snipes Water Resource Center, 780 Barber St, Athens, GA 30601         </div> |                             |                     |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| NAME  | County or City of Residence | EMAIL               |
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| Carol Flaute  | CLARKE                      | cflaute@negrc.org   |
| Phillip Jones   | CLARKE                      | pjones@negrc.org    |
| Sara Kemmish  | CLARKE                      | skemmish@negrc.org  |
| John McBrayer   | CLARKE                      | jmcbrayer@negrc.org |
|   |                             |                     |
|   |                             |                     |
|   |                             |                     |
|   |                             |                     |
|   |                             |                     |
|   |                             |                     |



**Regional Listening Session 1**

**Tuesday, October 25 at 2:00 – 4:00 PM**

**@**

**Bobby Snipes Water Resource Center,**  
**780 Barber St., Athens GA 30601**

**HYBRID MEETING**

negrc\_pgs Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

negrc\_pgs The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) will host the first of three regional input meetings for the update to the 12-county area's regional plan. The purpose of the meeting is to engage with stakeholders and the public to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the region. A Regional Plan is very similar to a local government's comprehensive plan: the plan will develop needs and opportunities based on the input we receive and a work program for the Regional Commission to address those needs.

The input meeting will take place at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 25, 2022 at the Bobby Snipes Water Resource Center (780 Barber St., Athens, GA 30601). There will be a hybrid (virtual) option that will be posted to the NEGRC website at least 48-hours in advance of the meeting. For questions, please contact Mark Beatty, Director of Planning and Government Services, at mbeatty@negrc.org or (706) 369-5650.

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


15w

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OCTOBER 14, 2022

Add a comment...

- ▶ November 15, 2022, 2:00 p.m. – City of Monroe City Hall, 215 N. Broad Street, Monroe GA 30655

| <div>  <div> <b>NEGRC</b><br/>           NORTH EAST GEORGIA<br/>           REGIONAL COMMISSION         </div> </div> <div>           NEGRC: Regional Plan Update<br/>           Listening Session #2: November 15, 2022 – 2:00 p.m.<br/>           City of Monroe City Hall, 215 N Broad St, Monroe, GA 30655         </div> |                             |                          |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| NAME  | County or City of Residence | EMAIL                    |
| Mark Beatty   |                             | mbeatty@negrc.org        |
| Phillip Jones   |                             | pjones@negrc.org         |
| Carol Flaute  |                             | cflaute@negrc.org        |
| Jon McBrayer  |                             | jmcbrayer@negrc.org      |
| Kenny Smith   |                             | Ksmith@monroega.gov      |
| Gina Roy  | JACKSON                     | gray@jacksoncountyga.gov |
| Beth Evenson  | DCA                         | beth.evenson@dca.ga.gov  |
| Brian Callender   | MONROE                      | bcallender@monroega.gov  |
| Chris Bailey  | MONROE                      | cbailey@monroega.gov     |
| Logan Proper  | MONROE                      | lproper@monroega.gov     |
| Sara Shropshire   | monroe                      | sshropshire@monroega.gov |



**Regional Listening Session 2**

**Tuesday, November 15 from 2:00 – 4:00 PM**

**@**

**City of Monroe Council Chambers**  
**215 N. Broad Street, Monroe GA 30655**

**HYBRID MEETING**

negrc\_pgs Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

negrc\_pgs The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) will host the second of three regional input meetings for the update to the 12-county area's regional plan. The purpose of the meeting is to engage with stakeholders and the public to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the region and review the proposed regional goals and supporting policies. A Regional Plan is very similar to a local government's comprehensive plan: the plan will develop needs and opportunities based on the input we receive and a work program for the Regional Commission to address those needs.

The input meeting will take place at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at the City of Monroe City Hall Council Chambers (215 North Broad Street, Monroe, GA 30655). There will be a hybrid (virtual) option that will be posted to the NEGRC website at least 24-hours in advance of the meeting. For questions, please contact Mark Beatty, Director of Planning and Government Services, at mbeatty@negrc.org or (706) 369-5650.

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

1w


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NOVEMBER 11, 2022

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► December 6, 2022, 2:00 p.m. – Festival Hall, 201 N. Main Street, Greensboro GA 30642

|  <div>             NEGRC: Regional Plan Update<br/>             Listening Session #3: December 6, 2022 – 2:00 p.m.<br/>             Festival Hall - Greensboro, 201 N Main St, Greensboro, GA 30642           </div> |                             |                          |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| NAME  | County or City of Residence | EMAIL                    |
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| Sara Kaminski   | Clarke                      | skaminski@negrc.org      |
| Jon McBrayer  | Cobb                        | jmcbrayer@negrc.org      |
| Phillip Jones   | Clarke                      | pjones@negrc.org         |
| Carol Flante  | Jackson                     | cflante@negrc.org        |
| Beth Eavenson (Virtual)   | Elbert                      | beth.eavenson@dca.ga.gov |
|   |                             |                          |
|   |                             |                          |
|   |                             |                          |
|   |                             |                          |



**Regional Listening Session 3**  
**Topic: Land Use**  
**Tuesday, December 6, 2:00–4:00 PM**  
**@**  
**Festival Hall**  
**201 N. Main Street, Greensboro GA 30642**  
  
**HYBRID MEETING**

negrc\_pgs Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

negrc\_pgs The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) will host the final of three regional input meetings for the update to the 12-county area's regional plan. The purpose of the meeting is to engage with stakeholders and the public to discuss regional development maps and corresponding land use strategies across the region. A Regional Plan is very similar to a local government's comprehensive plan; the plan will develop needs and opportunities based on the input we receive and a work program for the Regional Commission to address those needs.

The input meeting will take place at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 6, 2022 at Festival Hall in Greensboro (201 North Main Street, Greensboro, GA 30642). There will be a hybrid (virtual) option that will be posted to the NEGRC website at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. For questions, please contact Mark Beatty, Director of Planning and Government Services, at mbeatty@negrc.org or (706) 369-5450.

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

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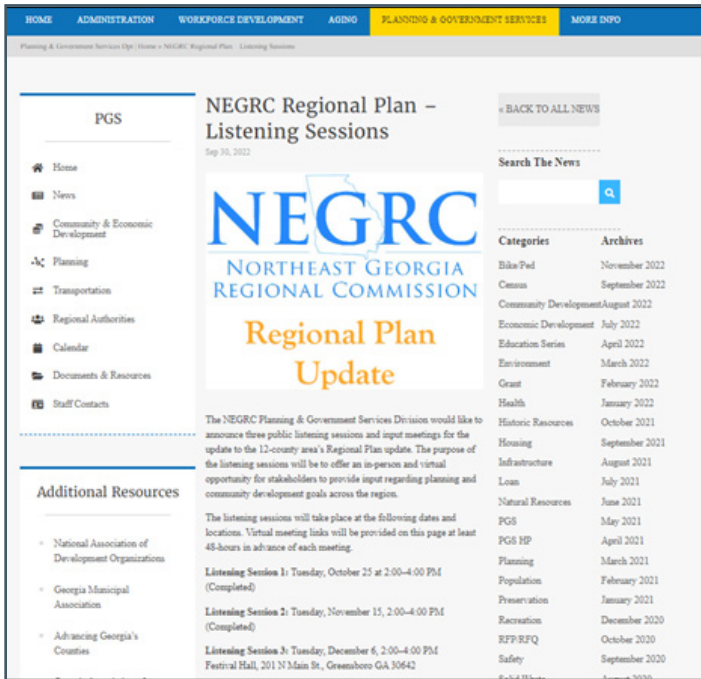
DECEMBER 4, 2022

Add a comment...

## Website Information

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's website ([www.negrc.org](http://www.negrc.org)) served as the main online conduit of information for the regional plan update. The site served as an easily accessible portal to check the plan's process, get project contact information, and access virtual links for listening sessions.

Staff also shared notices for all meetings on the NEGRC PGS Instagram page a week prior to each meeting.



NEGRC website listing of Regional Plan listening sessions

## Online Survey

An online survey was developed and deployed to gather responses from targeted stakeholders across the region to provide more detailed input on various elements and topics. Out of 185 stakeholders, 54 people from 34 local jurisdictions provided input for the online survey. The link to the survey was shared directly by email with stakeholders and made available for four weeks. An overview of survey respondents is provided below.

### County Respondent Works In

|               |    |            |           |
|---------------|----|------------|-----------|
| Athens-Clarke | 2  | Morgan     | 8         |
| Barrow        | 4  | Newton     | 4         |
| Elbert        | 3  | Oconee     | 7         |
| Greene        | 3  | Oglethorpe | 3         |
| Jackson       | 10 | Walton     | 5         |
| Jasper        | 4  | <N/A>      | 1         |
| Madison       | 0  |            |           |
| <b>Total</b>  |    |            | <b>54</b> |

### County Government Officials Respondents

|               |   |            |   |
|---------------|---|------------|---|
| Athens-Clarke | 1 | Madison    | 0 |
| Barrow        | 2 | Morgan     | 1 |
| Elbert        | 1 | Newton     | 0 |
| Greene        | 1 | Oconee     | 3 |
| Jackson       | 5 | Oglethorpe | 2 |
| Jasper        | 1 | Walton     | 1 |

### City Government Officials Respondents

|   |   |                   |   |
|---|---|-------------------|---|
| Bethlehem                                   | 1 | Maxeys            | 1 |
| Between                                     | 1 | Monroe            | 1 |
| Bogart                                      | 2 | Monticello        | 3 |
| Braselton                                   | 2 | Newborn           | 2 |
| Commerce                                    | 1 | North High Shoals | 1 |
| Elberton                                    | 2 | Pendergrass       | 1 |
| Good Hope                                   | 1 | Porterdale        | 1 |
| Greensboro                                  | 1 | Rutledge          | 1 |
| Hoschton; Jefferson; Arcade; Talmo; Statham | 1 | Siloam            | 1 |
| Jersey                                      | 1 | Watkinsville      | 1 |
| Madison                                     | 6 | Winder            | 1 |
| Mansfield                                   | 1 | Winterville       | 1 |

### City or County Official

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| City Government Officials   | 35 |
| County Government Officials | 18 |
| <N/A>                       | 1  |

