



# Northeast Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026

For the Northeast Georgia Economic  
Development District:

Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson,  
Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee,  
Oglethorpe, & Walton Counties

# Acknowledgements

To retain Economic Development District designation, the NEGRC regularly maintains and updates the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Northeast Georgia, with guidance from local public and private stakeholders.

## CEDS Committee

Courtney Bernardi | President, Oconee County Chamber of Commerce  
Bo Cochran | Board of Directors, Madison-Morgan Chamber of Commerce (COC)  
Daniel Dobbins | President & CEO, Development Authority of Elbert County  
Asher Dozier | VP of Economic Development, Newton County IDA  
David DuBois | Economic Development Director, Greene County  
David Dyer | Executive Director, Development Authority of Jasper County  
Serra Hall | Executive Director, Newton County IDA  
Amrey Harden | Post 3 Commissioner, Oconee County Board of Commissioners  
Bruce Henry | Chair, Jasper County Board of Commissioners  
John Howard | Mayor, City of Monroe (Walton County)  
Bob Hughes | President/Economic Development Director, Madison-Morgan COC  
Lisa Maloof | Barrow County Economic Development Director  
Vance Mattox | Private, Oglethorpe County  
Ben McDaniel | Barrow County Economic Development Coordinator  
Jay Paul | Chair, Oglethorpe County Board of Commissioners  
Christopher Roach | Dept. Head for Code Enforcement and P&Z Depts., Madison County  
John Rogeberg | Site Development Services Coordinator, Athens-Clarke County  
John Scott | VP & Director of Economic Development, Jackson County COC  
Shane Short | Executive Director, Development Authority of Walton County  
Daniel Sizemore | Bicycle-Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, Athens-Clarke County  
Anna Strickland | Executive Director, Madison County Chamber of Commerce  
Phil Pitts | County Manager, Elbert County  
Sam Young | Secretary, Greene County Development Authority

## Planning & Government Services Committee

Andy Ainslie (Chair) | District 2 Commissioner, Morgan County  
Linda Blechinger | Mayor, City of Auburn (Barrow County)  
John Daniell | Chair, Oconee County  
David Dyer | Executive Director, Development Authority of Jasper County  
Cary Fordyce | Gubernatorial Appointee, Oglethorpe County  
Pat Graham | Chair, Barrow County  
Gail Harrell | Mayor, City of Monticello (Jasper County)  
Steve Horton | Mayor, City of Covington (Newton County)  
John Howard | Mayor, City of Monroe (Walton County)  
W.M. Palmer | Private, Elbert County  
Brad Tucker | Private, Oconee County  
Lee Vaughn | Chair, Elbert County

## NEGRC Staff

Burke Walker | Executive Director  
Mark Beatty | Director of Planning & Government Services  
Phillip Jones | Community Planner

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**Prepared by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Planning & Governmental Services Division**

US Mail: 305 Research Drive, Athens, GA 30605

Phone: 706-369-5650 • Email: [pgsassist@negrc.org](mailto:pgsassist@negrc.org) • Website: [www.negrc.org](http://www.negrc.org)



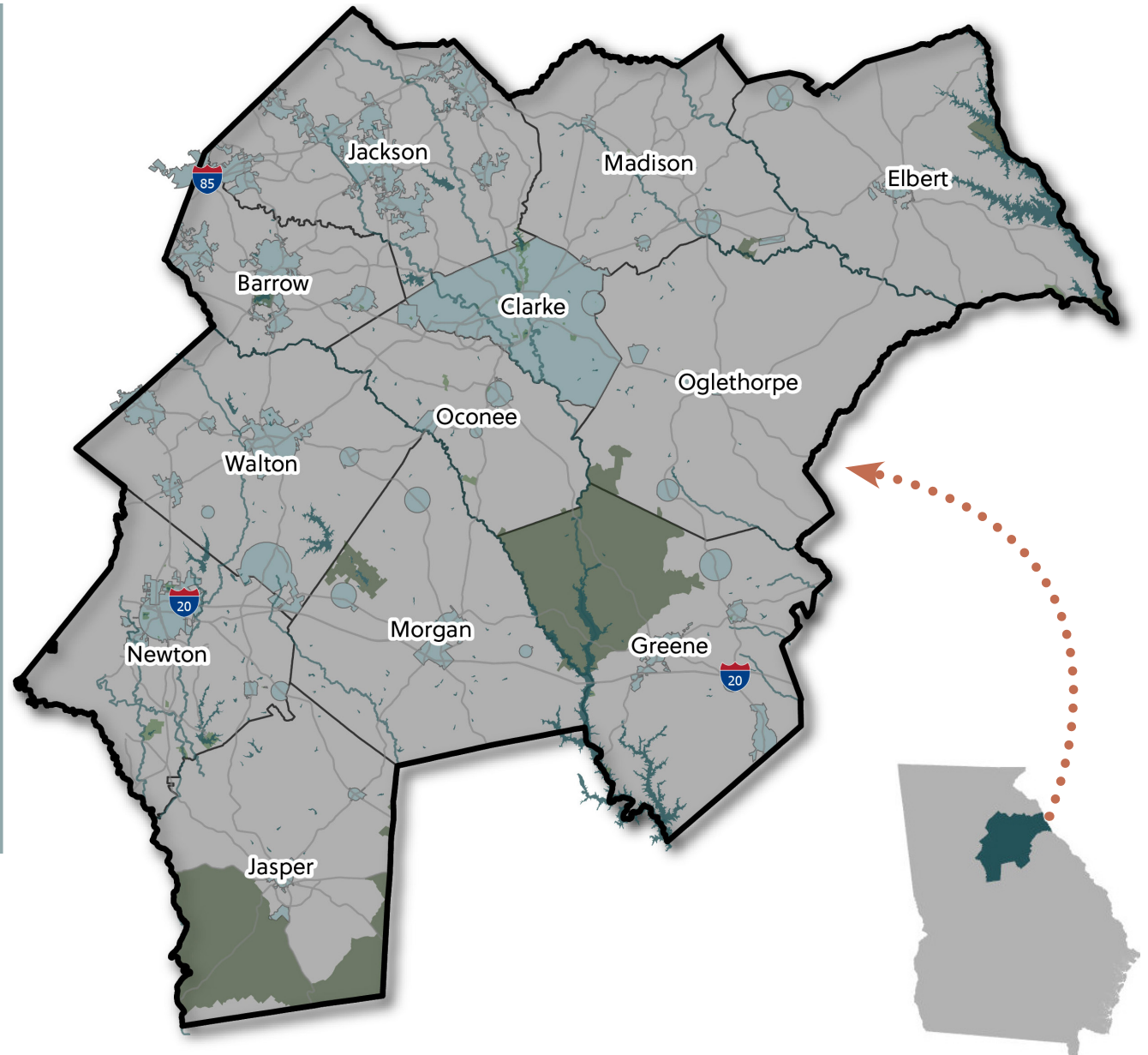




# The Northeast Region of Georgia

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) serves as the Economic Development District (EDD) for the 12-county Northeast Georgia Region, through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). To retain EDD designation, NEGRC regularly maintains and updates the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Northeast Georgia, with guidance from local public and private stakeholders. This document is consistent with 13 C.F.R. § 303.7 and the CEDS standards and guidelines set forth by the U.S. EDA and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO). It is intended to compliment the vision and initiatives articulated by the Northeast Georgia Regional Agenda.

- City Limits
- Major Roads
- State and Federal Lands



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Who are We?

The Northeast Georgia Region spans from the perimeter of Metro Atlanta to the rural border of South Carolina. It is a region with a strong agricultural heritage and vibrant downtowns. As the region has grown, it has diversified to contain a unique mix of urban, small town, industrial, and pastoral spaces, giving it a unique character.

Athens-Clarke County, located toward the center of Northeast Georgia, is home to the University of Georgia, Athens Technical College, and Piedmont University. Athens, along with portions of Oconee County to the south, makes up the region's central metropolitan core. Barrow, Jackson, Walton, and Newton counties have urbanized areas of their own as a result of their proximity to Atlanta and the major I-85 and I-20 interstate corridors. Elbert, Greene, Jasper, Madison, and Morgan counties contain small municipalities but remain considerably rural in character. However, many rural cities and counties are receiving an increasing amount of developmental pressures for their business, residential, and recreational potential.

According to the 2020 Census, the region has a population of approximately 657,220, which is a 15% increase since 2010. The region is expected to continue growing at a rapid pace, with a projected 2050 population of 914,366. The presence of the University of Georgia and many other post-secondary institutions help make education services the largest industry in the region. The region is also host to a growing manufacturing and transportation hub, exciting retail establishments, and world class healthcare and social assistance facilities.

### Top Industries

1. Educational services (38,538 jobs)
2. Manufacturing (36,157 jobs)
3. Retail trade (35,219 jobs)
4. Health care and social assistance (32,681 jobs)
5. Construction (21,804 jobs)

Source: US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

### 2020 Population

**657,200**

**+15% vs. 2010**

**+50% vs. 2000**

Source: US Census (2020, 2010, 2000)

### 2050 Population

**Projection**

**914,366**

**+39% vs. 2020**

Source: Georgia Governor's Office of  
Planning and Budget

## Where are we as a Region?

The Northeast Georgia regional economy has grown from approximately \$14.2 billion in 2001 to \$21.1 billion in 2020 (adjusted to 2012 dollars), representing a 49% increase in the region's economy. This period of growth has only been interrupted by the 2008-2010 recession and the economic contraction between 2019-2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2010 and 2020, the regional workforce has increased



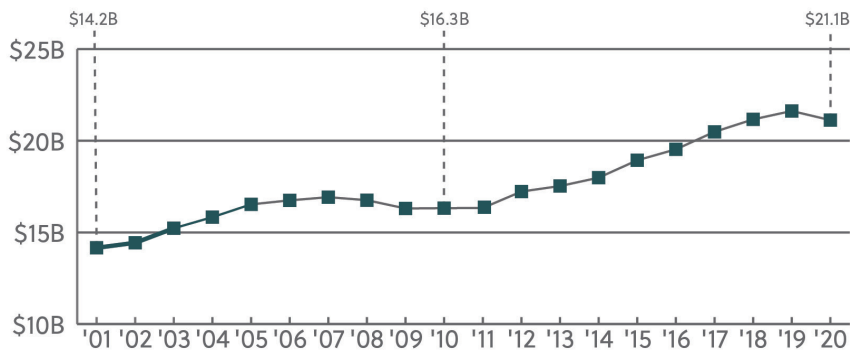
by approximately 17%. This growth has been concentrated in a few industries, including the transportation, warehousing, and utility sector as well as the professional, scientific, management, and administrative sector, which have both seen a 40% increase in the workforce.

## Notable Changes in Industry Jobs



Source: US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010 & 2020 )

## Regional GDP Over Time (2012 Dollars)



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

# Impacts of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting economic impacts have tested the economic resilience of the region, and these impacts have been felt differently across industries. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Accommodation and Food Services industry had the largest number of establishments severely impacted by the pandemic, with large impacts on other in-person industries including retail trade, healthcare, and social assistance. As with the rest of the nation, the Northeast Georgia Region is grappling with an affordability crisis due to a high rate of inflation and increasing housing costs.

## COVID-19 Impacts by Industry (Nationally)

### Most Impacted

1. Accommodation and Food Services
2. Arts, entertainment, recreation
3. Retail Trade
4. Healthcare and Social Assistance
5. Manufacturing

### Least Impacted

1. Utilities
2. Finance, Insurance, and Management
3. Professional and Technical Services
4. Arts, entertainment, recreation

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

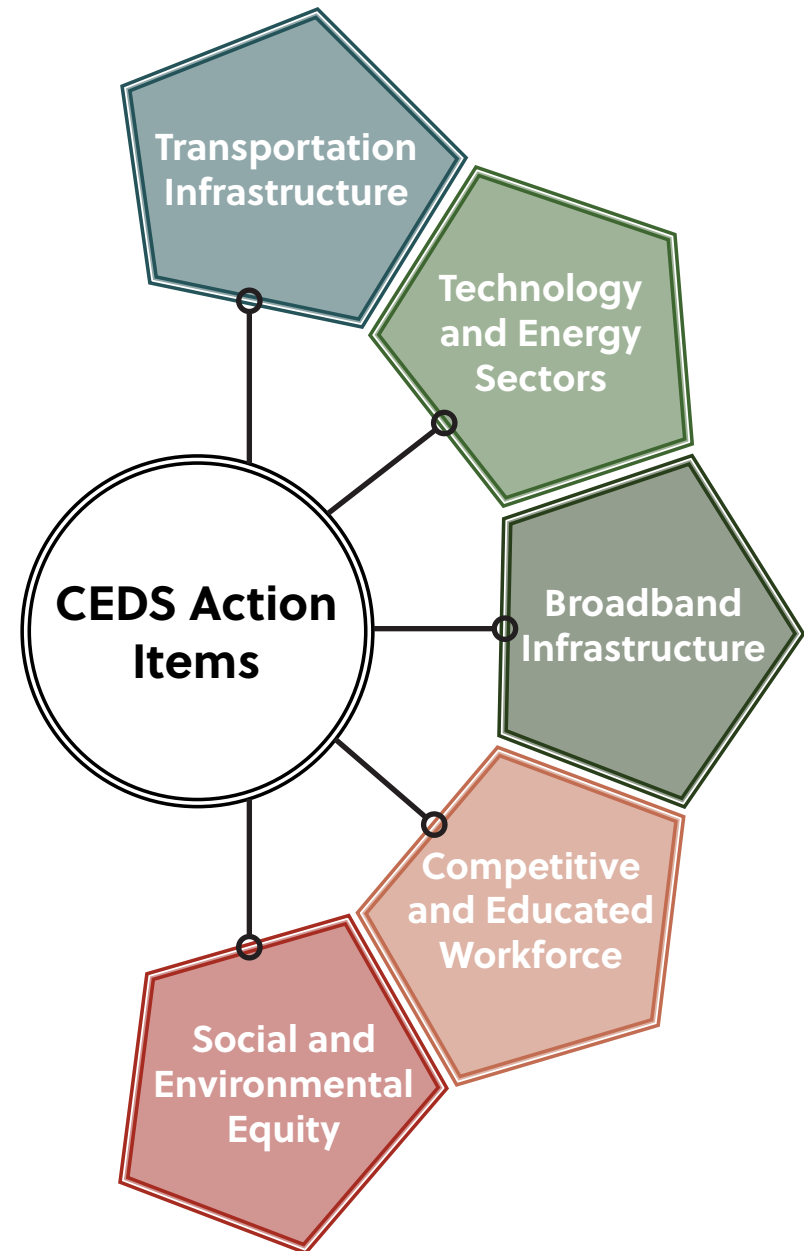
# What are our Economic Development Goals?