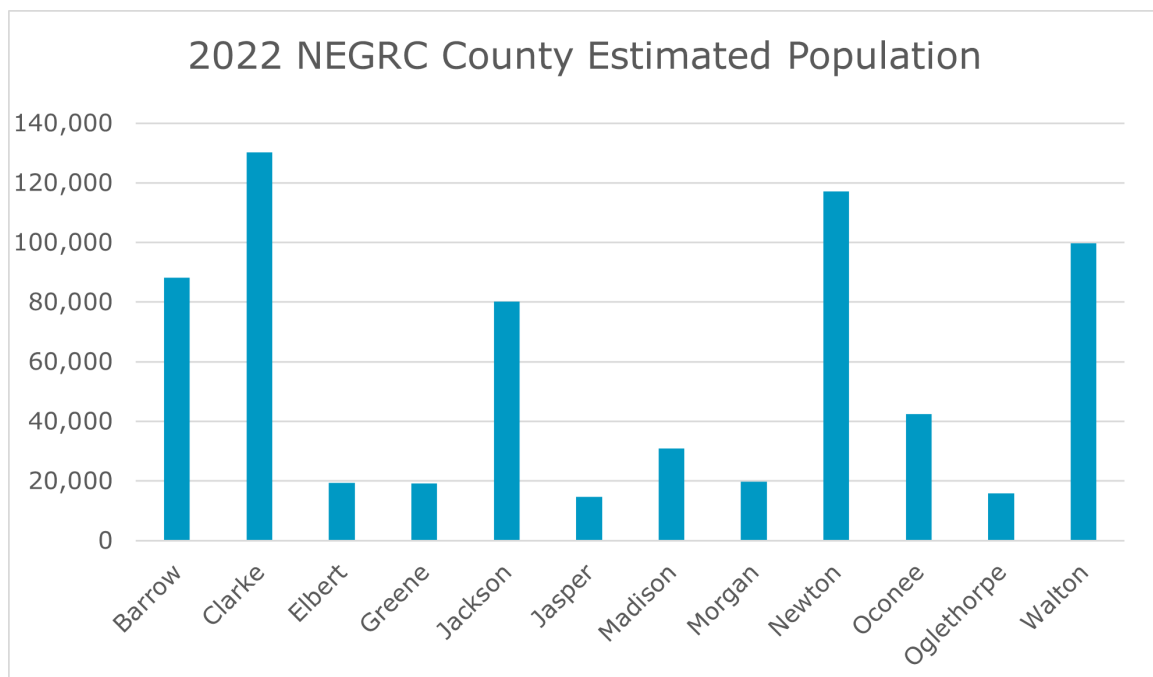
Supporting Data

|                                       |           |   |           |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|---|-----------|
| <b>Population.....</b>                | <b>56</b> | <b>Community Facilities and Services ...</b>  | <b>74</b> |
| Total Population .....                | 56        | <b>Intergovernmental Coordination .....</b>   | <b>74</b> |
| Age Distribution.....                 | 57        | Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority .....  | 74        |
| Race and Ethnicity .....              | 57        | Appalachian Regional Commission .....   | 75        |
| Income.....                           | 58        | Southern Crescent Regional Commission ..  | 75        |
| <b>Economic Development .....</b>     | <b>59</b> | Non-Attainment Designations .....   | 76        |
| Economic Base .....                   | 59        | Water Planning Regions .....  | 76        |
| Labor Force.....                      | 60        | Northeast Georgia Bicycling and Walking ..  | 77        |
| Economic Resources.....               | 62        | Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste<br>Management Authority .....                | 77        |
| Economic Trends.....                  | 65        | Northeast Georgia Resource Management<br>Plan for Regionally Important Resources... | 77        |
| <b>Housing .....</b>                  | <b>66</b> | <b>Transportation System.....</b>   | <b>78</b> |
| Regional Housing Types and Mixes..... | 66        | Road Network .....  | 78        |
| Housing Age and Vacancy .....         | 66        | Safety .....  | 79        |
| Regional Housing Cost.....            | 68        | Alternative Modes .....   | 80        |
| Housing Deficiencies .....            | 69        | Railroads, Trucking, and Airports .....   | 82        |
| Special Housing Needs .....           | 70        |   |           |
| Transportation and Housing Costs..... | 73        |   |           |

## Population

### Total Population

- ▶ The total population increased for the region from 585,627 in 2010 to 677,013 in 2022, a 15.6% population change.
- ▶ According to the Governor's Office, Planning and Budget population growth for the region will increase 14.2% in 2020 to 2030 but decrease to 11.5% in 2030 to 2040.
- ▶ The projected growth rate for the region (27.4%) from 2020–2040 is higher than the state (18%).
- ▶ According to 2019 state-to-state migration flow data, the top five states from which people are migrating into Georgia are Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, and Texas. Nationwide, the top five States which people are migrating into are Florida, Texas, California, North Carolina, and Georgia (Source: U.S. Census Bureau).



Source: Office of Planning and Budget Projection

### Historical and Projected Population

|               | 1990        | 2000        | 2010        | 2020        | 2030        | 2040        |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Region</b> | 328,223     | 438,300     | 585,627     | 657,220     | 752,809     | 839,636     |
| <b>State</b>  | 6,478,216   | 8,186,453   | 9,687,653   | 10,711,908  | 11,742,622  | 12,632,994  |
| <b>Nation</b> | 248,709,873 | 281,421,906 | 308,745,538 | 331,449,520 | 355,100,000 | 373,500,000 |

Sources: Census 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020, ACS 2016–2020, Georgia Office of Planning and Budget 2020

### Historical and Projected Population Growth Rate

|               | 1990–2000 | 2000–2010 | 2010–2020 | 2020–2030 | 2030–2040 | 1990–2040     |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| <b>Region</b> | 33.5%     | 33.6%     | 12.2%     | 19.1%     | 11.5%     | <b>155.8%</b> |
| <b>State</b>  | 26.4%     | 18.3%     | 10.5%     | 9.6%      | 7.6%      | <b>95.0%</b>  |
| <b>Nation</b> | 13.2%     | 9.7%      | 7.3%      | 7.1%      | 5.2%      | <b>50.1%</b>  |

Sources: Census 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020, ACS 2016–2020, Georgia Office of Planning and Budget 2020



## 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 | 38,297  | 42,648  | 45,832  |
|                  | 7.3%   | 7.0%   | 7.3%   | 5.8%    | 5.6%    | 5.5%    |
| <b>5–9</b>       | 46,734 | 62,732 | 72,937 | 41,832  | 41,815  | 47,690  |
|                  | 14.2%  | 14.3   | 12.5   | 6.3%    | 5.5%    | 5.7%    |
| <b>10–14</b>     | 13,513 | 17,560 | 32,632 | 44,375  | 44,143  | 49,171  |
|                  | 4.1%   | 4.0%   | 5.6%   | 6.7%    | 5.9%    | 5.9%    |
| <b>15–19</b>     | 22,918 | 27,496 | 29,198 | 48,708  | 51,718  | 52,212  |
|                  | 7.0%   | 6.3%   | 5.0%   | 7.4%    | 6.9%    | 6.2%    |
| <b>20–24</b>     | 27,098 | 32,259 | 46,602 | 53,958  | 49,338  | 49,543  |
|                  | 8.3%   | 7.4%   | 8.0%   | 8.2%    | 6.6%    | 5.9%    |
| <b>25–34</b>     | 54,803 | 66,828 | 79,913 | 87,433  | 106,172 | 106,804 |
|                  | 16.7%  | 15.2%  | 13.6%  | 13.3%   | 14.1%   | 12.7%   |
| <b>35–44</b>     | 46,277 | 65,915 | 78,276 | 82,604  | 95,346  | 112,993 |
|                  | 14.1%  | 15.0%  | 13.4%  | 12.5%   | 12.7%   | 13.5%   |
| <b>45–54</b>     | 32,655 | 54,541 | 75,223 | 82,606  | 89,237  | 101,268 |
|                  | 9.9%   | 12.4%  | 12.8%  | 12.5%   | 11.9%   | 12.0%   |
| <b>55–64</b>     | 24,724 | 36,763 | 61,371 | 78,728  | 87,115  | 96,000  |
|                  | 7.5%   | 8.4%   | 10.5%  | 11.9%   | 11.6%   | 11.4%   |
| <b>65+</b>       | 35,651 | 43,730 | 66,752 | 100,466 | 145,227 | 178,123 |
|                  | 10.9%  | 10.0%  | 11.4%  | 15.2%   | 19.3%   | 21.2%   |

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020. Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2020 Series

## Race and Ethnicity

- "White Alone" is the only racial/ethnic category that has decreased since 2010 and is projected to continue to decrease through 2027.
- The "Other" category increased since 2010 and could be due to the inclusion of "One or more races" options. The Hispanic Origin or Latino category is growing as well, but the numbers are not included in the total percentage of race and ethnicity.

### Regional Racial and Ethnic Composition 2010–2027

|  | 2010  | 2020  | 2027  | Difference   |
|--|-------|-------|-------|--------------|
| <b>White Alone</b>                                   | 71.6% | 65.4% | 64.2% | <b>-7.4%</b> |
| <b>Black or African American Alone</b>               | 21.4% | 21.6% | 21.7% | <b>+0.3%</b> |
| <b>American Indian Alone and Alaska Native Alone</b> | 0.2%  | 0.4%  | 0.4%  | <b>+0.3%</b> |
| <b>Asian or Pacific Islander Alone</b>               | 2.0%  | 2.5%  | 2.5%  | <b>+0.5%</b> |
| <b>Other</b>   | 4.6%  | 10.2% | 10.5% | <b>+5.9%</b> |
| <b>Latino or Hispanic Origin</b>                     | 6.1%  | 8.0%  | 8.2%  | <b>+2.1%</b> |

Source: ACS 2016–2020 ESRI BAO

## 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 59% in 2022 to \$67,470. While still below the state figures numerically, the average Median Household Income for Northeast Georgia counties increased by 56% from 2000 to 2022. Projections demonstrate that median household income will increase from \$61,871 in 2022 to \$75,320 by 2027 for the region, and from \$67,470 in 2022 to \$80,470 in 2027 for the state.
- ▶ Poverty estimates indicate that Clarke County has the highest percentage of total population in poverty at 21.5% followed by Elbert County at 19.2% (SAIPE 2021).

### Regional Median Household Income Projections

|               | 1990     | 2000     | 2010     | 2022     | 2027     |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Region</b> | \$25,566 | \$39,550 | \$45,897 | \$61,871 | \$75,320 |

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2010 and ACS 2016–2020, ESRI BAO

### Median Household Income by County

| Jurisdiction               | 2000     | 2010     | 2022     |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Barrow</b>              | \$45,019 | \$48,958 | \$62,990 |
| <b>Clarke</b>              | \$28,403 | \$34,253 | \$40,363 |
| <b>Elbert</b>              | \$28,724 | \$30,543 | \$39,323 |
| <b>Greene</b>              | \$33,479 | \$38,513 | \$57,880 |
| <b>Jackson</b>             | \$40,439 | \$51,506 | \$68,307 |
| <b>Jasper</b>              | \$39,890 | \$42,081 | \$52,409 |
| <b>Madison</b>             | \$36,347 | \$41,343 | \$51,142 |
| <b>Morgan</b>              | \$36,347 | \$45,817 | \$68,669 |
| <b>Newton</b>              | \$40,249 | \$52,361 | \$59,178 |
| <b>Oconee</b>              | \$55,211 | \$74,352 | \$95,064 |
| <b>Oglethorpe</b>          | \$35,578 | \$39,319 | \$52,816 |
| <b>Walton</b>              | \$46,479 | \$51,721 | \$65,491 |
| <b>Northeast GA Region</b> | \$39,550 | \$45,897 | \$61,871 |
| <b>Georgia</b>             | \$42,433 | \$49,347 | \$61,224 |

Sources: Census Bureau 2000, 2010, ACS 2016–2020, ESRI BAO

### 2021 Poverty Estimates by County

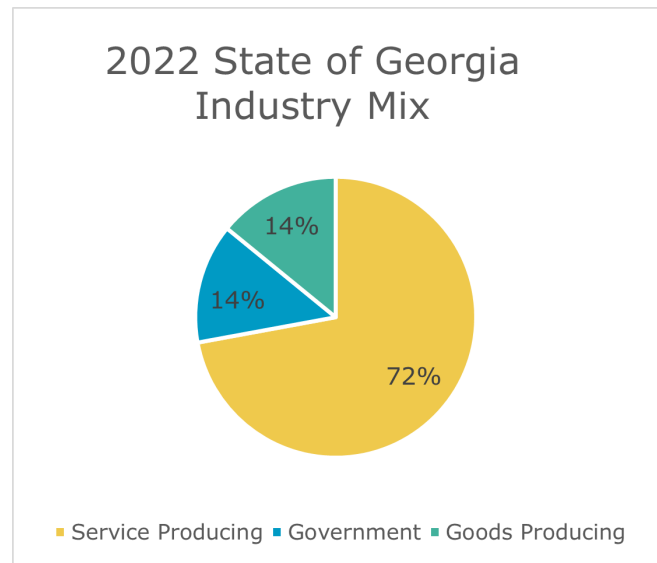
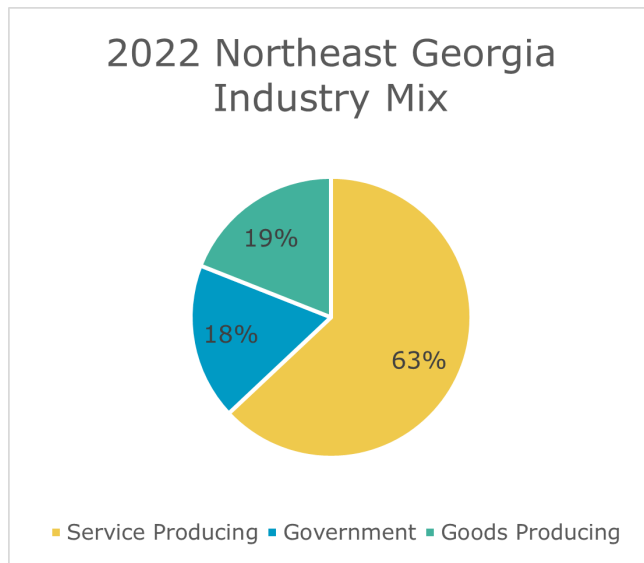
|                   | Total Population |         | Children Under 18 |         |
|-------------------|------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
|                   | Number           | Percent | Number            | Percent |
| <b>Barrow</b>     | <b>8,262</b>     | 9.6%    | <b>2,911</b>      | 13.3%   |
| <b>Clarke</b>     | <b>25,418</b>    | 21.5%   | <b>5,418</b>      | 25.4%   |
| <b>Elbert</b>     | <b>3,710</b>     | 19.2%   | <b>1,296</b>      | 30.3%   |
| <b>Greene</b>     | <b>2,716</b>     | 14.0%   | <b>902</b>        | 26.4%   |
| <b>Jackson</b>    | <b>9,491</b>     | 11.9%   | <b>2,659</b>      | 13.3%   |
| <b>Jasper</b>     | <b>2,232</b>     | 14.7%   | <b>726</b>        | 20.8%   |
| <b>Madison</b>    | <b>4,611</b>     | 15.1%   | <b>1,584</b>      | 22.4%   |
| <b>Morgan</b>     | <b>2,222</b>     | 10.9%   | <b>828</b>        | 18.0%   |
| <b>Newton</b>     | <b>14,185</b>    | 12.5%   | <b>6,197</b>      | 21.3%   |
| <b>Oconee</b>     | <b>2,577</b>     | 6.0%    | <b>709</b>        | 6.3%    |
| <b>Oglethorpe</b> | <b>2,010</b>     | 13.4%   | <b>621</b>        | 20.0%   |
| <b>Walton</b>     | <b>10,602</b>    | 10.7%   | <b>3,575</b>      | 15.1%   |

Sources: Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) 2021

## Economic Development

### Economic Base

- ▶ In 2022, the NEGRC collaborated with representatives from member governments to develop the most recent Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).



Source: Georgia DOL Labor Market Explorer Industry Mix – Q2 2022

### 2022 Employed Population 16+ by Industry

| Northeast Georgia Region      |         | Georgia                       |         |
|-------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|---------|
| Industry                      | Percent | Industry                      | Percent |
| Agriculture/Mining            | 1.1%    | Agriculture/Mining            | 0.9%    |
| Construction                  | 8.1%    | Construction                  | 7.0%    |
| Manufacturing                 | 12.5%   | Manufacturing                 | 10.2%   |
| Wholesale Trade               | 3.3%    | Wholesale Trade               | 2.8%    |
| Retail Trade                  | 11.6%   | Retail Trade                  | 10.6%   |
| Transportation/Utilities      | 6.9%    | Transportation/Utilities      | 8.0%    |
| Information                   | 1.4%    | Information                   | 2.3%    |
| Finance/Insurance/Real estate | 4.7%    | Finance/Insurance/Real estate | 6.6%    |
| Services                      | 46.2%   | Services                      | 46.8%   |
| Public Administration         | 4.3%    | Public Administration         | 4.8%    |

Source: ACS 2016–2020 ESRI BAO

- ▶ 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 (2022)

|                                | 18–24 Years | 25–34 Years | 35–44 Years | 45–64 Years | 65+ Years | All Ages     |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| <b>Some High School</b>        | 14.1%       | 13.0%       | 11.2%       | 12.6%       | 16.3%     | <b>13.2%</b> |
| <b>High School Diploma/GED</b> | 31.0%       | 29.1%       | 33.0%       | 34.2%       | 32.5%     | <b>32.3%</b> |
| <b>Some College</b>            | 43.0%       | 20.5%       | 21.3%       | 19.9%       | 14.4%     | <b>23.5%</b> |
| <b>Associates Degree</b>       | 2.8%        | 6.7%        | 7.1%        | 6.5%        | 3.1%      | <b>5.6%</b>  |
| <b>Bachelor’s Degree</b>       | 6.5%        | 17.7%       | 14.8%       | 11.8%       | 9.3%      | <b>12.2%</b> |
| <b>Post Graduate Degree</b>    | 0.6%        | 8.9%        | 9.0%        | 9.9%        | 8.6%      | <b>7.8%</b>  |

Source: Georgia DOL Market Explorer Education of Labor Force 2022

### Employment Wage Statistics (2021–2022)

|                          | Average Hourly Wage | Average Weekly Wage | Average Annual Wage |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Northeast Georgia</b> | \$24.17             | \$967               | \$50,284            |
| <b>Georgia</b>           | \$30.55             | \$1,222             | \$63,544            |
| <b>United States</b>     | \$32.35             | \$1,294             | \$67,288            |

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

### Northeast Georgia Per Capita Income

| 2016     | 2017     | 2018     | 2019     | 2020     | 2021     |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| \$37,803 | \$40,298 | \$42,524 | \$43,237 | \$46,374 | \$49,954 |

Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile



## Northeast Georgia Largest Employers (2022)

| Company or Organization        |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Amazon Services Inc.           | Publix Super Market Inc. |
| Athens Regional Medical Center | St. Mary's Hospital      |
| Carvana, LLC                   | The Kroger Company       |
| HG Georgia Merchants Inc.      | University of Georgia    |
| Pilgrim's Pride Corporation    | Walmart                  |

Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile

## Unemployment Rate

|                          | % 2020 | % 2021 | % Change     |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------------|
| <b>Northeast Georgia</b> | 5.6    | 3.3    | <b>-41.1</b> |
| <b>Georgia</b>           | 6.5    | 3.9    | <b>-40.0</b> |
| <b>United States</b>     | 8.1    | 5.3    | <b>-34.6</b> |

Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile

## Commuter Inflow/Outflow 2019

| County            | Inflow | Outflow | Live & Work |
|-------------------|--------|---------|-------------|
| <b>Barrow</b>     | 14,058 | 32,042  | 5,715       |
| <b>Clarke</b>     | 45,249 | 24,218  | 23,242      |
| <b>Elbert</b>     | 2,380  | 5,676   | 3,197       |
| <b>Greene</b>     | 3,964  | 4,711   | 2,372       |
| <b>Jackson</b>    | 20,774 | 21,701  | 7,225       |
| <b>Jasper</b>     | 1,186  | 3,612   | 1,182       |
| <b>Madison</b>    | 2,339  | 10,668  | 1,676       |
| <b>Morgan</b>     | 4,539  | 6,170   | 2,372       |
| <b>Newton</b>     | 17,670 | 37,304  | 9,754       |
| <b>Oconee</b>     | 10,930 | 12,709  | 3,639       |
| <b>Oglethorpe</b> | 1,096  | 6,104   | 818         |
| <b>Walton</b>     | 14,101 | 33,300  | 8,454       |
| <b>Region</b>     | 83,318 | 143,532 | 124,614     |

Source: US Census, On the Map

## **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. However, a regional tourism study with recommendations has been completed and is available on the NEGRC website, [www.negrc.org](http://www.negrc.org).