For the region to adapt to an ever-changing economic environment, improve the standard of living of all residents, and prepare for future economic difficulties, the region must actively invest in its physical and human infrastructure.

The region must prioritize improving its physical infrastructure by continuing to diversify its transportation infrastructure, enhance the resilience of its technology and energy sectors, and improve the region's broadband infrastructure.

The region must strive to improve the standard of living and capabilities of its residents. The region's local governments must ensure that the economic benefits derived from future economic growth are equitably shared among residents and that no socio-economic group unjustly bears the economic or environmental burden of industry or land development. In addition, fostering a competitive and educated workforce will ensure the region is able to attract in-demand industries that fit the needs of the area.

Refer to Chapter 4 for more information regarding these goals.





# *Regional Economic Vision*

*A region where quality of life is built on a foundation of community and culture. Where education, innovation, and prosperity thrive thanks to a blend of regional and global connections, leveraged by world-class local infrastructure.*

The CEDS 2022-2026 is the result of four months of public input from local public and private stakeholders. Outreach included regular CEDS Committee meetings and an online questionnaire; input guided the regional economic development strategies and tasks laid out in the Action Plan (described in Chapter 4). An inventory of economic development items from local County and Municipal Community Work Programs (a component of local comprehensive plans) provided additional guidance for strategy and goal development.

## CEDS Committee

The CEDS Committee served as a steering committee to articulate the regional vision, strategies, and goals. County commissioners from each of the Northeast Georgia counties appointed two CEDS Committee members; the result was a mix of public and private sector representatives with a variety of backgrounds. The CEDS Committee held three meetings: Meeting #1, to review the current economic conditions of the region and examine Northeast Georgia's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; Meeting #2, to outline the region's foci for economic development and draft strategies; and Meeting #3, to refine strategies, goals, and objectives with clear performance measures for each.

## Questionnaire

An online questionnaire was distributed to government staff, elected officials, residents, and business owners within the Northeast Region via NEGR.org, a press release, and through county and municipal social media. Fifty responses provided additional insight for the SWOT analysis and development of the strategy items.

## Community Work Programs

The Georgia Department of Community Development (DCA) requires a Community Work Program component for every local comprehensive plan. These programs identify and prioritize community activities and initiatives and are updated every five years. Local government Community Work Program items specific to economic development were compiled and considered during development of the CEDS Action Plan.

### CEDS Committee Suggestions for Optimizing Quality of Life in Their Communities

*Promote cooperation and collaboration. Break silos and unify. Share ideas and learn to listen.*

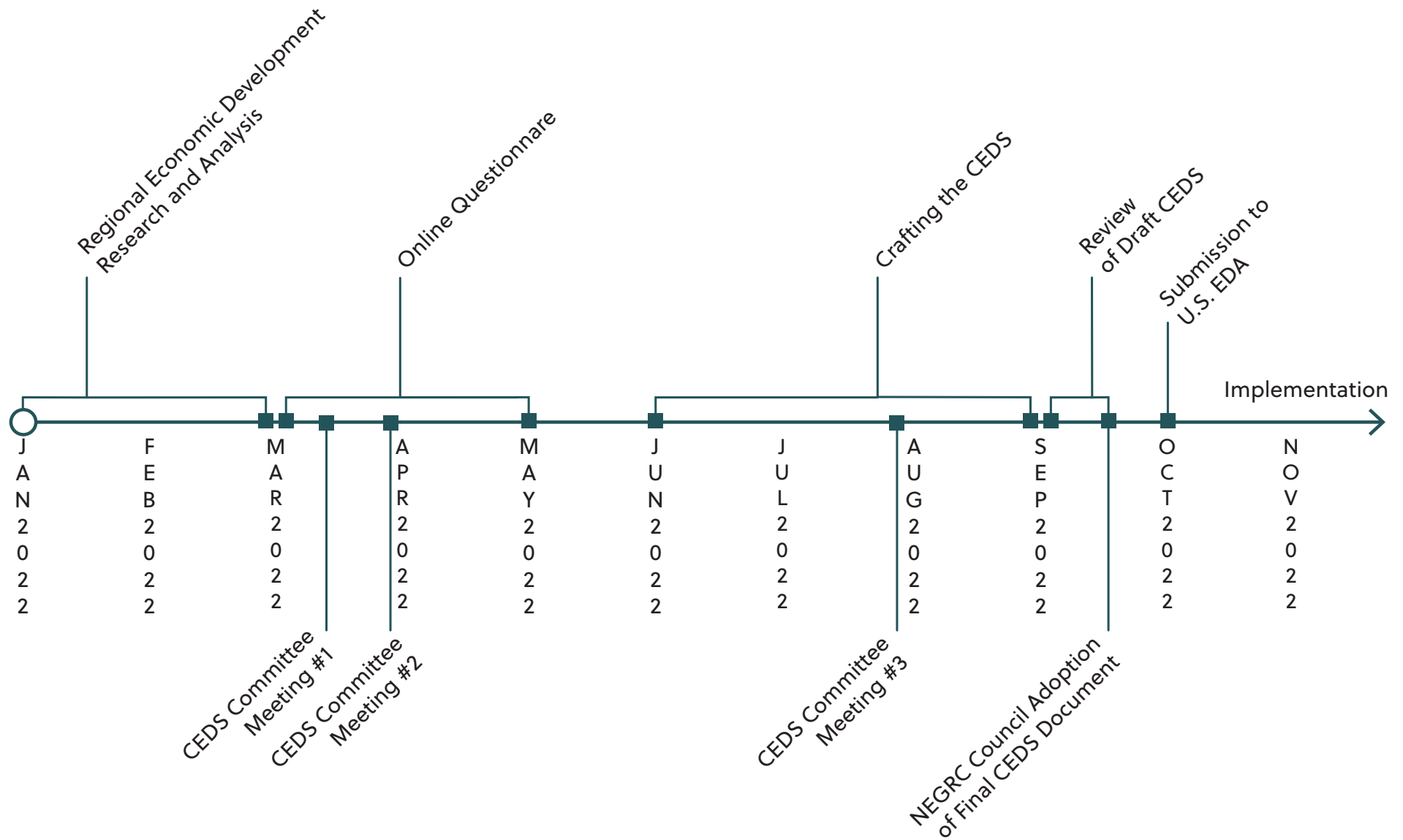
*Increase water infrastructure, decrease traffic, more recreation opportunities*

*Become a volunteer, serve where you eat, live, and work.*

*High quality residential growth, high paying jobs, better broadband*



# Timeline

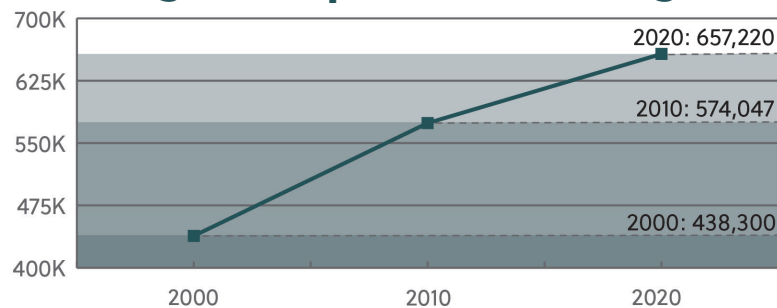


# Chapter 2: Economic Snapshots

## Regional Analysis

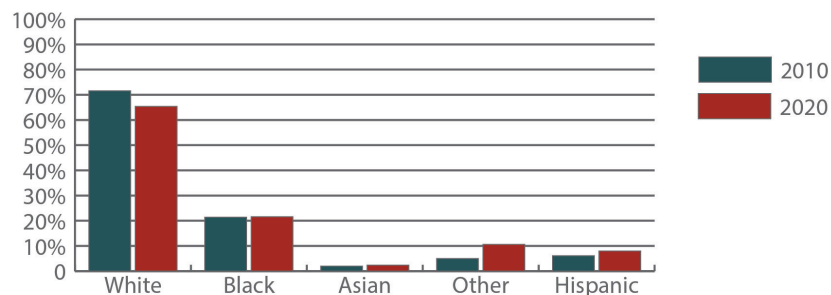
The region's population has grown dramatically in the 21st century, with the overall population growing 31% between 2000 and 2010 and an additional 15% between 2010-2020. Between 2010 and 2020, the region has steadily become more diverse, with the percentage of white residents decreasing from 72% to 65%. The percentage of residents who are Black, Asian, Hispanic, and other races have all increased.

### Region Population Change



Source: US Census (2000, 2010, 2020)

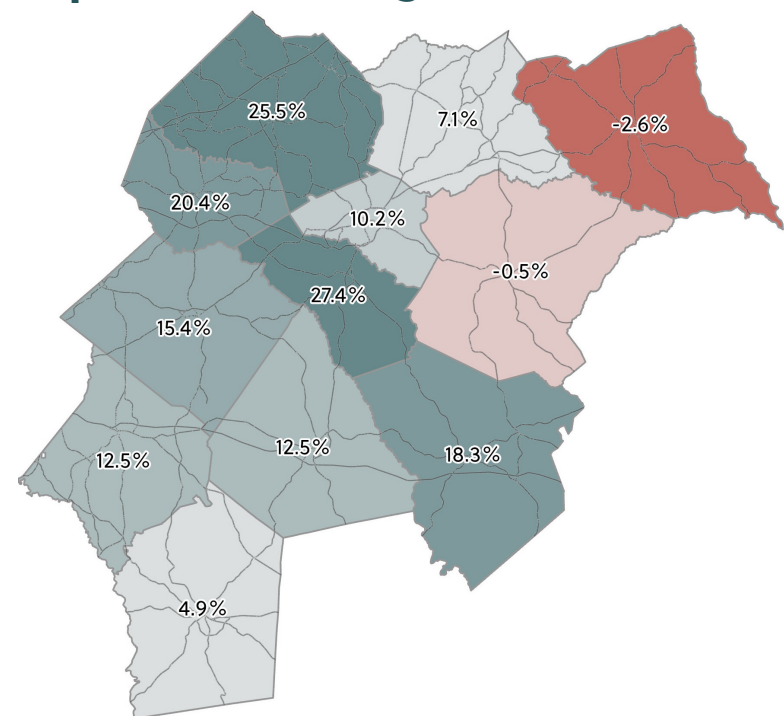
### Race Change Over Time



Source: US Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

Oconee County has seen the largest population increase between 2010-2020 at over 27%. All counties located along the I-20 and I-85 interstate corridors, which include Barrow, Jackson, Newton, Walton, and Morgan Counties, have seen moderate to high population increases ranging from 13% to 26%. The only counties experiencing a decrease in population are Elbert and Oglethorpe County, which saw population decreases of -0.5% and -2.6%, respectively.

### Population Change (2010 - 2020)



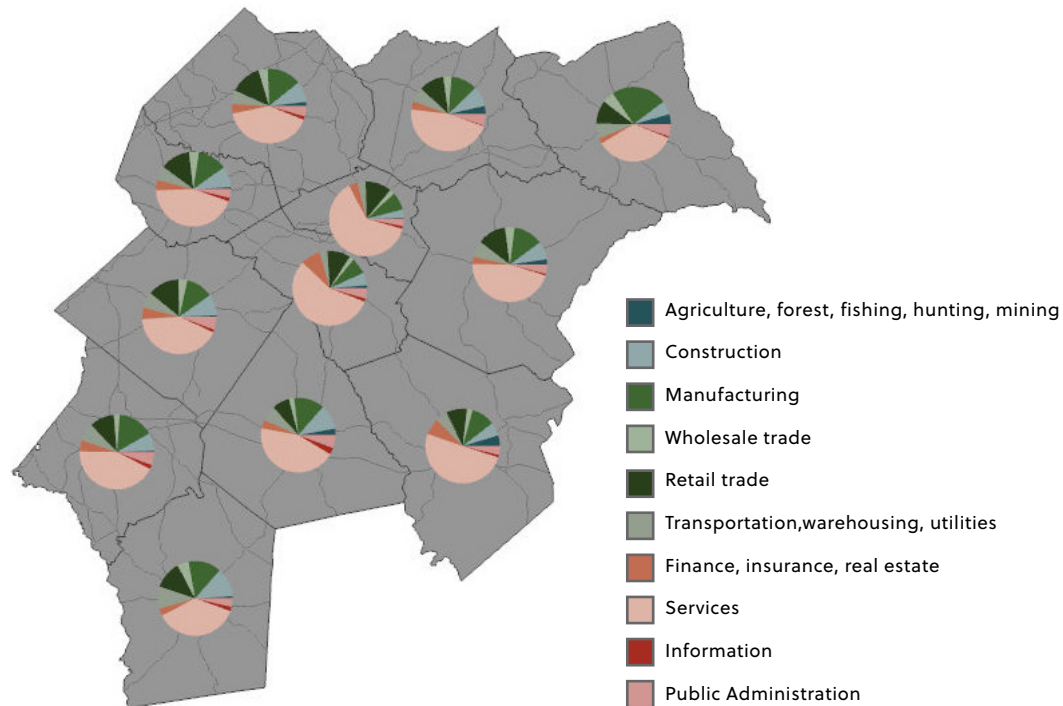
Source: US Census (2010, 2020)



# Industry Breakdown

The combined services category is the largest industry in all counties in the region. In Clarke and Oconee County, services make up more than half of all jobs, while other counties have larger manufacturing, transportation, and construction industries. Amazon has grown to the largest employer in the region due to its growth in warehousing space, which has followed the overall growth in the transportation, warehousing, and utility industries in the region.