### *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:** Elbert (#16)
- ▶ **Tier 2:** Clarke (#72), Newton (#73), Madison (#89)
- ▶ **Tier 3:** Jasper (#116), Greene (#122), Oglethorpe (#126), Walton (#132)
- ▶ **Tier 4:** Morgan (#144), Barrow (#146), Jackson (#149), Oconee (#158)

*Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Job Tax Credit Rankings, 2023*

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, childcare 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 State 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:

- ▶ City of Covington (Expires 2032)
- ▶ City of Winder (Expires 2025)

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

### *Northeast Georgia Federal Opportunity Zones*

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)

### *Northeast Georgia Rural Zones*

Recognizing that many rural downtown areas have experienced varying levels of economic distress, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) worked with the Georgia General Assembly to secure passage of a bill calling for the development of "Rural Zones." Rural Zone designation allows a company within the designated area to claim tax credits for creating jobs, upgrading its building, or buying/constructing a new facility. All tax credits can be layered and used at the same time, but a business is not eligible for credits unless it creates two or more full-time-equivalent (FTE) positions. A Rural Zone designation has a duration of five years, and there are ten designees every year. Communities with historic commercial districts that may be underperforming should utilize the Rural Zone. The local government must have a master plan identifying existing assets in a downtown as a prerequisite before applying for the Rural Zone designation. Rural Zones currently exist in the following Northeast Georgia communities:

- ▶ City of Comer (Expires 2027)
- ▶ City of Greensboro (Expires 2023)
- ▶ City of Monticello (Expires 2023)

### *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 an 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 and Stanton Springs North.
- ▶ **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 Partnerships*

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.

## College and Universities

### The University of Georgia

- ▶ Location(s): Athens (main)
- ▶ Enrollment: 40,118 (Fall 2021, All Campuses)
- ▶ Workforce Total: 11,097 (Fall 2021, All Campuses)
- ▶ Workforce FT: 10,397
- ▶ Workforce PT: 700
- ▶ 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 (satellite of Emory University)
- ▶ Enrollment: 1,067 (AY 2021)
- ▶ 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): Covington (satellite)
- ▶ Enrollment: 18,500 (Fall 2019)
- ▶ Serves the dual enrollment, international, online, transfer, and first-time associate degree seeking students.

### Athens Technical College

- ▶ Location(s): Athens (main) and Elberton, Greensboro, and Monroe (satellite)
- ▶ Enrollment: 4,294 (Fall 2021)
- ▶ 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: 7,501 (AY 2022, 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: 3,819 (AY 2021)
- ▶ 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.

### Piedmont University

- ▶ Location(s): Athens (satellite)
- ▶ Enrollment: 1900+
- ▶ Offers baccalaureate, masters, specialists, doctoral, and professional certifications. Programs focus on Art, Education, Management, Marketing, Nursing, and Business Administration. Provides students with flexible options to take classes at satellite campuses and offers online classes.

### University of North Georgia

- ▶ Location(s): Oconee Campus (satellite)
- ▶ Enrollment: 2400+
- ▶ Offers dual enrollment and associate degrees for traditional and online students. Programs and pathways focus on Behavioral Sciences, Education, Business Administration, and General Studies.

### Southern Crescent Technical College

- ▶ Location(s): Monticello (satellite)
- ▶ Enrollment: 11,140 (AY 2021 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): Winder and Commerce (satellite)
- ▶ Enrollment: 5,086 (AY 2021, 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



## ***Economic Trends***

### ***Developments of Regional Impact (DRI)***

Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) submissions have increased significantly since 2017. From 2018–2022, the NEGRC received 178 DRI submissions—an increase of nearly 400% compared with the 36 applications submitted from 2013–2017—with 57 submissions in 2019 alone. The increase in submissions demonstrates the amount of growth interest that has occurred throughout the region in the past three–four years. The DRIs have been primarily industrial, wholesale and distribution, mixed-use, or residential neighborhoods.

### ***Summary of Trends***

There were roughly 204,442 jobs in the region in 2017, and in 2022 the Georgia Department of Labor estimates there are 224,306 jobs in the region, a 9.7% increase in the last five years. The number of establishments increased 6.6% from 14,296 to 15,241 between 2021 and 2022. Employment opportunities also increased 5.6% from 212,477 to 224,306 between 2021 and 2022. The only industries that saw a decrease in employment were financial activities and Professional and Business Services.

### **Industry Rankings for 2017 and 2022**

| <b>Northeast Georgia Region</b> |                                   |                                      |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Rank</b>                     | <b>2017</b>                       | <b>2022</b>                          |
| <b>1</b>                        | Manufacturing                     | Retail Trade                         |
| <b>2</b>                        | Retail Trade                      | Manufacturing                        |
| <b>3</b>                        | Local Government                  | Local Government                     |
| <b>4</b>                        | Accommodation and Food Services   | Accommodation and Food Services      |
| <b>5</b>                        | Health Care and Social Assistance | Healthcare and Social Assistance     |
| <b>6</b>                        | State Government                  | Transportation and Warehousing       |
| <b>7</b>                        | Admin, Support, Waste Mgmt.       | Construction                         |
| <b>8</b>                        | Wholesale Trade                   | Wholesale Trade                      |
| <b>9</b>                        | Construction                      | Admin, Support, Waste Mgmt.          |
| <b>10</b>                       | Transportation and Warehousing    | Other Services (except public admin) |

*Source: Georgia DOL Market Explorer Education of Labor Force 2022*

## Housing

In 2022, the NEGRC completed a Housing Guidelines study that outlines housing needs and opportunities throughout Northeast Georgia.

### Regional Housing Types and Mixes

#### Regional Total Housing Units, Owner and Renter Occupied

| Unit Type                  | Owner-Occupied |         | Renter-Occupied |         | Total          |              |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|----------------|--------------|
|                            | Number         | Percent | Number          | Percent | Number         | Percent      |
| <b>1 (detached)</b>        | 132,557        | 89.0%   | 31,138          | 41.7%   | <b>163,695</b> | <b>73.2%</b> |
| <b>1 (attached)</b>        | 1,919          | 1.3%    | 4,314           | 5.8%    | <b>6,233</b>   | <b>2.8%</b>  |
| <b>2 units</b>             | 181            | 0.1%    | 7,493           | 10.0%   | <b>7,674</b>   | <b>3.4%</b>  |
| <b>3 or 4 units</b>        | 191            | 0.1%    | 5,649           | 7.6%    | <b>5,840</b>   | <b>2.6%</b>  |
| <b>5 to 9 units</b>        | 232            | 0.2%    | 5,741           | 7.7%    | <b>5,973</b>   | <b>2.7%</b>  |
| <b>10 to 19 units</b>      | 203            | 0.1%    | 5,456           | 7.3%    | <b>5,659</b>   | <b>2.5%</b>  |
| <b>20 to 49 units</b>      | 96             | 0.1%    | 3,268           | 4.4%    | <b>3,364</b>   | <b>1.5%</b>  |
| <b>50 or more units</b>    | 34             | 0.02%   | 3,178           | 4.3%    | <b>3,212</b>   | <b>1.4%</b>  |
| <b>Mobile home</b>         | 13,356         | 9.0%    | 8,366           | 11.2%   | <b>21,722</b>  | <b>9.7%</b>  |
| <b>Boat, RV, Van, etc.</b> | 142            | 0.1%    | 111             | 0.1%    | <b>253</b>     | <b>0.1%</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>               | 148,911        | 100.0%  | 74,714          | 100.0%  | <b>223,625</b> | 100.0%       |