## Industry by County



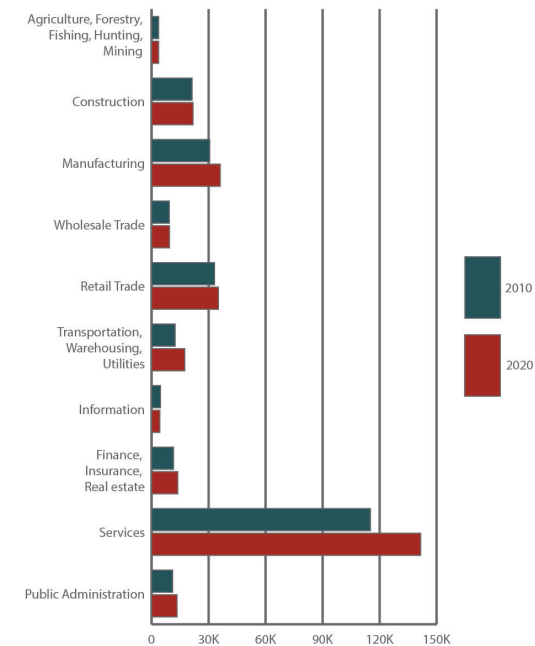
Source: US Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

## Largest Employers in the Region

- |                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Amazon.com Services, Inc.      | 6. St. Marys Hospital         |
| 2. Athens Regional Medical Center | 7. The William Carter Company |
| 3. HG Georgia Merchants, Inc.     | 8. University Of Georgia      |
| 4. Hire Dynamics, LLC             | 9. Walmart                    |
| 5. Pilgrim's Pride Corporation    | 10. Wellpoint, Inc.           |

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Local Area Profiles

## Regional Industry Jobs

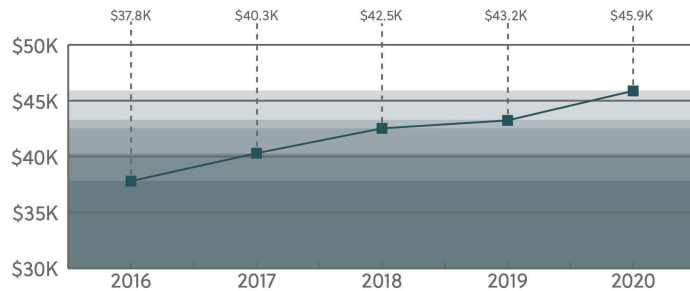


Source: US Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

# Economic Wellbeing

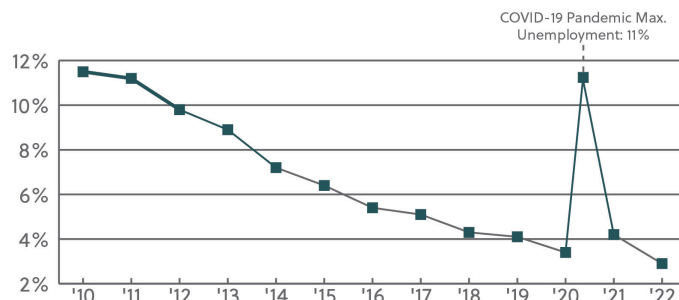
The average resident of the region has experienced a steady improvement in their socio-economic wellbeing. The average per capita income has increased by 21% between 2016 and 2020, reaching \$45,880 in 2020. The region has also seen a steady decrease in the unemployment rate from 2010 to 2022. While the unemployment rate soared briefly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 11% in May of 2020, it has since dropped to 2.9% at the beginning of 2022.

## Per Capita Income



Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Local Area Profiles

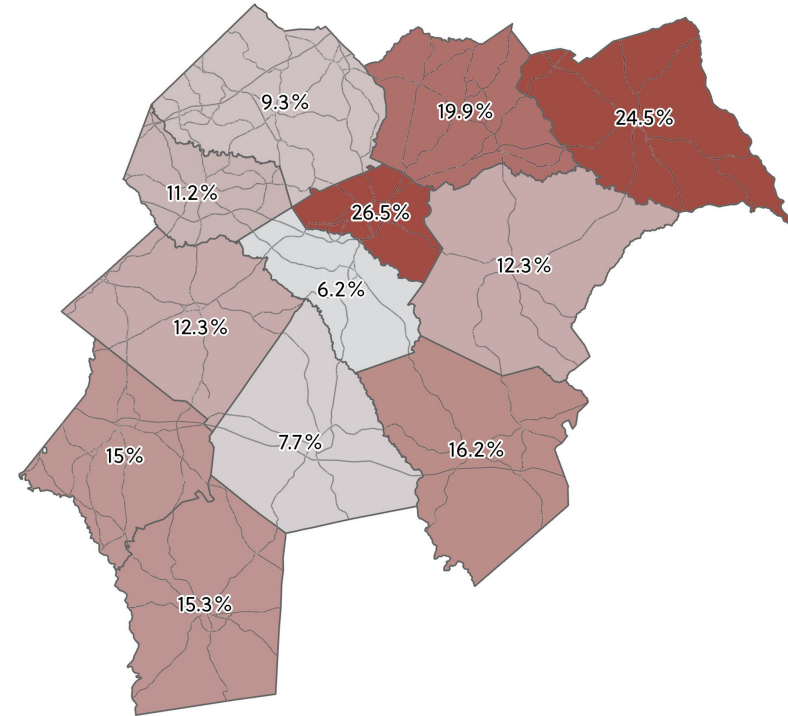
## Unemployment



Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Monthly Labor Force Estimates

While there has been an average increase in standard of living across the region, poverty continues to be prevalent throughout the region. Overall, the region has a poverty rate of 15.3%, which is higher than the poverty rate for the state of Georgia (14%). Clarke and Elbert County have the highest poverty rates in the region at 26.5% and 24.5%, respectively. Oconee and Jackson County have the lowest poverty rates at 6.2% and 9.1%, respectively.

## Poverty Rate Across the Region



Source: US Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

# Education and Opportunity Zones

The region is anchored by a number of educational institutes that attract and train talent. The largest school is the University of Georgia (UGA), a tier-one research institution with an enrollment close to 40,000 students. Oxford University, which is a satellite school of Emory University focused on liberal arts, is located in Newton County. The region also has a number of technical colleges, including Athens Technical College, Lanier Technical College, and Georgia Piedmont Technical College. In total, 10 out of 12 of the region's counties have at least one post-secondary education institution.

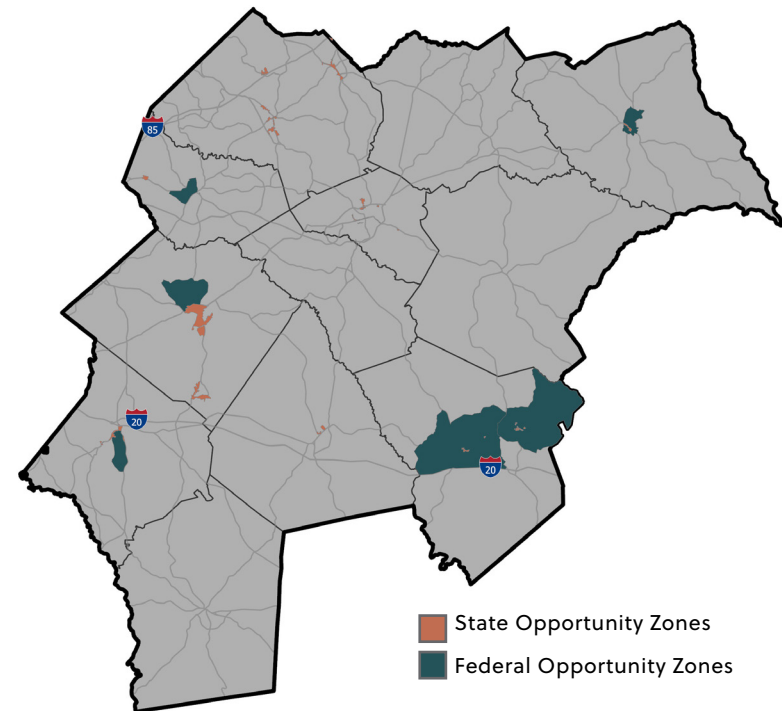
## Colleges in the Region

Name	Locations
University of Georgia	Clarke County
Piedmont University	Clarke County (Satellite Campus)
Athens Technical College	Clarke County (Main Campus) Elbert County (Satellite Campus) Greene County (Satellite Campus) Walton County (Satellite Campus)
Lanier Technical College	Barrow County (Satellite Campus) Jackson County (Satellite Campus)
Southern Crescent Technical College	Jasper County (Satellite Campus)
Georgia Military College	Madison Campus in Morgan County
Emory University-Oxford College	Newton County
Georgia Piedmont Technical College	Newton County (Satellite Campus)
University of North Georgia	Oconee County (Satellite Campus)

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Local Area Profiles

Areas in Barrow, Walton, Newton, Greene and Elbert County have been designated as Federal Opportunity Zones under the Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. This program allows people to invest in distressed areas while obtaining tax benefits. In addition, 14 local governments within the region have designated state opportunity zones within their jurisdiction, which are allowed under the Georgia Job Tax Credit Program. This program allows businesses within the zones to benefit from enhanced Job Tax Credits for new eligible jobs created.

## State and Federal Opportunity Zones

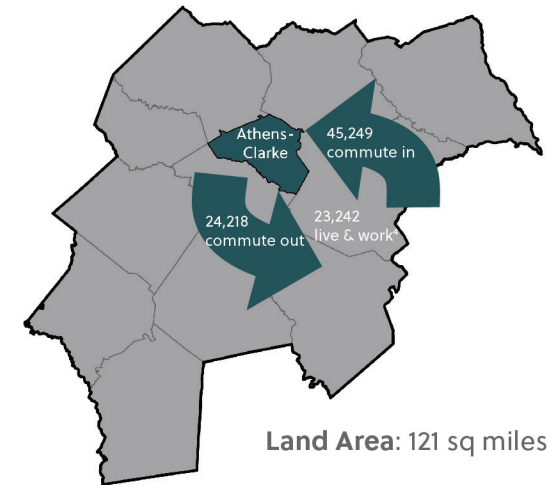
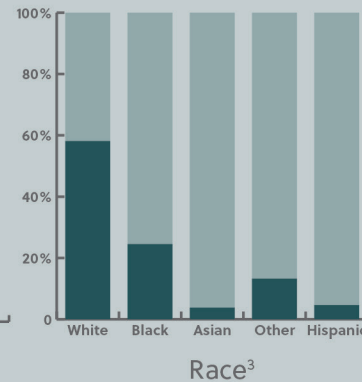
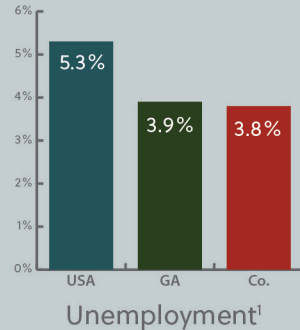
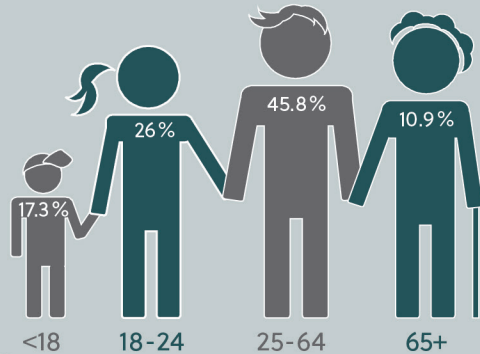




# Athens-Clarke County

## Population Summary

Population: 128,671<sup>3</sup>  
159,669 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 28.3<sup>2</sup>



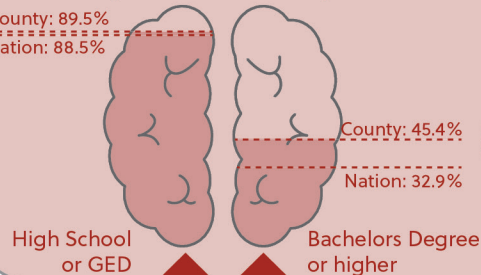
Land Area: 121 sq miles

Municipalities: Athens\*, Winterville

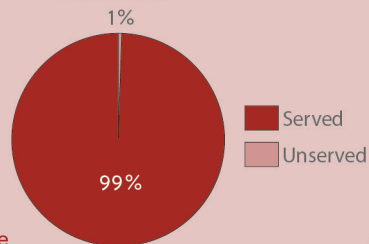
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

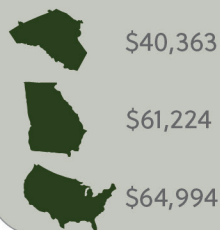
County: 89.5%  
Nation: 88.5%



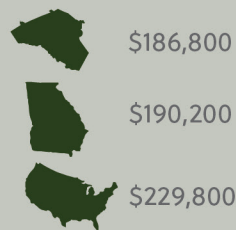
## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

Athens Regional Medical Center  
Athens Technical College  
Innovative Solution Advisors  
McLane Southeast  
Pilgrim's Pride Corporation  
St. Marys Hospital  
The Kroger Company  
University Of Georgia  
Walmart  
Wellpoint, Inc.

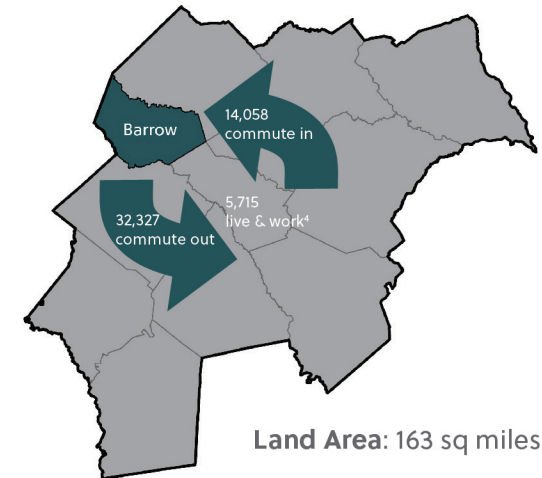
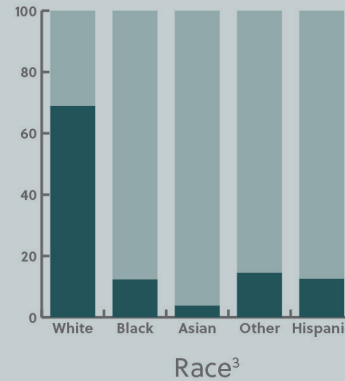
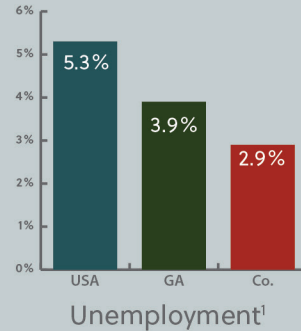
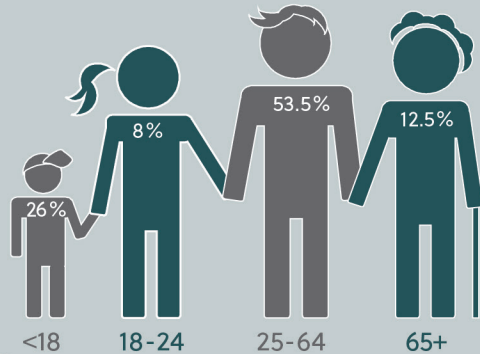
## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- 1 Education Services
- 2 Accommodation and food services
- 3 Retail trade
- 4 Health care and social assistance
- 5 Manufacturing
- 6 Professional, scientific, and technical services
- 7 Administrative, support, waste management
- 8 Construction
- 9 Transportation and warehousing
- 10 Public administration

# Barrow County

## Population Summary

Population: 83,505<sup>3</sup>  
119,407 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 36<sup>2</sup>

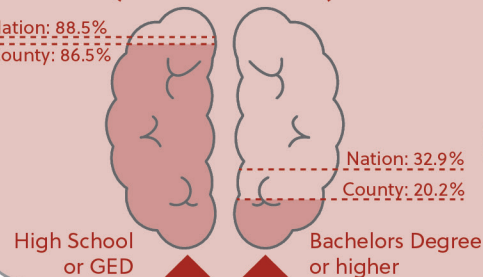


**Municipalities:** Auburn, Bethlehem, Braselton, Carl, Statham, and Winder\*

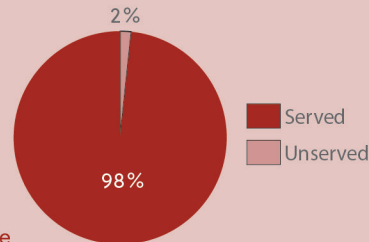
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

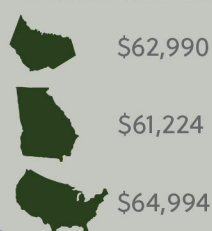
Nation: 88.5%  
County: 86.5%



## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

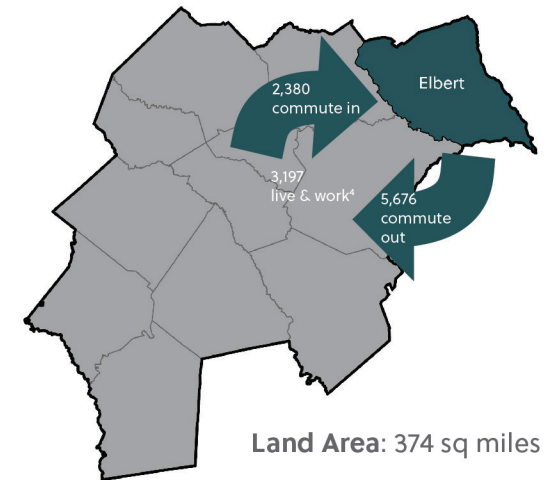
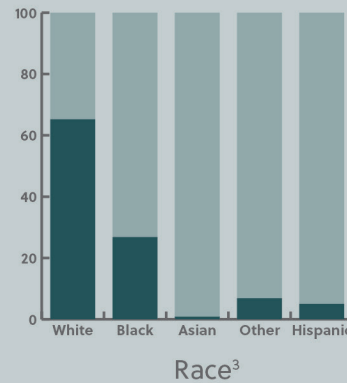
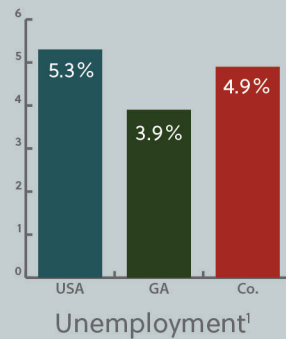
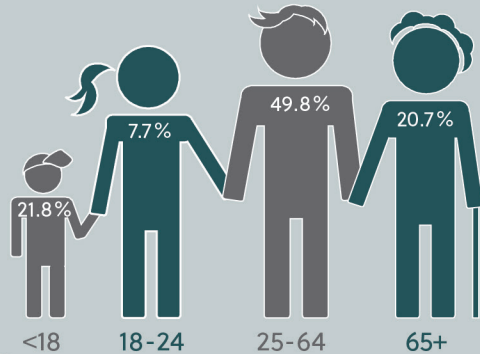
- Akin Ford Corp
- Carvana, LLC
- Chico's Distribution Services, LLC
- Harrison Poultry, Inc.
- Ingles Markets, Inc.
- Johns Manville International, Inc.
- Northeast Georgia Med Ctr Barr
- Publix Super Markets, Inc.
- Sheraton Buckhead
- Walmart

## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- Retail trade
- Manufacturing
- Health care & social assistance
- Educational services
- Construction
- Accommodation & food services
- Administrative, support, waste management
- Professional, scientific, technical services
- Transportation & warehousing
- Wholesale trade

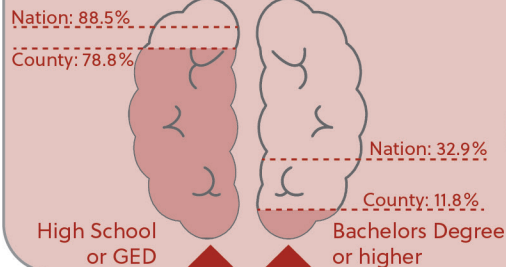
## Population Summary

Population: 19,637<sup>3</sup>  
19,327 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 43.3<sup>2</sup>

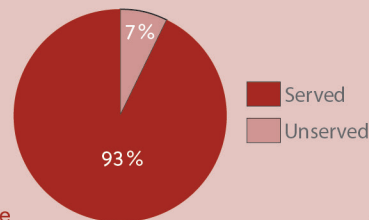


**Municipalities:** Bowman and Elberton\*  
\* County Seat

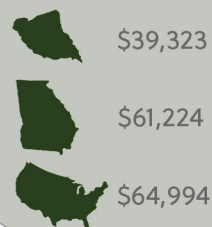
## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)



## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

- Eagle Granite Co, Inc.
- Ingles Markets, Inc.
- Keystone Memorials, Inc.
- McDonalds
- Mollertech South, LLC
- Pilgrim's Pride Corporation
- Pinnacle Bank
- The York Group
- Walmart
- Whitlow Electric Service Co, Inc.

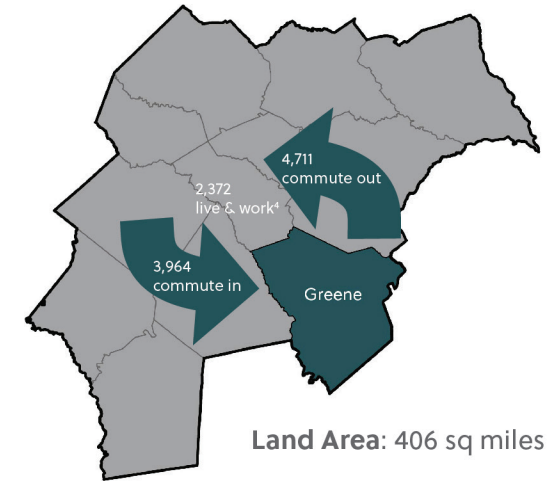
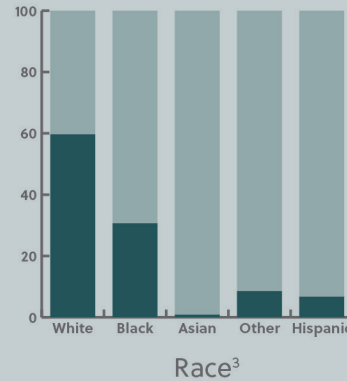
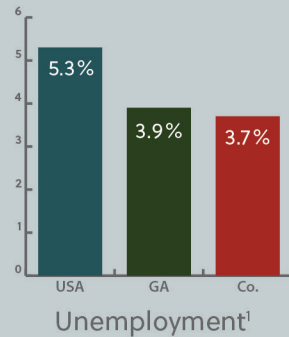
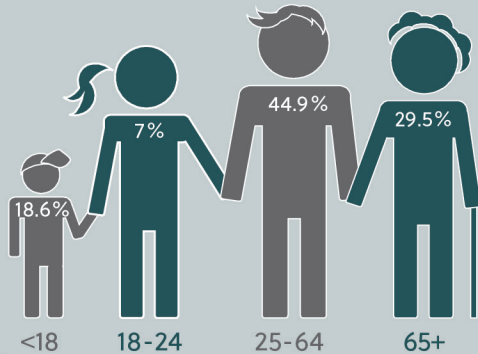
## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- Manufacturing
- Health care & social assistance
- Retail trade
- Educational services
- Transportation & warehousing
- Construction
- Public Administration
- Wholesale trade
- Accommodation & food services
- Administrative, support, waste management



## Population Summary

Population: 18,915<sup>3</sup>  
21,388 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 50.7<sup>2</sup>

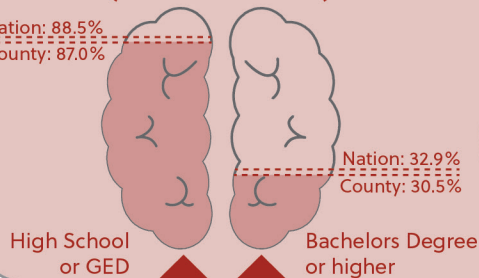


**Municipalities:** Greensboro\*, Siloam, Union Point, White Plains, and Woodville

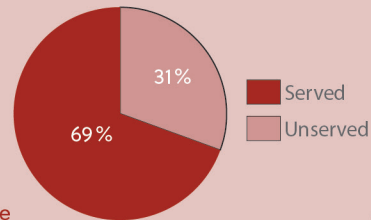
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

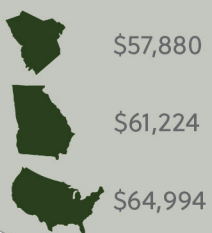
Nation: 88.5%  
County: 87.0%



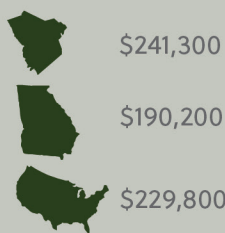
## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

1. A2bf, Inc.  
2. Bughouse Pest Control Of Lake Oconee  
3. Daniel RP Management, LLC  
4. Nibco, Inc.  
5. Novelis Corporation  
6. Publix Super Markets, Inc.  
7. Ritz-Carlton Hotel  
8. St Joseph's at East Georgia  
9. Tendercare Clinic, Inc.  
10. The Home Depot

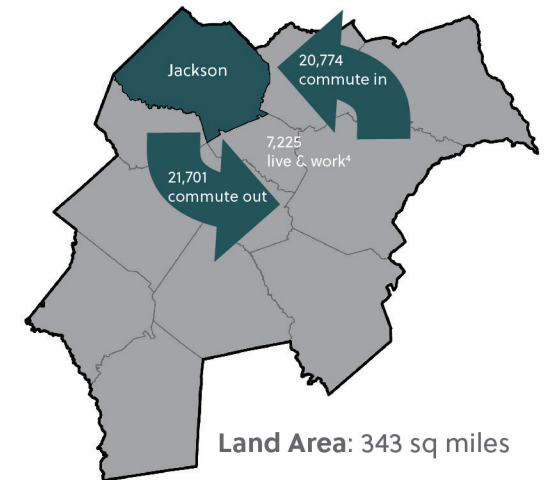
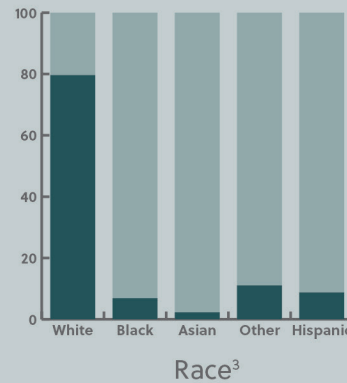
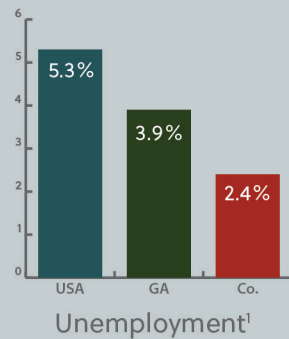
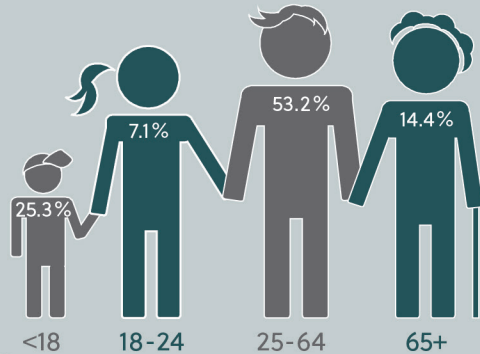
## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

1. Health care & social assistance
2. Accommodation & food services
3. Manufacturing
4. Educational services
5. Retail trade
6. Administrative, support, waste management
7. Construction
8. Professional, scientific, technical services
9. Transportation & warehousing
10. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting

# Jackson County

## Population Summary

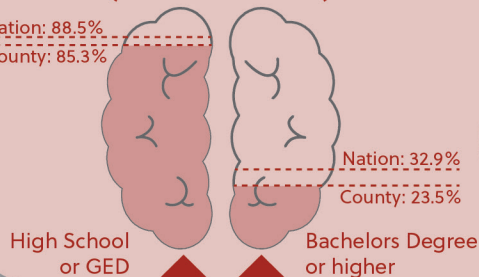
Population: 75,907<sup>3</sup>  
123,941 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 38.4<sup>2</sup>



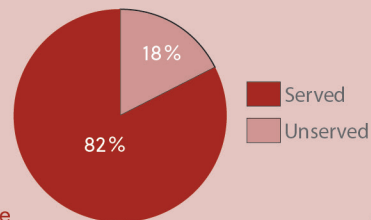
**Municipalities:** Arcade, Braselton, Commerce, Hoschton, Jefferson\*, Nicholson, Pendergrass, Talmo  
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