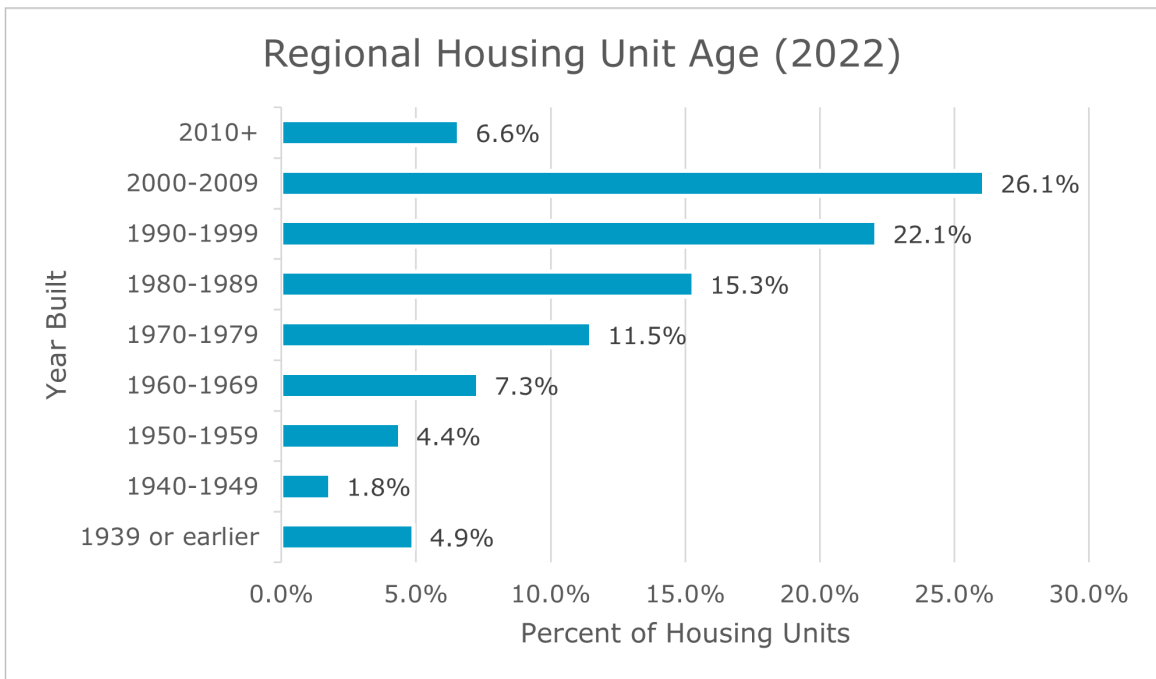
Source: ACS 2015–2019 ESRI BAO

### Housing Age and Vacancy

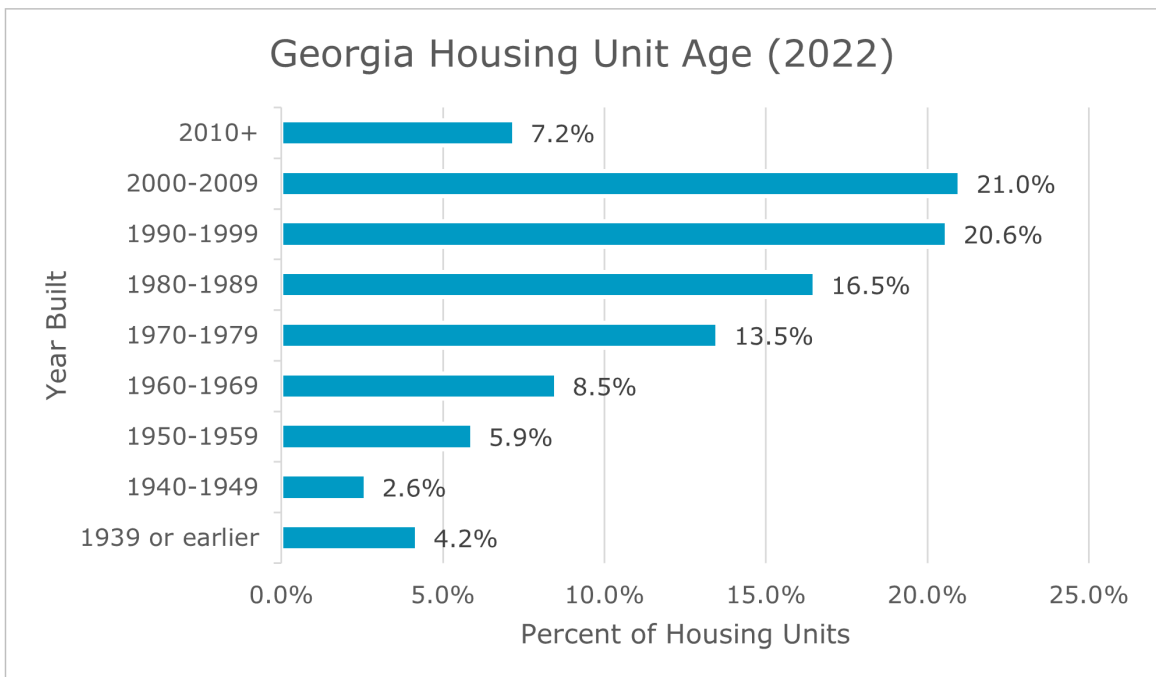
#### Percent Vacant Housing Units (2022)

|                | 2010           |               | 2022           |               |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
|                | Renter Vacancy | Total Vacancy | Renter Vacancy | Total Vacancy |
| <b>Region</b>  | 8.1%           | 15.5%         | 1%             | 8.5%          |
| <b>Georgia</b> | 10.9%          | 13.7%         | 2.2%           | 11.5%         |

Source: ACS 2016–2020 ESRI BAO



*Source: ACS 2016–2020 ESRI BAO*



*Source: ACS 2016–2020 ESRI BAO*

## Regional Housing Cost

- ▶ Housing prices increased at a record level in 2021–2022, furthering the gap between median household income and the median home value. Affordable housing and attainable housing have been topics of discussion at every Comprehensive Plan Update meeting in the past few years and will be an ongoing discussion for the foreseeable future.
- ▶ The region's median home value in 2020 was \$187,646, and the median household income was \$57,751. The highest average home values are in Oconee County (\$297,000), while the lowest average home values are in Elbert County (\$93,000). The region's counties also differ considerably in the ratio of home value to median household income, which can be used to measure housing affordability for the average county resident. For example, although the average home value in Greene County and Oconee County are similar, the value of a home in Greene County is approximately 5 times higher than the median household income, while the same ratio is only 3.32 in Oconee County.

### Median Household Income and Home Value by County

| Jurisdiction                    | Median Household Income 2020 | Median Home Value 2020 | Ratio of Median Home Value to Median Household Income |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| <b>Northeast Georgia Region</b> | \$57,751                     | \$187,646              | 3.25  |
| <b>Barrow</b>                   | \$67,759                     | \$167,208              | 2.47  |
| <b>Clarke</b>                   | \$42,909                     | \$193,203              | 4.50  |
| <b>Elbert</b>                   | \$42,142                     | \$93,282               | 2.21  |
| <b>Greene</b>                   | \$58,630                     | \$294,824              | 5.03  |
| <b>Jackson</b>                  | \$72,403                     | \$197,921              | 2.73  |
| <b>Jasper</b>                   | \$42,711                     | \$166,186              | 3.89  |
| <b>Madison</b>                  | \$54,783                     | \$168,339              | 3.07  |
| <b>Morgan</b>                   | \$53,746                     | \$260,682              | 4.85  |
| <b>Newton</b>                   | \$58,246                     | \$166,073              | 2.85  |
| <b>Oconee</b>                   | \$89,434                     | \$296,785              | 3.32  |
| <b>Oglethorpe</b>               | \$47,765                     | \$150,000              | 3.14  |
| <b>Walton</b>                   | \$65,849                     | \$209,153              | 3.18  |

Source: ACS 2015–2019 ESRI BAO

### Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage (2022)

| Monthly Cost Percentage   | Northeast Georgia Region |                             | Georgia             |                             |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
|   | Total Housing Units      | Percentage of Housing Units | Total Housing Units | Percentage of Housing Units |
| <b>Monthly owner costs as a percentage of household income in past 12 months (with Mortgage)</b>    |                          |                             |                     |                             |
| <b>Less than 10.0 Percent</b>   | 8,005                    | 5.1%                        | 145,082             | 5.9%                        |
| <b>10.0 to 14.9 Percent</b>   | 19,278                   | 12.4%                       | 315,850             | 12.9%                       |
| <b>15.0 to 19.9 Percent</b>   | 21,248                   | 13.7%                       | 330,152             | 13.5%                       |
| <b>20.0 to 24.9 Percent</b>   | 15,632                   | 10.0%                       | 240,145             | 9.8%                        |
| <b>25.0 to 29.9 Percent</b>   | 8,871                    | 5.7%                        | 145,616             | 5.9%                        |
| <b>30.0 to 34.9 Percent</b>   | 6,529                    | 4.2%                        | 95,239              | 3.9%                        |
| <b>35.0+ Percent</b>  | 18980                    | 12.2%                       | 301,198             | 12.2%                       |
| <b>Monthly owner costs as a percentage of household income in past 12 months (without Mortgage)</b> |                          |                             |                     |                             |
| <b>Less than 10.0 Percent</b>   | 28,226                   | 18.1%                       | 438,613             | 17.9%                       |
| <b>10.0 to 14.9 Percent</b>   | 10,447                   | 6.7%                        | 156,898             | 6.4%                        |
| <b>15.0 to 19.9 Percent</b>   | 5,532                    | 3.6%                        | 82,182              | 3.4%                        |
| <b>20.0 to 24.9 Percent</b>   | 3,105                    | 2.0%                        | 49,296              | 2.0%                        |
| <b>25.0 to 29.9 Percent</b>   | 2,337                    | 1.5%                        | 32,804              | 1.3%                        |
| <b>30.0 to 34.9 Percent</b>   | 1,278                    | 0.8%                        | 19,977              | 0.8%                        |
| <b>35.0+ Percent</b>  | 4,789                    | 3.1%                        | 73,790              | 3.0%                        |

Source: ACS 2016–2020 ESRI BAO



## Housing Deficiencies

- ▶ Housing deficiencies are defined by the American Community Survey (ACS) 2015–2019 estimates (5-year data) that is released by the U.S. Census Bureau in December 2020. This data is used to identify block groups that have concentrations of housing deficiencies and households living in poverty.

### Block Groups with High Housing Deficiencies

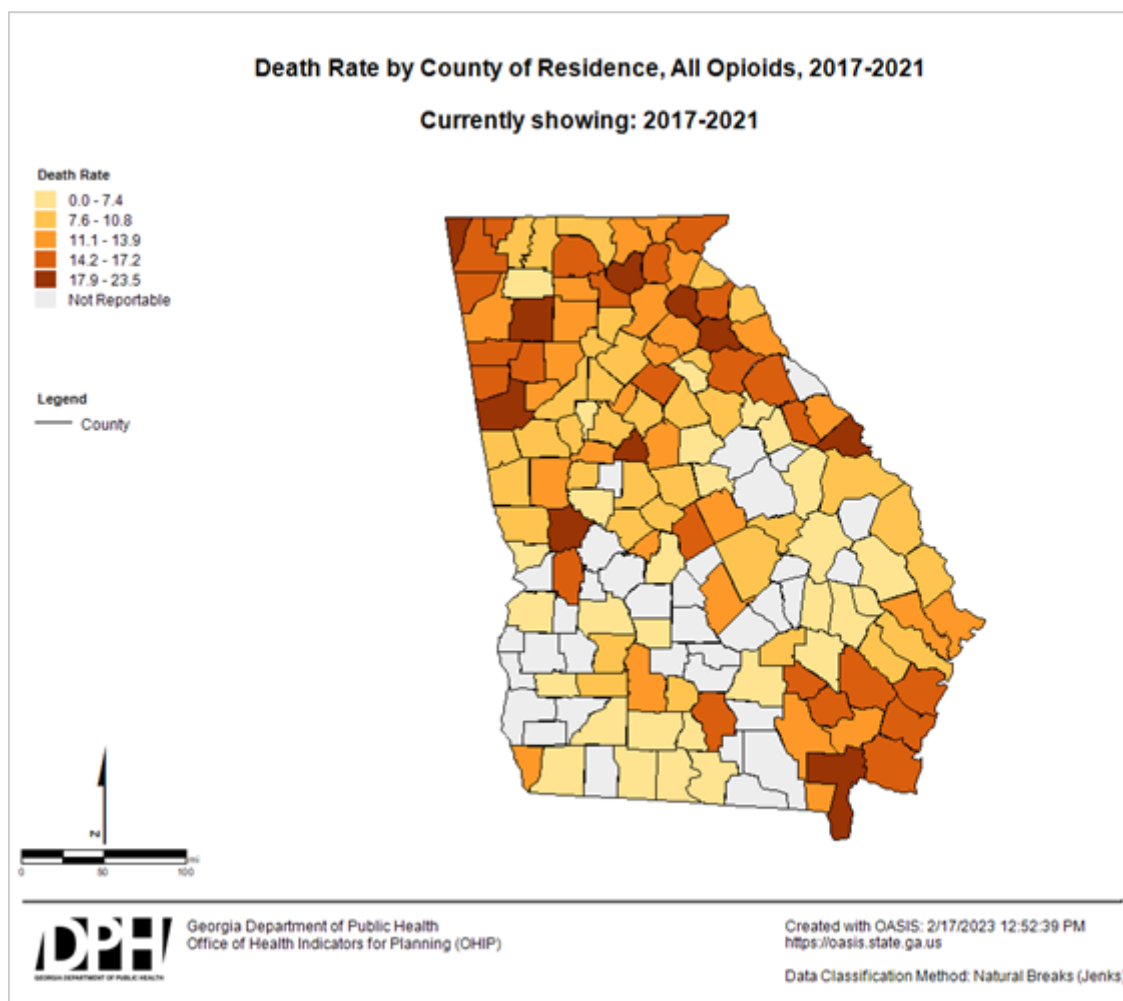
| Census Block Number | County        | Lacks Complete Kitchen (%) | Lacks Complete Plumbing (%) | Percent (%) At or Below 80% AMI |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>130590009002</b> | Athens-Clarke | 3                          | 10                          | 84                              |
| <b>130591307003</b> | Athens-Clarke | 2                          | 10                          | 63                              |
| <b>130131802041</b> | Barrow        | 9                          | 1                           | 89                              |
| <b>130131802052</b> | Barrow        | 8                          | 0                           | 92                              |
| <b>131050004003</b> | Elbert        | 14                         | 10                          | 67                              |
| <b>131050004005</b> | Elbert        | 16                         | 11                          | 55                              |
| <b>131339503031</b> | Greene        | 18                         | 18                          | 75                              |
| <b>131339502001</b> | Greene        | 13                         | 2                           | 64                              |
| <b>131570103002</b> | Jackson       | 7                          | 15                          | 73                              |
| <b>131570105001</b> | Jackson       | 15                         | 15                          | 82                              |
| <b>131590105002</b> | Jasper        | 12                         | 6                           | 67                              |
| <b>131950201002</b> | Madison       | 9                          | 9                           | 64                              |
| <b>131950203003</b> | Madison       | 13                         | 7                           | 56                              |
| <b>131950201003</b> | Madison       | 18                         | 13                          | 65                              |
| <b>132110103004</b> | Morgan        | 9                          | 18                          | 69                              |
| <b>132971108002</b> | Walton        | 8                          | 8                           | 75                              |
| <b>132971103003</b> | Walton        | 14                         | 0                           | 63                              |

Source: ACS 2015–2019 ESRI BAO

## Special Housing Needs

### Opioid Abuse

The State of Georgia is among the top eleven states with the most reported opioid related deaths from 2020–2021, but only 33 states reported opioid related deaths. 60 counties in Georgia have opioid death rates [Formula = (Number of deaths / Population) \* 100,000] at 11 or greater. In the northeast region, seven counties have death rates at 11 or greater. Those counties include Madison, Oglethorpe, Walton, Jackson, Barrow, Elbert, and Jasper. The endemic is an ongoing problem, but multiple state agencies offer resources that are available to those who need treatment or assistance with opioid addiction. To learn more about the resources available, please visit: <https://dph.georgia.gov/stopopioidaddiction>.



Source: Department of Public Health – OASIS Mapping Tool

### *Aging Residents*

According to the Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging (AAA), the five most needed services for older adults include the following:

- 1. Home-delivered meal services:** Hot, frozen, or 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. Personal care services:** Personal assistance, stand-by assistance, supervision, or cues.
- 4. 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.
- 5. Caregiving Program:** A provision of materials to relative caregivers raising children for purchase of such materials. Materials may include housing/shelter, transportation, utilities, food/meals, groceries, clothing, child safety items, incontinence supplies, cleaning supplies, school supplies, etc.

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.

### *Domestic Violence*

According to the Georgia Commission on Family Violence, from 2010–2019, 1,380 Georgia citizens lost their lives due to domestic violence. There are a variety of local and state resources available to survivors suffering from domestic violence. For more information, call the toll-free number 1-800-33-HAVEN.

## Regional Homelessness Analysis

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) performs a Point-in-Time (PIT) homeless count every other year to enumerate the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population on one night in January to provide a snapshot of homelessness in the state. DCA developed a statistical model for predicting the rate of unsheltered homelessness in each county in the Balance of State jurisdiction utilizing data collected in sample counties. Due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the most recent Point in Time count was performed in 2019. However, the Athens Homeless Coalition in Athens-Clarke County performed a local count in January 2021. The data from these two surveys for NEGRC counties are listed below.

### Northeast Georgia Point-in-Time (PIT) Homeless by County

| County                | Unsheltered Homeless Persons (UHP) | Unsheltered Veterans (UV) | Unsheltered Chronic (UC) | Sheltered Homeless Persons (SHP) | Total Homeless | Total Beds Available | PIT Utilization |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Barrow</b>         | 14                                 | 1                         | 1                        | 43                               | 57             | 55                   | 79%             |
| <b>Elbert</b>         | 1                                  | 0                         | 0                        | 0                                | 1              | 0                    | 0%              |
| <b>Greene</b>         | 8                                  | 0                         | 0                        | 3                                | 11             | 12                   | 25%             |
| <b>Jackson</b>        | 27                                 | 2                         | 2                        | 0                                | 27             | 0                    | 0%              |
| <b>Jasper</b>         | 0                                  | 0                         | 0                        | 0                                | 0              | 0                    | 0%              |
| <b>Madison</b>        | 7                                  | 1                         | 1                        | 0                                | 7              | 0                    | 0%              |
| <b>Morgan</b>         | 7                                  | 1                         | 1                        | 0                                | 7              | 0                    | 0%              |
| <b>Newton</b>         | 29                                 | 2                         | 3                        | 55                               | 84             | 65                   | 85%             |
| <b>Oconee</b>         | 18                                 | 7                         | 0                        | 0                                | 18             | 0                    | 0%              |
| <b>Oglethorpe</b>     | 0                                  | 0                         | 0                        | 0                                | 0              | 0                    | 0%              |
| <b>Walton</b>         | 18                                 | 1                         | 2                        | 0                                | 18             | 0                    | 0%              |
| <b>Athens-Clarke*</b> | 67                                 | --                        | 50                       | 143                              | 210            | 189                  | 76%             |

Source: 2019 Georgia Balance of State Continuum of Care Point-in-Time Homeless Count  
(\*homeless count self-reported by Athens-Clarke County, but not included in state dataset)

While ten of twelve Northeast Georgia counties are predicted to contain unsheltered homeless persons, eight counties lack facilities for homeless persons. Counties within the region should use this data to set a baseline goal for temporary emergency housing units available in each jurisdiction based on the PIT numbers for each jurisdiction.



### ***Transportation and Housing Costs***

The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) developed the H+T Affordability index to measure affordability by combining housing and transportation costs. The index sets affordability at 45%. This means that the index deems transportation and housing costs as affordable if the combined costs are lower than 45% of the household's monthly income.

These data demonstrate that many households in Northeast Georgia spend more than half of their incomes on housing and transportation costs. According to the index 84.9% and 66% of the residents for Oconee and Barrow County, respectively, spend 66% or more of their income on housing and transportation costs.

#### **Housing and Transportation Affordability Index**

| <b>County</b>     | <b>H+T cost less than 45%</b> | <b>H+T costs 45%–66%</b> | <b>H+T costs more than 66%</b> |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Barrow</b>     | 35.3%                         | 64.7%                    | 0.0%                           |
| <b>Clarke</b>     | 29.3%                         | 63.8%                    | 6.9%                           |
| <b>Elbert</b>     | 0.0%                          | 55.1%                    | 44.9%                          |
| <b>Greene</b>     | 7.0%                          | 57.2%                    | 35.7%                          |
| <b>Jackson</b>    | 29.0%                         | 71.0%                    | 0.0%                           |
| <b>Jasper</b>     | 64.4%                         | 35.6%                    | 0.0%                           |
| <b>Madison</b>    | 2.4%                          | 97.6%                    | 0.0%                           |
| <b>Morgan</b>     | 23.3%                         | 76.7%                    | 0.0%                           |
| <b>Newton</b>     | 52.0%                         | 48.0%                    | 0.0%                           |
| <b>Oconee</b>     | 0.0%                          | 15.1%                    | 84.9%                          |
| <b>Oglethorpe</b> | 0.0%                          | 100.0%                   | 0.0%                           |
| <b>Walton</b>     | 35.0%                         | 65.0%                    | 0.0%                           |

*Source: Housing and Transportation Index, 2019 ACS*

## Community Facilities and Services

### Northeast Georgia Community Facilities and Services Assessment by County

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

Source: Data were developed through qualitative analysis analyzing each county on an individual basis; The 2022 Broadband Availability Map 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. In 2023, construction is expected to being to increase reservoir capacity from 21 MGD to 42 MGD.

### ***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. NEGRRC 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:

- 1. Building Appalachian Businesses:** Strengthen and diversify the Region’s economy through inclusive economic development strategies and investments in entrepreneurship and business development.
- 2. Building Appalachia’s Workforce Ecosystem:** Expand and strengthen community systems (education, healthcare, housing, childcare, and others) that help Appalachians obtain a job, stay on the job, and advance along a financially sustaining career pathway. Critical Infrastructure: Invest in essential infrastructure—especially broadband; transportation, including the Appalachian Development Highway System; and water/wastewater systems
- 3. Building Appalachia’s Infrastructure:** Ensure that the residents and businesses of Appalachia have access to reliable, affordable, resilient, and energy efficient utilities and infrastructure in order to successfully live and work in the Region.
- 4. Building Regional Culture and Tourism:** Strengthen Appalachia’s community and economic development potential by preserving and investing in the Region’s local cultural heritage and natural 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.
- 5. Building Community Leaders and Capacity:** Invest in the capacity of local leaders, organizations, and communities to address local challenges by providing technical assistance and support to access resources, engage partners, identify strategies and tactics, and conduct effective planning and project execution.

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 FY23, Elbert has been designated as “At-risk,” Barrow and Madison are considered “Transitional,” and Jackson has been designated as “Competitive”.

### ***Southern Crescent Regional Commission***

The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) is an economic development partnership agency of the federal government and seven state governments, and was created in 2008 under the U.S. Farm Bill. Eight counties in the Northeast Georgia region are in the SCRC: Athens-Clarke County, Greene County, Jasper County, Morgan County, Newton County, Oconee County, Oglethorpe County, and Walton County. SCRC plans to invest in driving positive outcomes by implementing six strategic goals:

- 1.** Invest in Critical Infrastructure
- 2.** Improve Health and Support Services Access and Outcomes
- 3.** Strengthen Workforce Capacity
- 4.** Foster Entrepreneurial and Business Development Activities
- 5.** Expand Affordable Housing Stock and Access
- 6.** Promote Environmental Conservation, Preservation, and Access

SCRC compares three-year unemployment rates, per capita market income, and poverty rates from each SCRC County with national averages. Four economic status designations are then used to classify the counties: Distressed, Transitional, Attainment, and Isolated Areas of Distress. For FY23, Athens-Clarke County was classified as “Distressed”, Greene County, Jasper County, Newton County, Oglethorpe County, and Walton County were classified as “Transitional”, and Morgan County and Oconee County were classified as “Attainment.”