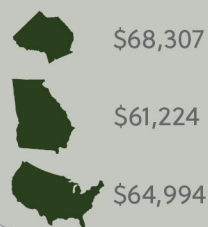
Nation: 88.5%  
County: 85.3%



## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

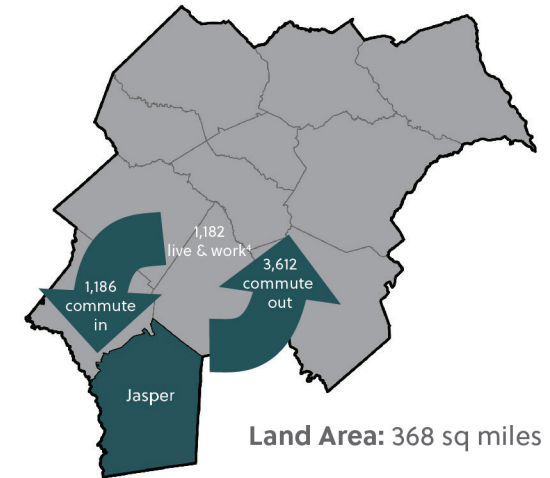
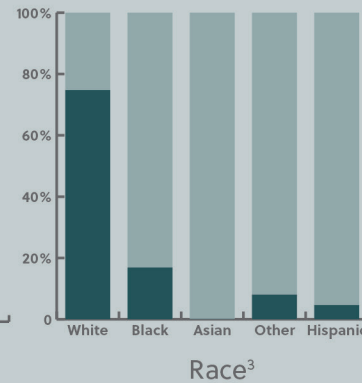
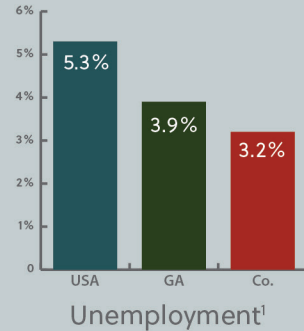
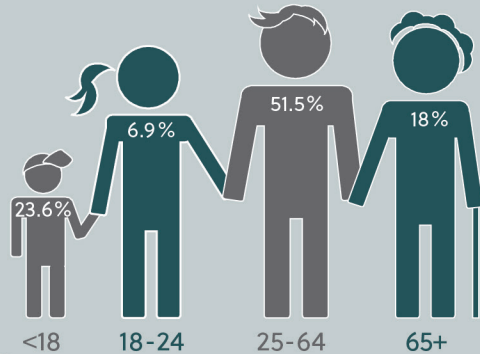
- Amazon.Com Services, Inc.
- Bed Bath and Beyond, Inc.
- Fox Racing Shox
- HG Georgia Merchants, Inc.
- Hire Dynamics, LLC
- Kubota Industrial Equipment Corporation
- The William Carter Company
- Walmart
- Wayne Poultry
- Williams-Sonoma Direct, Inc.

## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- 1 Manufacturing
- 2 Retail trade
- 3 Health care & social assistance
- 4 Construction
- 5 Educational services
- 6 Professional, scientific, technical services
- 7 Administrative, support, waste management
- 8 Transportation & warehousing
- 9 Accommodation & food services
- 10 Public Administration

## Population Summary

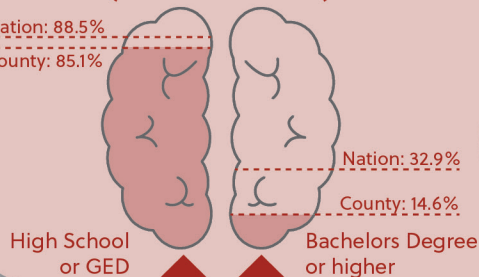
Population: 14,588<sup>3</sup>  
18,366 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 43.2<sup>2</sup>



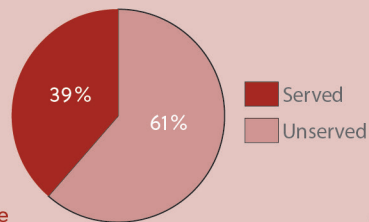
**Municipalities:** Monticello\*, Shady Dale  
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

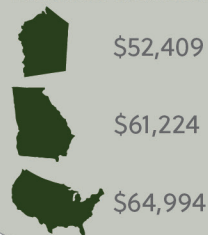
Nation: 88.5%  
County: 85.1%



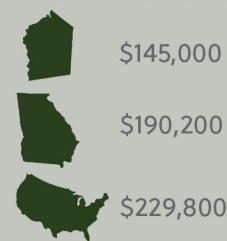
## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

- Associated Staffing Services, Inc.
- Cal Maine Foods, Inc.
- Dexter Axle Company
- Ingles Markets, Inc.
- Jasper Memorial Hospital
- Norton Packaging, Inc.
- Pallets Acquisition, LLC
- Permatheem, Inc.
- Profile Products
- Earth and Turfs Reps, Inc.

## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

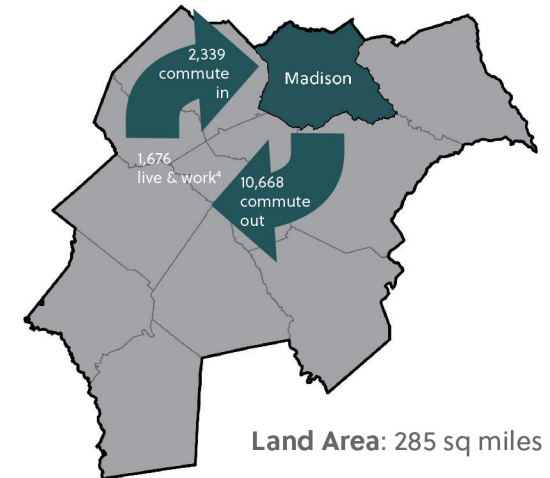
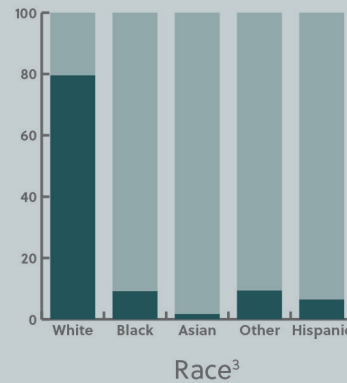
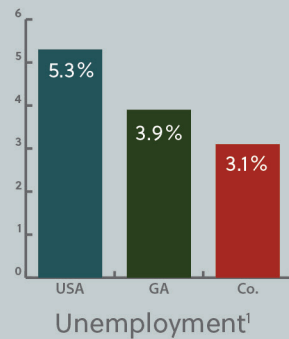
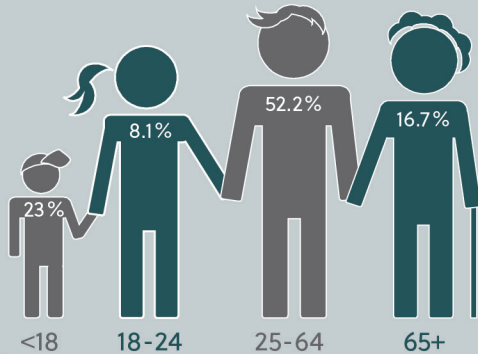
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Retail trade
- Educational services
- Health care and social assistance
- Transportation and warehousing
- Administrative, support, waste management
- Wholesale trade
- Accommodation and food services
- Public administration



# Madison County

## Population Summary

Population: 30,120<sup>3</sup>  
42,067 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 40.5<sup>2</sup>

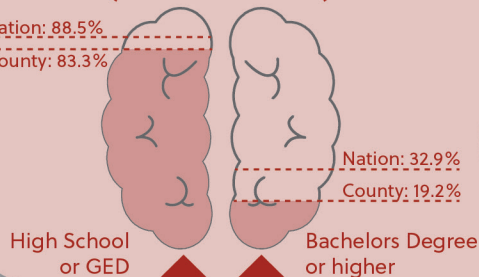


**Municipalities:** Carlton, Colbert, Comer, Danielsville\*, Hull, and Ila

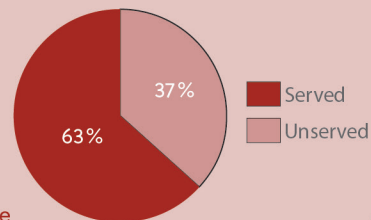
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

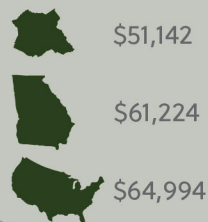
Nation: 88.5%  
County: 83.3%



## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

- Burger King
- Christopher Bridge, LLC
- College Pro Landscaping
- Foothills Education Charter High School
- Ingles Markets, Inc.
- Madison County Health & Rehabilitation
- Medlink Georgia, Inc.
- Smi Composites, LLC
- Spg Construction, LLC
- Vital Workforce Solutions, Inc.

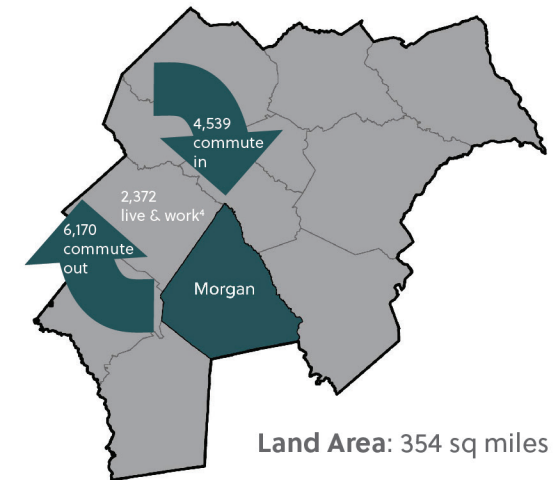
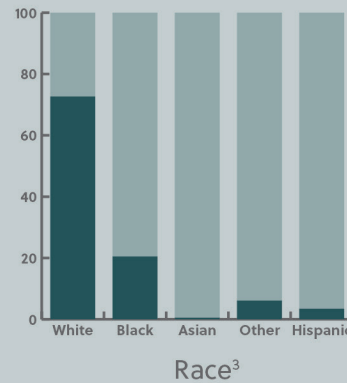
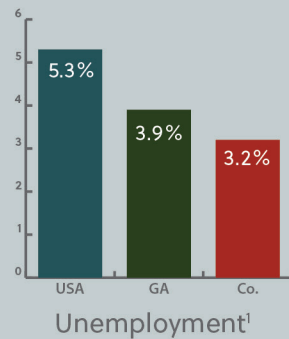
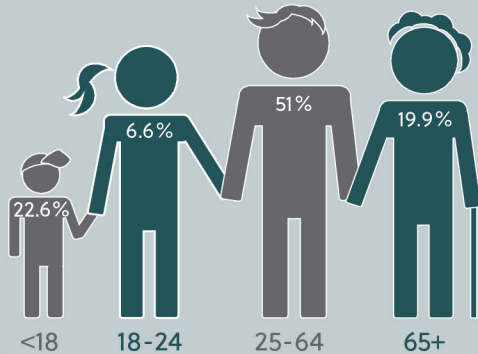
## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- Educational services
- Manufacturing
- Retail trade
- Health care & social assistance
- Construction
- Accommodation & food services
- Transportation & warehousing
- Administrative, support, waste management
- Public Administration
- Professional, scientific, technical services

# Morgan County

## Population Summary

Population: 20,097<sup>3</sup>  
21,529 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 44.1<sup>2</sup>

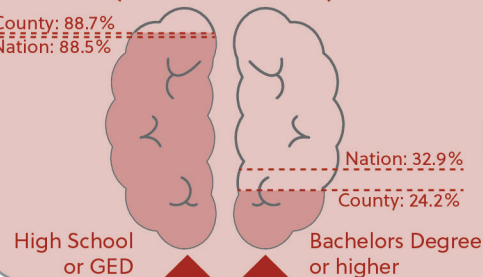


**Municipalities:** Bostwick, Buckhead, Madison\*, and Rutledge

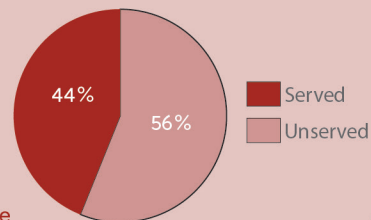
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

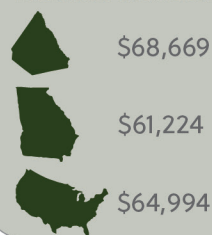
County: 88.7%  
Nation: 88.5%



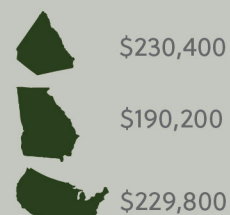
## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

1. Amtico International, Inc.
2. Bard Manufacturing Co, Inc.
3. C R Bard, Inc.
4. Flambeau, Inc.
5. Georgia-Pacific Wood Products, LLC
6. Ingles Markets, Inc.
7. Lowe's Home Centers, Inc.
8. Pennington Seed, Inc.
9. Townsend Tree Service Company, LLC
10. Walmart

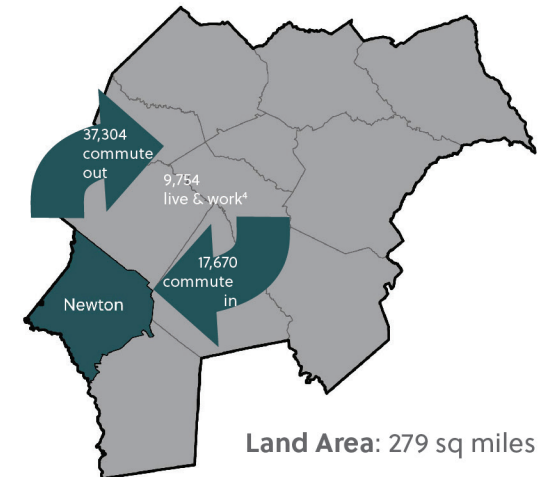
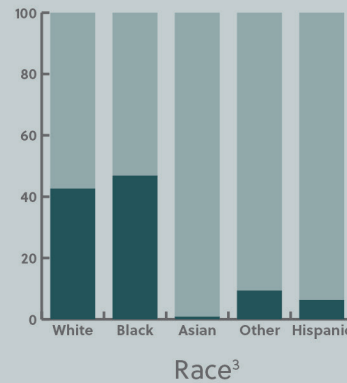
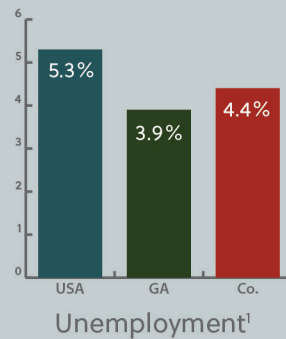
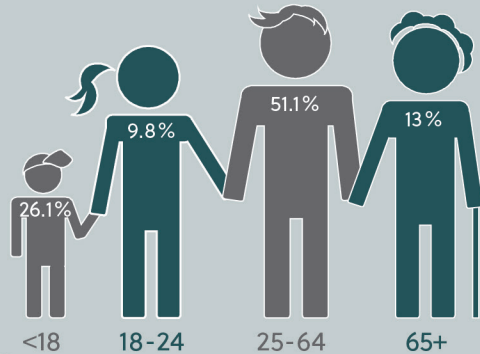
## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