## 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 December 2022, there are no counties in the region listed under non-attainment designations.

## 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 are charged with developing regional water plans outlining the preferred water management practices. All the regions submitted an updated water plan in 2017 that describes short-term and long-term strategies to meet water needs through 2050, and 2023 updates to these plans are nearing completion. Below is a chart with critical issues that are being addressed by each council, as identified in the 2017 updates to the regional water plans.

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

| <b>Middle Ocmulgee:</b><br>Jasper, Newton  | <b>Upper Oconee:</b><br>Barrow, Clarke, Greene, Jackson,<br>Morgan, Oconee, Walton  | <b>Savannah–Upper Ogeechee:</b><br>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> |

### ***Northeast Georgia Bicycling and Walking***

In 2009, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) contracted with the NEGRC to develop the Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking. Since then, the NEGRC has assisted six local governments with establishing local Complete Streets and Trails Plans and has also participated in monthly statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force meetings hosted by GDOT.

### ***Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority***

This collaborative is comprised of representatives from ten Northeast Georgia counties, excluding Newton and Jasper. In 2020, the authority partnered with the NEGRC to complete a Regional Solid Waste Management Plan. The Plan analyzed the following topics for all counties represented by the authority:

- 1. Management Assurance:** Providing for the assurance of adequate solid waste handling capability and capacity within the planning area for at least ten (10) years from the date of completion of the plan.
- 2. Facility Inventory:** Enumeration of the solid waste handling facilities as to size and type.
- 3. Land Suitability Analysis:** Identification of sites which are not suitable for solid waste handling facilities based upon environmental and land use factors.
- 4. Report of Accomplishments:** The Report of Accomplishments is an evaluation of the Short-Term Work Program (STWP) included in the local government's previously adopted Solid Waste Management Plan. The Report of Accomplishments requires the local government to state whether activities listed in the STWP have been completed, are currently underway, have been postponed, or have not been accomplished and are no longer slated for implementation. In addition, a brief narrative should be included for all activities listed.
- 5. Updated Community Work Program (CWP):** The new CWP is the implementation plan for the ten (10) year scope of the jurisdiction's plan. The CWP identifies existing and new activities the local government will implement or continue to implement over the next ten (10) years. It includes the activity, timeframe for implementation, estimated cost, responsible party, and potential funding source.

The Solid Waste Management Plan will serve as a long-term guide for the 10-member local governments and is one of the first regional plans completed for Solid Waste Management in the past 10–15 years.

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

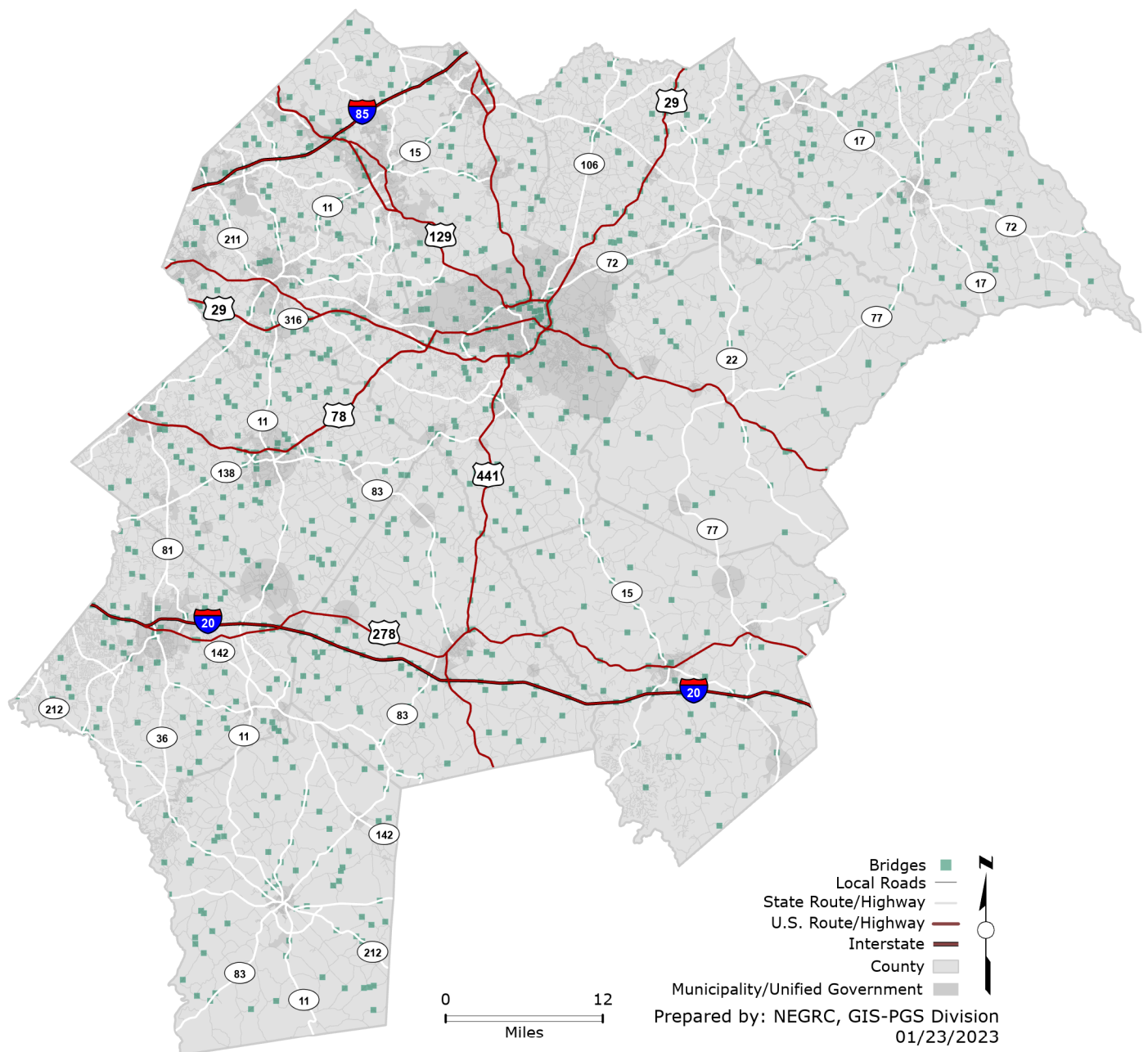
In 2018, the NEGRC updated the Resource Management Plan for designated Regionally Important Resources (RIRs). Designated resources were placed into one of two categories: Heritage Resources and Natural and Recreational Resources. Development practices, policies, and protection measures were developed 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.



# 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 NEGRC, 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 through the Road Evaluation Validation and Mapping Program (REVAMP). REVAMP was created in 2020, after the completion of the Moving Ahead Program (MAP21). Map21 collected and validated traffic control devices (TCDs), operational directions, surface types, and other local road attributes that will be used to assist in funding allocations for resurfacing, road widening, TCD upgrades, and other improvements to enhance safety along local roadways.



Total Number of Bridges: 1,025

## Safety

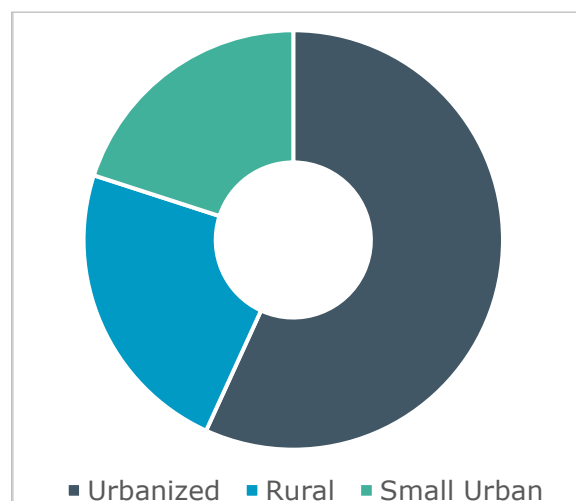
According to GDOT-Numetric crash data from 2017–2021, Athens-Clarke County had the most reported crashes in the region with 23,907 accidents. Most of the crashes within the region occurred in the more urbanized areas, which is expected due to the increased vehicle activity. The same reasoning can be applied to crashes occurring around peak traffic times (8:00am, 4:00pm, 5:00pm). 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, and Walton counties.

**GDOT Reported Crash Data by County  
(2017–2021)**

| Area:<br>County | Number of<br>Crashes | % Of Total<br>Crashes |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Clarke          | 23,907               | 24.70%                |
| Newton          | 16,000               | 16.53%                |
| Walton          | 12,577               | 12.99%                |
| Barrow          | 11,803               | 12.19%                |
| Jackson         | 11,209               | 11.58%                |
| Oconee          | 6,819                | 7.04%                 |
| Morgan          | 3,840                | 3.97%                 |
| Madison         | 3,185                | 3.29%                 |
| Greene          | 2,548                | 2.63%                 |
| Elbert          | 1,948                | 2.01%                 |
| Oglethorpe      | 1,618                | 1.67%                 |
| Jasper          | 1,354                | 1.40%                 |

Source: GDOT-Numetric Crash Portal (2017–2021)

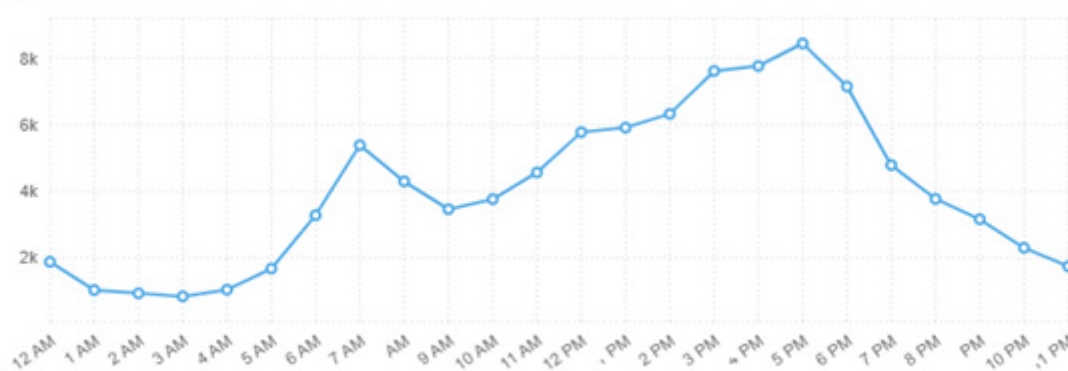
**Northeast Georgia Urban and Rural  
Crash Breakdown**



Source: GDOT-Numetric Crash Portal (2017–2021)

**Northeast Georgia Crashes by Hour of Day**

Crashes by Hour of Day



Source: GDOT-Numetric Crash Portal (2017–2021)

## ***Alternative Modes***

### ***Bicycle/Pedestrian***

Plans are in place, at a regional level, for a relatively comprehensive multi-use trail network. Topography, low population densities, and major roadways and rivers serve as barriers to establishing multi-use trail systems connecting to the eastern and southern edges of the region. At a local level, Athens-Clarke County, Newton County (Covington, Porterdale, and Oxford), and Greene County (Union Point and Woodville) have established and are actively expanding their multi-use trial network. In addition, the City of Winterville portion of the Firefly Trail, a multi-jurisdictional multi-use trail, is mostly complete, with funding in place to finish the entire section of the Firefly Trail within Athens-Clarke County. Many municipalities within the Northeast Georgia Region have complete sidewalk networks within their downtown areas. Expansion of sidewalk and bicycle facilities beyond these downtown nodes are 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.

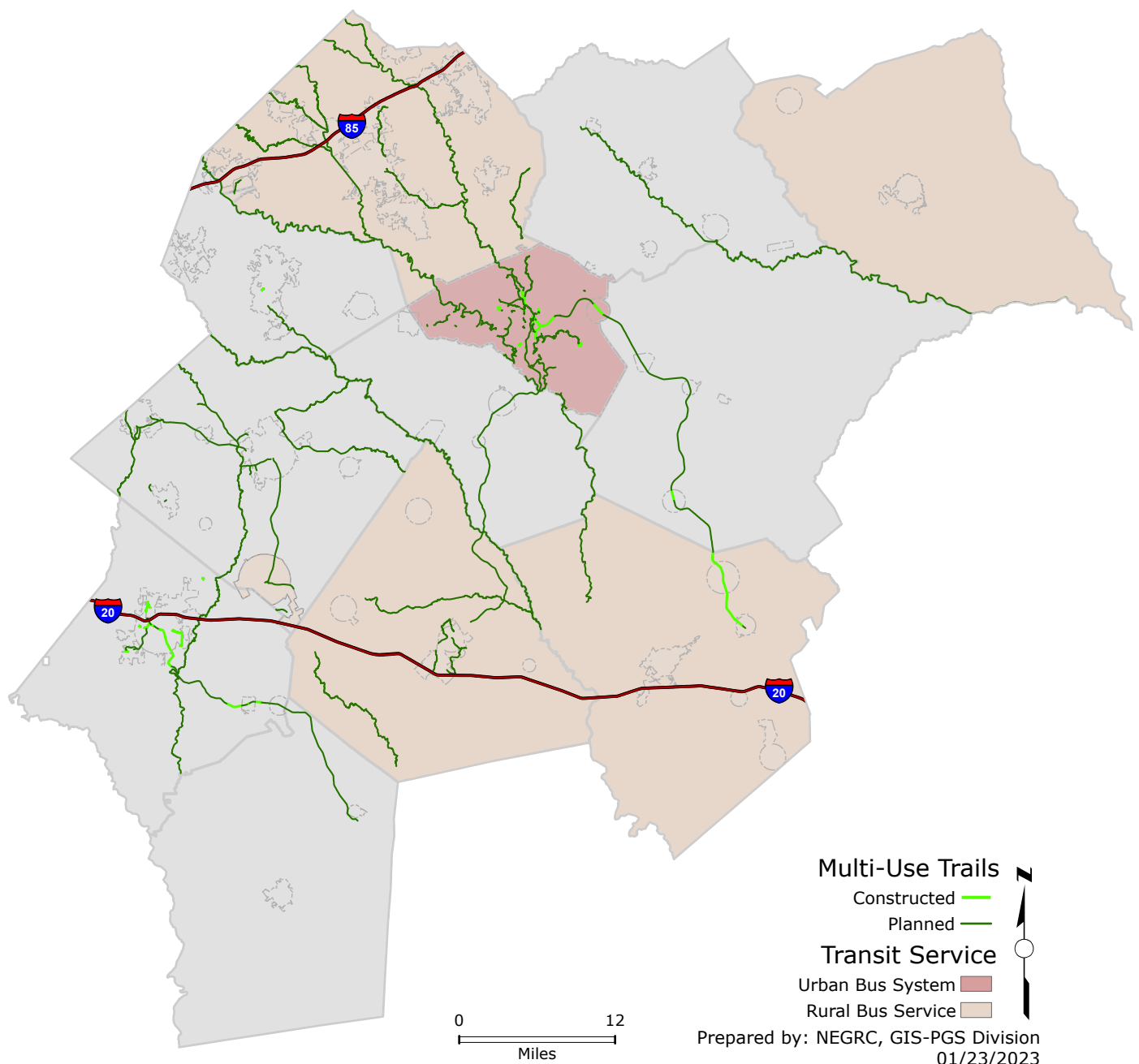
### ***Transit***

Athens-Clarke County (ACC) and the University of Georgia bus systems are the two urbanized transit systems within the region with Jackson County Transit expected to transition from rural to urban in the near future. UGA and the ACC bus transit systems are fixed-route services and are free to all riders. 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. In 2019, the NEGRC completed Phase II of the Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan (RHST). Phase II was 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. The goal of the Phase II plan was to assist areas of the region transitioning from “rural” to “urban” on how to changeover funding and new administrative requirements.

In addition to public transit, the Department of Human Services provides funding for Medicare recipients in all twelve Northeast Georgia counties. This program provides transportation to medical appointments and other essential needs. The NEGRC Area on Aging Division serves as a call center and administrative role for those services.

## Choice and Access

Available modes of transportation are most limited in the rural areas of the region and areas without transit access: Barrow County, Jasper County, Madison County, Oconee County, Oglethorpe County, and Walton 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). A Transit Development Plan can assist with 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.



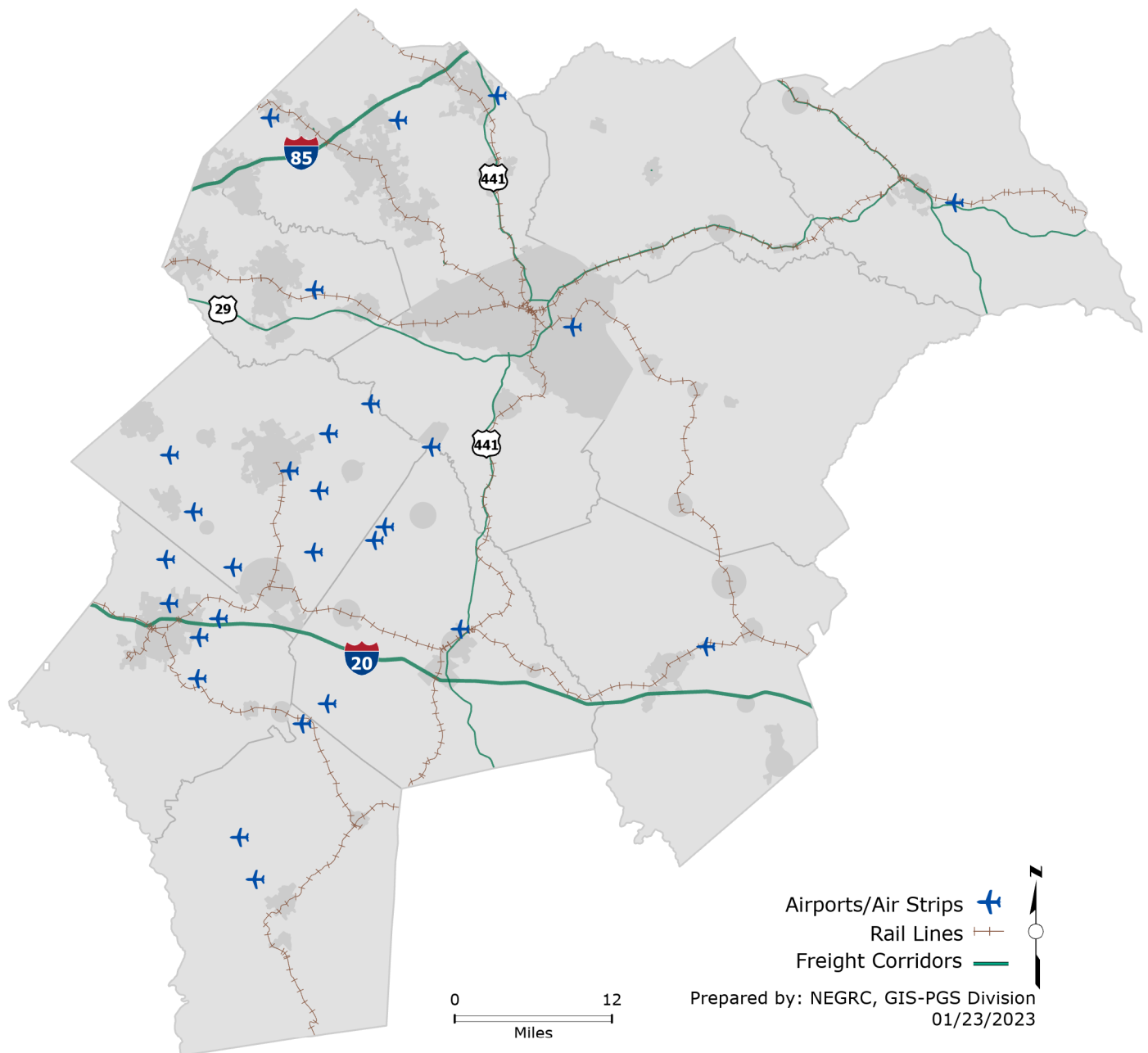
## Railroads, Trucking, and Airports

Regional airports, open to the public, are 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 Ben Epps airport recently expanded its runway to accept commercial flights, but commercial flights are limited.

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 proximity are ideal for industrial development including manufacturing and warehousing.

Road improvements and expansions of U.S. Highways 441, 129, and 316 are underway, and should continue to increase traffic flow and reduce congestion for commuters and truckers entering and exiting the region.





## Transportation and Land Use Connection

As shown in the Average Daily Traffic map, Northeast Georgia's most significant areas of traffic congestion are in the central core and west, within the counties that border the Atlanta Metropolitan area. While the central core (Athens-Clarke County, Oconee County, and southern Madison County) is expected to grow, most of the development expected will take place in the western edge of the region. 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. Over-investment in roadway construction is costly from a construction and maintenance perspective. Similar to water and sewerage infrastructure, 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 can be found throughout Northeast Georgia, and planners and decision makers should exercise caution in directing development based on existing land use plans, not roadway capacity.