1. Manufacturing
2. Educational services
3. Construction
4. Accommodation & food services
5. Health care & social assistance
6. Retail trade
7. Public Administration
8. Professional, scientific, technical services
9. Transportation & warehousing
10. Administrative, support, waste management

# Newton County

## Population Summary

Population: 112,483<sup>3</sup>  
171,036 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 36.5<sup>2</sup>

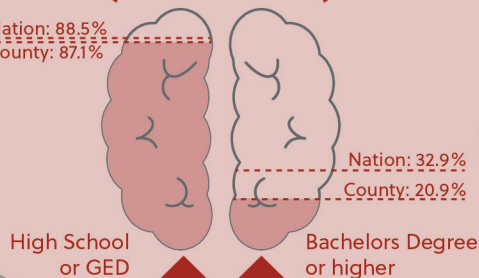


**Municipalities:** Covington\*, Mansfield, Newborn, Porterdale, and Oxford

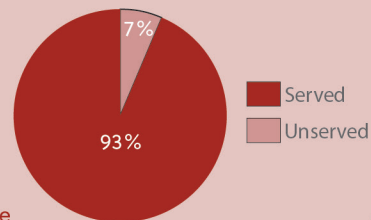
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

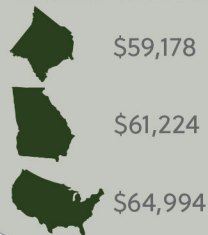
Nation: 88.5%  
County: 87.1%



## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

- Covington Moulding Co
- FiberVisions, Inc.
- General Mills Operations, Inc.
- Hire Dynamics, LLC
- Landmark Financial Services
- Newton Health System, Inc.
- Pactiv Corporation
- Sas Retail Merchandising
- The Kroger Company
- Walmart

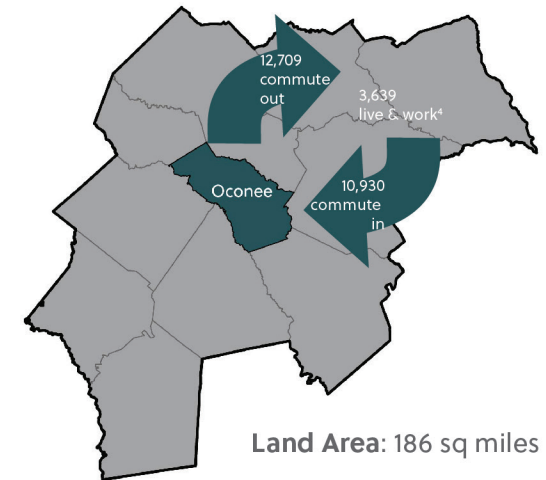
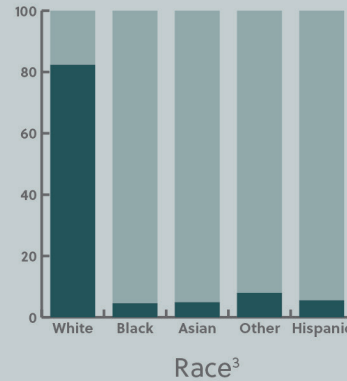
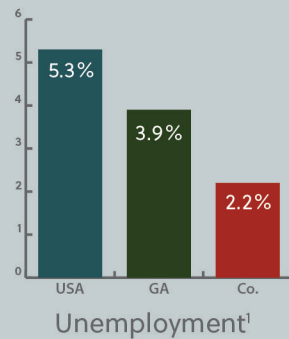
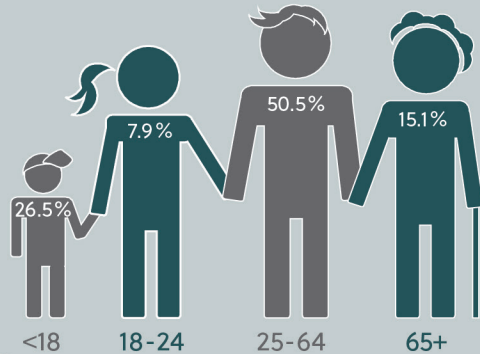
## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- Manufacturing
- Health care & social assistance
- Retail trade
- Educational services
- Construction
- Accommodation & food services
- Transportation & warehousing
- Public Administration
- Administrative, support, waste management
- Professional, scientific, technical services

# Oconee County

## Population Summary

Population: 41,799<sup>3</sup>  
64,008 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 40.1<sup>2</sup>

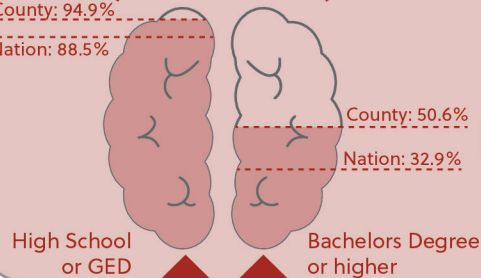


**Municipalities:** Bishop, Bogart, North High Schools, and Watkinsville

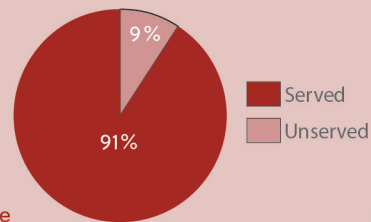
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

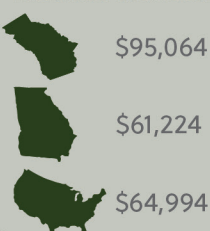
County: 94.9%  
Nation: 88.5%



## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



**Poverty:**  
6.2%

## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

- Athens Academy, Inc.
- Benson'S Old Home Kitchens Bakery, LLC
- Caterpillar, Inc.
- Coastal Home Care, LLC
- Lowe's Home Centers, Inc.
- Prince Avenue Christian School
- Publix Super Markets, Inc.
- The Home Depot
- The Kroger Company
- Zaxby's

## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

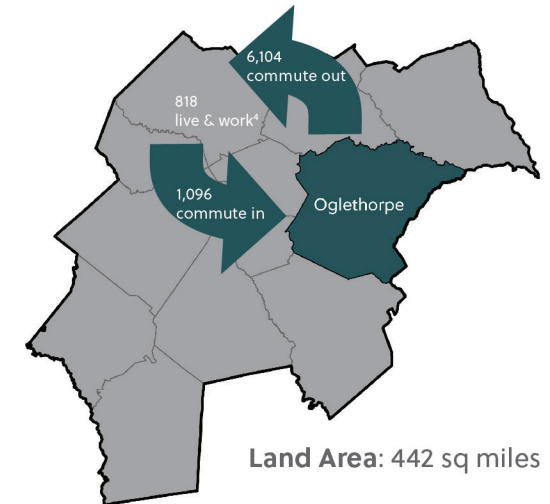
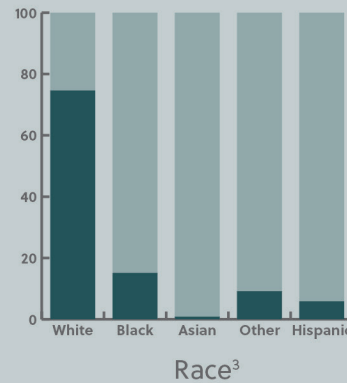
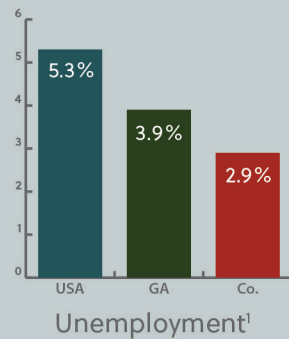
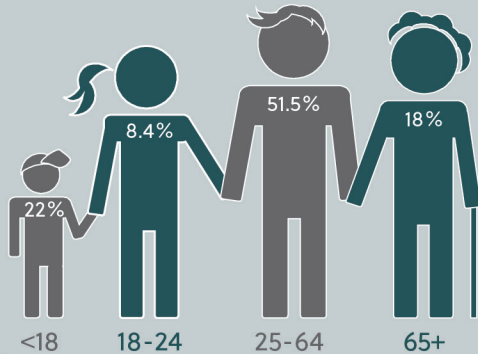
- Educational services
- Health care & social assistance
- Retail trade
- Professional, scientific, technical services
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Real estate, rental, leasing
- Administrative, support, waste management
- Public administration
- Accommodation & food services



# Oglethorpe County

## Population Summary

Population: 14,825<sup>3</sup>  
20,704 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 42.7<sup>2</sup>

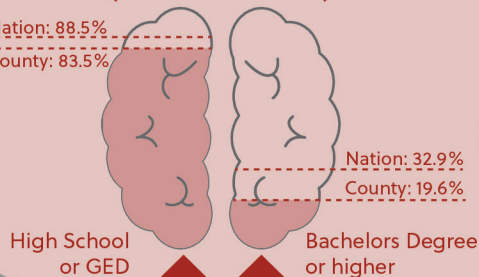


**Municipalities:** Arnoldsville, Crawford, Lexington\*, and Maxeys

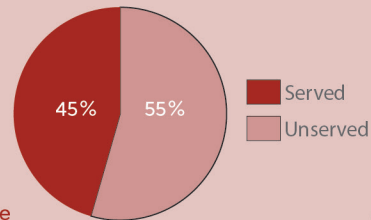
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

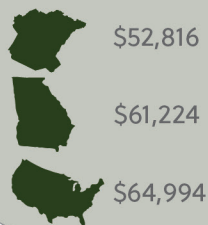
Nation: 88.5%  
County: 83.5%



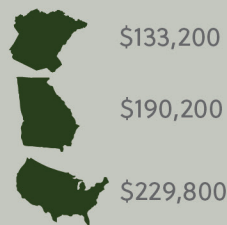
## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

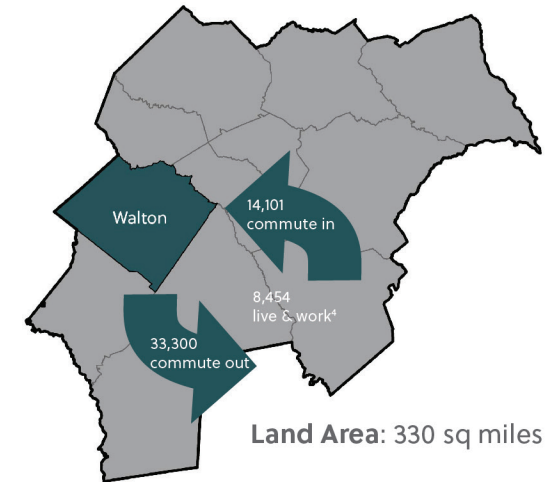
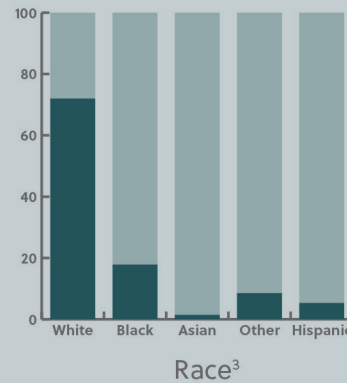
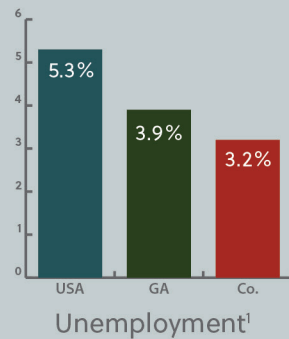
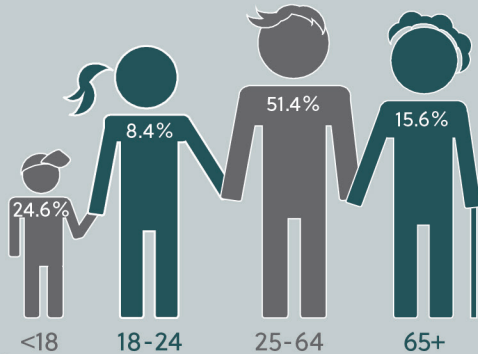
- Classic City Solutions, Inc.
- G Brand BBQ, LLC
- Greater Georgia Printers, Inc.
- J & J Chemical Company
- James Greenhouses, Inc.
- LCS Community Employment, LLC
- Oglethorpe Children's Academy, LLC
- Quiet Oaks Nursing Home
- Raven Manufacturing
- The Commercial Bank

## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- Educational services
- Health care & social assistance
- Manufacturing
- Retail Trade
- Construction
- Transportation & warehousing
- Accommodation & food services
- Administrative, support, waste management
- Wholesale trade
- Public administration

## Population Summary

Population: 96,673<sup>3</sup>  
132,924 people by 2050<sup>5</sup>  
Median Age: 39.1<sup>2</sup>

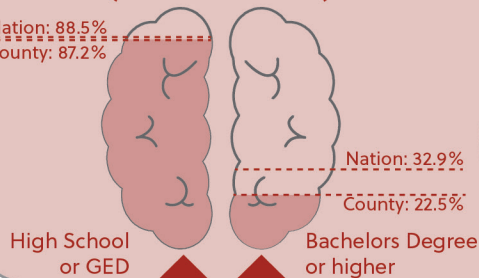


**Municipalities:** Good Hope, Loganville, Monroe\*, Social Circle, and Walnut Grove

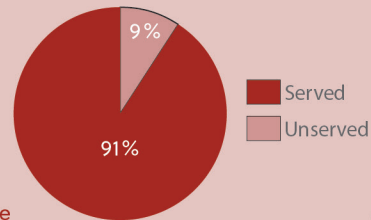
\* County Seat

## Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old)

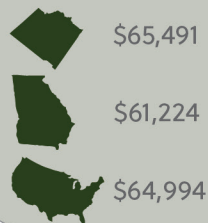
Nation: 88.5%  
County: 87.2%



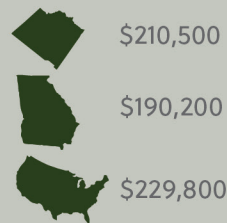
## Broadband Access<sup>6</sup>



## Median Household Income:



## Median Home Value



## Top 10 Employers:

1. Adp Totalsource FI XVII, Inc.  
2. BXL Covington  
3. Hitachi Automotive Products (USA), Inc.  
4. Leggett & Platt, Inc.  
5. Pike Electric, LLC  
6. Standridge Color Corp  
7. The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co  
8. Trilogy Foods, LLC  
9. Tucker Door & Trim, LLC  
10. Walmart

## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

1. Retail Trade
2. Manufacturing
3. Educational services
4. Health care & social assistance
5. Construction
6. Public administration
7. Transportation & warehousing
8. Professional, scientific, technical services
9. Accommodation & food services
10. Administrative, support, waste management



# Chapter 3: SWOT Analysis



The CEDS Committee and NEGRC staff conducted a regional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis following a review of county and regional demographic and economic data. In addition, 50 regional community members, elected officials, and local government staff provided insight via an online questionnaire.

The following page lists the key themes and topics identified by the SWOT analysis; this investigation assisted the CEDS Committee in articulating the Action Plan, presented in Chapter 4.

“

*Our region should focus on being purposefully branded and unique as to not be absorbed by Metro Atlanta.*

”

“

*We live in a wonderful place, the more we help those around us, the more we will benefit.*

”

## Strengths

1. Infrastructure
2. Labor pool
3. Quality of life (lifestyle options)
4. Educational resources (UGA, Athens Tech, GA Piedmont, Lanier Tech)
5. Recreational opportunities
6. Diversity of workforce opportunities/ job market (small and large)
7. Number of workers available
8. Natural Resources
9. Relationships with state and utilities
10. Willing volunteers
11. Proximity to Metro Atlanta (close and far away)
12. Range of housing
13. Strong small business environment
14. Regional collaborations (Stanton Springs)
15. Good historical work ethic/ workforce
16. Post-secondary education opportunities
17. Location

## Weaknesses

1. Lack of infrastructure to meet growth
2. Funding capital/lack of funds available
3. Lack of interconnectivity of transportation/transit between communities
4. Lack of inventory of industrial & residential (housing)
5. Communities/communication patterns
6. Regional collaboration (everyone else minus Stanton Springs)
7. Metro Flight
8. Lack of Broad-band
9. Alternative transportation (bike, trails)
10. Transportation safety
11. Policy barrier with transit
12. Growing NIMBYS (Not In My Back Yard)
13. Rapid growth
14. Not enough affordable/ workforce housing

## Opportunities

1. Growth
2. Holistic approach to Education
3. Educational Institutions
4. Regional cooperation/ collaboration
5. Community identity
6. EV industry = EV corridor (EV: Electric Vehicle)
7. College + Career academics
8. Rail infrastructure
9. Rebirth of historic downtown for these amenities new population
10. ECV: Electronic Convenience Vehicles
11. "Come back in"/prevent rural brain drain (the out-migration of young, college educated workers from the rural areas)/ Control of urban spiral.
12. Identity of Communities

## Threats

1. Anti-change sentiment
2. Lack of housing/ workforce/ transportation
3. Lack of utility infrastructure
4. Higher density in city
5. Rebirth of historic downtowns
6. Lack of Public transportation
7. Public Parks
8. Lack/aging infrastructure
9. Politics
10. Housing
11. Internet connectivity - educational needs to be met for rural areas.



# Chapter 4: Action Plan



The action items identified herein are intended to guide economic development throughout Northeast Georgia by building upon existing strengths and pursuing opportunities that will overcome weaknesses and reduce the impacts of threats to the region's economy

The CEDS Committee and NEGRC staff identified the following economic development Action Items for the Northeast Georgia Region:

1. Advance a framework for a dynamic **transportation** network
2. Encourage a holistic and complimentary **technology and energy** sector across the region
3. Improve and expand **broadband** access in the region
4. Foster a competitive and **educated** workforce
5. Promote and cultivate **social and environmental equity** throughout communities

The following Action Plan identifies strategies, tasks, and performance measures for each Action Item.



The **Resilience Builder** emblem highlights opportunities to strengthen economic resilience against natural disasters, changing weather patterns, economic downturns, pests or disease, and other threats facing the region's economy

**Note:** Action Items are not numbered in order of importance. Key facilitators should prioritize the following based on existing capabilities, available funding, and achievability.

## 1 Advance a framework for a dynamic **transportation** network

- Prioritize regional transportation projects
- Assess regional opportunities for intermodal transportation development (focus targeting workforce)
- Expand electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure across the region

## 2 Encourage a holistic and complimentary **technology and energy** sector across the region

- Match industries that fit the goals and strengths of the region
- Assess the region's energy sources and identify areas for renewable energy integration (solar, wind, hydro, etc.)
- Improve relationship between agricultural land uses & nearby educational institutions

## 3 Improve and expand **broadband** access in the region

- Develop public, private, & non-profit partnerships to expand broadband infrastructure
- Ensure a regional network of free public broadband access
- Educate local stakeholders on the broadband language
- Support the development of & transition to digital information networks

## 4 Foster a competitive and **educated** workforce

- Create new and expand existing business incubators and shared spaces and/or equipment
- Support and expand advanced (high school and higher) skill-building programs
- Issue area education and training in the development sector (builders, knowledge base, homebuyer education, etc.)

## 5 Promote and cultivate **social and environmental equity** throughout communities

- Distinguish Northeast Georgia as a socially responsible community
- Monitor and encourage progress on key issues identified by the Middle Ocmulgee, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee, and Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Councils
- Support local disaster plan updates and emergency communication networks
- Promote land use efficiency and access to resources for vulnerable populations.



# Action Item 1: Transportation

## **GOAL:** Advance a framework for a dynamic transportation network

Transportation needs are inextricably linked to land use, so the region's transportation network must continue expanding along with the region's population. However, to keep pace with changing transportation needs, the region should prioritize building a diverse system of transportation infrastructure that includes multi-use trails, commuter rail, public transportation, and better street connectivity between neighborhoods and commercial areas. The region must also respond to the coming electric vehicle revolution by building the foundation for EV charging stations across the region.

### **Key Facilitators:**

*Local Government Planning Departments, Planning Commissions, Elected Officials, Transit Agencies, Georgia Department of Transportation, NEGR, Private Developers*



A diverse and dynamic transportation system with multiple mode options will allow the system to continue functioning if extreme stress impacts one single mode. Additionally, shifting to EVs using regionally produced electricity will alleviate the stress of fluctuating gas prices on the region's residents and businesses.



## **Strategy 1**

### **Prioritize regional transportation projects**

#### **Tasks:**

- Compare applicable MPO plans and county comprehensive plans to identify regional transportation priority projects (including multi-use trails and commuter rail).
- Encourage involvement of local governments in their respective MPOs.
- Identify applicable/relevant funding programs through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) for projects of regional significance

#### **Performance Measures:**

- Grant dollars dedicated to regional projects funded through GDOT or other transportation funding sources
- Reports of newly improved lane mileage on state and U.S. routes

## **Strategy 2**

### **Assess regional opportunities for intermodal transportation development (focus targeting on workforce)**

#### **Tasks:**

- Determine feasibility of a regional transit authority
- Communicate urban/rural designations to local governments for transit development
- Collaborate with GDOT in regard to the "Greenfield Corridor Alternative" of the Atlanta to Charlotte Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan


#### **Performance Measures:**

- Number of residents served by public transit extent in region
- Track investments in new rail infrastructure in region

## **Strategy 3**

### **Expand electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure across the region**

#### **Tasks:**

-  Identify current conditions of EV market and map existing infrastructure extent
- Create prioritization list for EV charging stations region-wide
- Identify applicable/relevant funding programs through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) for local governments

#### **Performance Measures:**

- Grant dollars dedicated to EV charging network within region
- Growth rate of available charging stations



# Action Item 2: Technology & Energy

## **GOAL:** Encourage a holistic and complimentary (or resilient) technology and energy sector across the region

Northeast Georgia is endowed with economic and natural resources that, if capitalized upon, will allow the region to continue to thrive in the future. The region should identify its industrial and commercial strengths and prioritize attracting suitable new businesses. The region can also capitalize on its renewable energy potential to improve its energy independence. However, the region should preserve its agricultural heritage by bringing in educational programs and the public to participate.

### **Key Facilitators:**

*Georgia Power, Local Electric Membership Cooperative's (EMC), MEAG Power Participant Communities, Local Governments, NEGRC, Local Development Authorities, Local Energy Subsidiaries*

*MEAG Participants of the Northeast Georgia Region: City of Commerce, City of Covington, City of Elberton, City of Monroe, City of Monticello, City of Oxford*

*EMC's of the Northeast Georgia Region: Central Georgia EMC, Hart EMC, Jackson EMC, Snapping Shoals EMC, Rayle EMC, Walton EMC*




Renewable energy is key to local energy independence, which would buffer the region from national and global energy supply disruptions. Similarly, local food production can help make the region less vulnerable to national or international food supply-chain shocks.



## Strategy 1

Match industries that fit the goals and strengths of the region

### Tasks

-  Analyze strengths of the regional energy network and share that information with local governments and development authorities
- Create a list of ideal industry types for the region
- Utilize technology platforms to collaboratively market available commercial and industrial land across the region (Note: this already exists at the state level through the Georgia ED Dept and GA Power; reach out to Kristen Miller for reference)


### Performance Measures

- Identification of key strengths and weaknesses in energy sector
- Growth in the number of jobs in target industries
- Number of new businesses in target industries relocating to or starting in the region

## Strategy 2

Assess the region's energy sources and identify areas for renewable energy integration (solar, wind, hydro, etc.)

### Tasks

- Engage private industry to provide internal education and SWOT analysis
-  Partner with state and federal partners to support services and programs guided toward renewable energy production
- Offer targeted training and educational programs for local government staff and elected officials

### Performance Measures

- Total megawatts of energy produced by renewable sources in region
- Number of public and private dollars invested in renewable energy production in region

## Strategy 3

Improve relationship between agricultural land uses & nearby educational institutions

### Tasks

-  Encourage opportunities for the public to directly benefit from local and industrial agriculture operations (ex. farmers markets, farm-to-table or farm-to-school programs, commercial and industrial farms, etc).
- Provide publicly accessible information on the economic impacts of local industries including timber and agriculture.
- Update local land use plans and development regulations to mitigate conflicts between intense agricultural uses, industrial uses, residential development, and sensitive environmental resources.

### Performance Measures

- Number of jobs created and retained by agricultural industries
- Expansion of local agritourism businesses
- Student enrollment rate of educational programs available for agricultural professions



# Action Item 3: Broadband

## **GOAL:** Improve and expand **broadband** access in the region and energy sector across the region

Access to high-speed broadband internet is essential in today's connected world and will only become more important. Broadband is key to communities developing and expanding job-creating businesses and providing public services. It can also provide access to online education resources and job search opportunities for workers. A significant portion of the Northeast Georgia region is considered rural and broadband coverage in these areas will be an important effort in the coming years.

### **Key Facilitators:**

*Broadband Providers, Local Governments, Economic Development Authorities*




A resilient communication network is imperative during times of emergency. Making broadband access universal can help governments communicate essential information to residents during natural or human-caused disasters.



## Strategy 1

Develop public, private, & non-profit partnerships to expand broadband infrastructure

### Tasks

-  Identify service gaps and methods for broadband expansion
- Review local planning documents, permitting procedures, and regulations to ensure state and federal funding eligibility and competitiveness (ex. Broadband Ready Certification)
- Appoint a local official/ expert to liaison broadband expansion discussions
- Hold conversations between local governments and providers (local EMCs and private providers) to discuss feasibility of broadband projects and collaborate on state/ federal funding applications
- Develop understandings of the confidence/ risk of investments into broadband infrastructure

### Performance Measures

- Number of new businesses / households served by broadband expansion project(s) in the region
- Number of communities in the region certified as Broadband Ready by DCA

## Strategy 2

Ensure a regional network of free public broadband access

### Tasks

- Review local planning documents to determine if efforts are being taken locally to identify public access points
- Facilitate discussions with local stakeholders regarding planning of publicly accessible Wi-Fi
- Use state and local data to map available public Wi-Fi locations across the region

### Performance Measures

- Inclusion of public broadband access initiatives in local comprehensive plans
- Understanding and mapping of available state and local data

## Strategy 3

Educate local stakeholders on the broadband language

### Tasks

- Host a broadband education series with knowledgeable guest speakers
- Collaborate with local colleges and universities to determine avenues for business development in the technology / broadband sector

### Performance Measures

- Number of local stakeholders who participate in education series
- Inventory of educational programs available in the region for broadband-related professions

## Strategy 4

Support the development of & transition to digital information networks

### Tasks

- Develop structured outlines for public entities' web content to promote consistency, recognition, and authenticity of online content
- Establish and maintain platforms and campaigns to promote local businesses, organizations, and initiatives

### Performance Measures

- Development of local promotional platforms
- Offering of trainings for local businesses / organizations
- Reported increases in online sales / patronage of local businesses due to online presence



# Action Item 4: Education

## GOAL: Foster a competitive and educated workforce

Education is one of the most powerful ways of reducing poverty and increasing the efficiency of organizations, and entrepreneurship is key to accelerating innovative economic growth. Local governments should have an active role in promoting education and entrepreneurship by providing the resources needed to promote a growth-oriented education and business environment.

### **Key Facilitators:**

*Boards of Education (BOE), Technical Colleges, Universities, Private Industry Representatives, WIOA and Other Workforce Training Organizations, Economic Development Authorities, Local Governments*




Economic downturns and industrial changes can threaten economic prosperity if the region is not prepared. A highly educated workforce capable of creating new business opportunities will help the region bounce back faster from systemic economic misfortune.



## Strategy 1

### Create new and expand existing business incubators and shared spaces and/or equipment

#### Tasks

- Work with local high schools and technical colleges to expand existing business incubators and program new shared spaces and equipment.
-  Develop public, private, and non-profit partnerships to provide support networks and guidance opportunities to regional entrepreneurs
- Evaluate local regulatory and amenity environment in relation to business startups and entrepreneurs
- Identify the needs of and solutions for underserved entrepreneurs
- Examine feasibility of dedicating portions of underused facilities in a community to incubatory efforts

#### Performance Measures

- Inventory active business incubators available in the region
- Sample the number of jobs created and retained by businesses within business incubators
- Track annual business “births”

## Strategy 2

### Support and expand advanced (high school and higher) skill-building programs

#### Tasks

- Expand programs that build soft skills alongside certification or training.
- Expand work training and placement programs in cooperation with local technical colleges, businesses, and industries.


#### Performance Measures

- Internship placement in local jobs
- Student enrollment numbers in NE Georgia region academies and universities
- Post-graduate placement rate in local jobs

## Strategy 3

### Issue area education and training in the development sector (builders, knowledge base, homebuyer education, etc.)

#### Tasks

- Engage private industry to provide internal education and SWOT analysis
-  Identify gaps in skilled workforce and construction industry needs
- Partner with private, non-profit, and state entities to engage and educate (participate in local area GICH programs, attend housing authority meetings, etc.)

#### Performance Measures

- Inventory of regional GICH participants
- Growth vs. demand of workforce in construction industry
- Number of homes built vs. population growth



# Action Item 5: Equity

## **GOAL:** Promote and cultivate social and environmental equity throughout communities

It is the responsibility of local governments to ensure that all residents of the region benefit from economic growth equally regardless of race, gender, age, or ability. Local governments must also ensure that growth does not come at the expense of vital natural resources in the region, such as the region's water supply or natural land. Humans and wildlife vitally depend on these resources. The support and preservation of wildlife diversity and well-being is as equally important as human equity regarding sustainable economic growth.

### **Key Facilitators:**

*Local Government Planning Departments, Private Industries and Businesses, Economic Development Authorities, Health Service Providers, Non-Profits, NEGRC, Water Planning Commissions, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services*



Reducing inequality can help decrease the social vulnerability of disadvantaged communities, which can help improve their resilience to external stressors. Preserving key watershed areas can help reduce the risk of extreme flooding events and improve water quality.



## Strategy 1

### Distinguish Northeast Georgia as a socially responsible community

#### Tasks

- Identify areas of wage and race disparity across the region and determine strategies for mitigation
- Review local plans to determine if local steering committees and public input are representative of the local demographics
- Promote sensitive land use practices that strive to prevent environmental justice concerns


#### Performance Measures

- Quantifiable reduction in wage disparity between races
- Demographic makeup of local plan steering committees
- Reduction in number of brownfields in the region

## Strategy 2

### Monitor and encourage progress on key issues identified by the Middle Ocmulgee, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee, and Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Councils

#### Tasks

-  Identify imperiled waterways in the Northeast Georgia region
- Encourage development of passive recreation and conservation corridors along major rivers
- Develop water quality and water capacity goals region-wide


#### Performance Measures

- Track water quality parameters over time
- Inventory of passive recreation options and conservation land region-wide

## Strategy 3

### Support local disaster plan updates and emergency communication networks

#### Tasks

-  Assist communities with updating local disaster plans
- Identify funding opportunities for emergency services and equipment

#### Performance Measures

- Up-to-date PDM's for all counties
- Awarded PDM grants and/or other project funding
- Inventory of new facilities that offer emergency support services

## Strategy 4

### Promote land use efficiency and access to resources for vulnerable populations.

#### Tasks

- Inventory regional industrial parks and available land to reduce greenfield development
- Identify opportunities to attract new businesses or expand on nearby specialized clusters.
- Determine barriers of access to employment clusters across the region

#### Performance Measures

- Track growth rate of industrial parks
- Track number of new business cluster proposals (DRI's)
- Identify changes in average travel times for residents per county



# Tracking Progress



The PGS Committee will serve as the monitoring entity for the Northeast Georgia CEDS. In this capacity, PGS Committee members will review the CEDS at least annually to identify progress made in implementing the five Action Items described in the Action Plan.

The NEGRC is governed by a Council of county, municipal, private sector, and state representatives. The Planning & Government Services (PGS) Committee of the NEGRC Council is one of four standing committees, established to consider potential PGS Division projects for inclusion in the NEGRC annual work program, make determinations about Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs), and perform a variety of other functions. On a (typically) monthly basis, the PGS Committee meets to discuss business activity, infrastructure projects, and other planning and government service-related matters within the region. Monthly meetings also provide an opportunity to report matters of importance or interest to the full Council.

Findings through the implementation of the CEDS will be presented to the full Council. Key Facilitators for each Action Item will provide the NEGRC PGS Division performance measure results to be compiled and provided to the PGS Committee prior to each CEDS progress review.

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# Appendix

## 1- CEDS ANNUAL REPORT REVIEW (CEDSAPR)

October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023

### Introduction

This report is submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission that serves as an Economic Development District (NEGEDD). Its purpose is to report on the progress of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) implementation. The NEGEDD's CEDS was adopted in September 2022 to cover a five-year period. This report serves as one of the four CEDS Annual Performance Reports (CEDSAPR) required for submission to the EDA Regional Office.

The CEDSAPR includes the following twelve counties served by the NEGEDD's region: Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton. The reported activities of the NEGEDD, more broadly, addresses the five Action Items and seventeen corresponding strategies developed and contained in the adopted CEDS (Chapter 4). When appropriate, updated information is provided on these strategies and their implementation. This report does not contain any changes in the technical components of the EDA-approved CEDS; a public review was not required.

### CEDS Implementation (Performance Measures)

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

- Jobs Created/Retained: 54
- Public Sector Investments (Projects): 23
- Total Investments (Dollars): \$46,786,546

Regarding changes in the regional economy during the period, several occurrences are noteworthy. The region's manufacturing, wholesale trade, construction, and transportation & warehousing industries have continued to see increases. Companies involved in bio-tech research, supplies, and development have also continued to see increases. For long-term industry projections, Accommodation, Warehousing and Storage, and Food Services ranked as the region's top five growing industry sectors by percent change.

Unemployment in Northeast Georgia stayed consistent from 3.1% in January 2023 to 3.2% in September 2023 (Georgia Dept. of Labor (DOL) estimate). This extremely low unemployment rate is indicative of the labor shortages throughout the region, necessitating increased workforce training programs and incentives to attract and retain a regional workforce. This is particularly necessary given the major private investments underway in the region in the EV industry.



### **Community and Private Sector Participation**

The CEDS Committee for the 2022 update was comprised of public and private sector economic development professionals, educators, local business owners, and elected officials from throughout Northeast Georgia. The NEGEDD requested that each County Chair within the Northeast Georgia Economic Development District appoint two CEDS Committee members (1 planning professional, 1 economic development professional). Appointed members were primarily from the public sector.

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

In implementing the CEDS Action Plan during this reporting period, there was a significantly greater amount of public sector projects funded than private sector projects within the scope of the EDD organization. However, major private sector investments have either been completed or started construction within the region from ancillary activities of CEDS Committee members. For example, the SK Battery facility in Jackson County was completed during this period resulting in a projected \$2.6 billion private investment resulting in up to 3,000 new jobs created. Also, the Rivian EV manufacturing facility began site preparation during this reporting period and will have an estimated \$5 billion investment impact resulting in up to 7,500 jobs created.

### **Updates on Projects, Programs and Activities**

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

### **Joint Development Authority**

As noted in the CEDS, the Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia (JDANEG) is a key organization that functions, among other things, to implement regional economic development strategies. Due to staffing changes and reorganizations in some member counties, the JDANEG only met once during the reporting period. The NEGRC staff are reestablishing quarterly meetings for this Authority and will continue helping coordinate the efforts of the JDANEG through hosting meetings and through the facilitation of a strategic planning process helping to guide the Authority in its future endeavors.

### **Redevelopment Planning**

The NEGRC staff actively engaged communities in updating comprehensive plans and providing related strategic planning. In this reporting period, NEGRC staff have completed several comprehensive plan updates and strategic planning facilitations. During the reporting period, NEGRC staff met with the following counties (and their municipalities) leadership to review and discuss the effectiveness of planning objectives outlined in local economic development and comprehensive plans: Elbert County, Jackson County, City of Winterville,



City of Loganville Development Authority, and the City of Lexington. Meetings with Oconee and Morgan Counties are scheduled for 2024. NEGRC staff administered awarded various CDBG projects for improvements in the City of Oxford, City of Hoschton, Athens-Clarke County, and Madison County, and completed a senior center expansion in Oconee County. NEGRC staff also prepared the awarded Appalachian Regional Commission grant applications for a new, larger phase two water tower to serve the City of Hoschton and a water/wastewater feasibility study for Madison County.

### **Small Business/Innovation**

The NEGRC partnered with the Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute to perform a regional study to analyze and identify opportunities for artificial intelligence applications in various industries. This study is approximately 50% complete and is anticipated to be finished in 2024. NEGRC staff have also been actively building relationships with local chambers of commerce and other local business-focused entities to identify potential collaborative projects and needs.

### **Tourism**

Information is continuously provided to local governments on various resources and funding sources for promoting tourism in their communities. Planning assistance and grant development services were also provided to communities seeking to utilize historic preservation to promote tourism. For example, NEGRC staff provided Historic Preservation Commission support for the City of Elberton and the City of Social Circle, finalized the City of Maxeys National Historic District nomination, are assisting the cities of Union Point and Social Circle

in renewing their Certified Local Government statuses by performing local resource surveys through a grant awarded by the Georgia Historic Preservation Division, and facilitated a strategic planning session for Elbert County, Jackson County, City of Winterville, City of Loganville Development Authority, and the City of Lexington. The NEGRC facilitates Firefly Trail Inc.'s strategic planning and assists in preparing applications for state and federal funding, easement acquisition, and other steps toward implementation of the planned trail. These projects all focus on enhancing existing features of the Northeast Georgia region and promoting them for the growing tourism industry.

### **Water Planning**

Water infrastructure and resource planning remains a key component to the region's economic development efforts. In keeping with CEDS Action Item 5, the activities of the various Water Planning Councils were monitored and progress on key issues encouraged. NEGRC staff are attending meetings with the Savannah-Upper Ogeechee and Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Councils to monitor efforts and opportunities for assistance with protection efforts for a key source of drinking water for the region. Staff also facilitated two project development discussions for water system improvements (Morgan County and the City of Greensboro) and is administering one awarded grants in the City of Oxford. In addition, NEGRC staff are administering the awarded CDBG for wastewater infrastructure improvements in the City of Hoschton and City of Winder. NEGRC staff incorporate goals and objectives of the Water Planning Councils into regional and local plans and initiatives, where applicable.

## **Transportation**

NEGRC staff play a key role in assisting Firefly Trail Inc. in gaining community momentum to support a multi-use trail from downtown Athens (Athens-Clarke County) to Union Point (Greene County) that will promote tourism and economic development in each community it goes through. The majority of funding for the Athens-Clarke – City of Winterville portion of the trail has been approved as part of the Athens-Clarke County TSPLOST program. The Greene County segment was recently completed as part of a NEGRC prepared application for \$2.8M in Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program funding. NEGRC recently prepared another application for funding to complete portions of the City of Crawford trail segment.

have been noted on the attached project list.

NEGRC staff continue to offer rural transit planning support, including development of Transit Development Plans (TDP), to all 12 counties in the region. NEGRC has partnered with the Georgia Department of Transportation and Blue Cypress Consulting to perform a regional transit development plan that is currently underway. Planning activities began in Summer 2023 and the study is estimated to be completed in August 2024. This TDP will identify opportunities and needs for transit investment across the 12-county area, particularly focusing in the form of workforce transit in several locations.

## **Summary Information**

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

## CEDS APR Project List: October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023

Local Government	Project Description	Estimated Investment (Dollars)	Estimated Jobs (Created or Retained)	Funding Sources	Status
Social Circle	Certified Local Government Renewal	\$10,253	N/A	Historic Preservation Fund (\$10,253)	Completed
Athens-Clarke County	Food Bank of Northeast Georgia Expansion	\$17,327,891	TBD	CDBG-CV (\$8.8M)	In Progress (Under Construction)
Madison County/Industrial Development Authority	Water System Improvements	\$541,241	N/A	CDBG (\$529,676)	Completed
Jasper County	Family Nutritional Resource Center	\$1,264,000	N/A	CDBG (\$750K), SCRC (\$350K)	In Progress (funded)
Oconee County	Senior Center Expansion	\$858,396	3	CDBG (\$750K)	Completed
Elberton City	Bailey Building Rehabilitation	\$914,157	6 new	CDBG (\$734,157)	Completed
Oxford	Water System Improvements	\$1,300,000	N/A	CDBG (\$750K)	In Progress (under construction)
Hoschton	Water System Expansion	\$3,800,000	N/A	Appalachian Regional Commission (\$1M)	In Progress (under construction)
Crawford	Firefly Trail multi-use trail construction	\$1,250,000	N/A	Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Local Funds	In Progress (partially funded)
Greene County	Firefly Trail multi-use trail construction	\$2,800,000	N/A	Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Completed
Hoschton	Wastewater Improvements (Panther Court Neighborhood)	\$860,000	N/A	CDBG	In Progress (funded)



Local Government	Project Description	Estimated Investment (Dollars)	Estimated Jobs (Created or Retained)	Funding Sources	Status
Madison County	Madison County Agricultural Education Center	\$4,871,000	N/A	OneGeorgia, Local, Private, Congressional Reapportionments	In Progress (funded)
JDANEG/NEGRC	Joint Development Authority	N/A	N/A	Bonds	Ongoing
Winder	New housing construction	\$900,000	N/A	Community HOME Investment Program	In Progress (funded)
Oxford	Seoul Street Multi-Use Trail	\$2,200,000	N/A	Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget: Improving Neighborhood Outcomes in Disproportionally Impacted Communities Grant Application	In Progress (funded)
Madison County	County-wide Water/ Sewer Feasibility Analysis	\$77,000	N/A	Appalachian Regional Commission	In Progress (funded)
Madison County	Columbia Farms water main extension	\$1,812,608	45	Congressional Reapportionments	In Progress (funded)
Madison County	Madison County Senior Center Expansion	\$2,000,000	N/A	Congressional Reapportionments	In Progress (funded)
Hoschton	Mulberry Park Development	\$500,000	N/A	Land and Water Conservation Fund	In Progress (assisting with second-round application)

Local Government	Project Description	Estimated Investment (Dollars)	Estimated Jobs (Created or Retained)	Funding Sources	Status
Jackson County	North Oconee Heritage Mounds Park Development	\$500,000	N/A	Land and Water Conservation Fund	In Progress (assisting with second-round application)
Jackson County	Airport Sewer Extension	\$3,000,000	TBD	Appalachian Regional Commission	In Progress (assisting with engineering and project development)
Lexington	Downtown Master Plan	N/A	N/A	Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Local Funds	In Progress
Total:	23 Projects	\$46,786,546	54		

