

In the REGION

The Cities of Adel, Fitzgerald, and Tifton Awarded Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) Funds

On April 5, Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Christopher Nunn announced that twelve (12) local governments across the state will be awarded \$5.2 million in Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) funds to improve the housing stock within their communities, with three (3) of those being located in the Southern Georgia Region. Ten (10) communities were awarded funding to rehabilitate owner-occupied homes, and two (2) communities were awarded funding to build and renovate affordable single-family homes. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocated the annual funds to Georgia's CHIP program, which is administered by DCA.

CHIP awards communities through a competitive and collaborative effort that reviews and scores applicants who prioritize providing safe, decent, and affordable housing in Georgia communities.

The Cities of Adel, Fitzgerald, and Tifton all have areas of low-moderate income residents that live in substandard and dilapidated housing. Families in these areas will now be given the opportunity to improve their quality of life through housing rehabilitation and renovations that will create a safer and more affordable living environment.



A home in the Adel Target Area that is in need of rehabilitation.

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The Southern Georgia Regional Commission proudly serves Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware Counties.

Community and Economic Development

The Cities of Adel, Fitzgerald, and Tifton Awarded Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) Funds (continued)

The Cities of Adel, Fitzgerald, and Tifton each received \$400,000 to provide housing rehabilitation of owner-occupied houses. The SGRC Community and Economic Development Division will administer the Adel and Fitzgerald projects.



Another home in the Adel Target Area that is in need of rehabilitation.



Homes within the Fitzgerald Target Area that are in of rehabilitation.

Workforce Development

Statewide Rural Collaborative Coalition Meets in Macon

On Wednesday, March 29, Amy Jones, SGRC Business Services Coordinator, attended the statewide Rural Collaborative Coalition meeting in Madison, Georgia. Meeting attendees explored regional and community approaches to meet student, workforce, and economic development needs through collaborative action. Together they imagined how to use the best processes and engage the correct people to move from strategic planning to strategic action with shared goals and targeted results. The group explored a braided approach for top-down strategic planning linked with "on the ground" team efforts that guide tasks such as addressing barriers and gaps; exploring, adapting, and creating best practices; and making breakthroughs for shared success.



Attendees of the statewide Rural Collaborative Coalition Meeting.

Coffee County High School leaders attended the meeting to understand how to build community collaborations focused on training students for high-quality careers. Understanding how to foster partnerships within a workforce sector or for a program launch helps to ensure that the many systemic challenges impacting the workforce and economic development in an area get addressed to support sustainable success for a community.

Workforce Development Programs improve the quality of life in Southern Georgia through the development and continuous improvement of a skilled workforce. Through the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the program has built collaborative partnerships and provided employment and training opportunities for thousands of unemployed, underemployed, and dislocated workers across the Southern Georgia region.

To get involved or to learn more about workforce development in Region 11, contact Amy Jones at ajones@sgrc.us.

Planning & Transportation

SGRC Planning & Transportation Division Shares Program Updates

Regional Plan Update-

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) is currently updating the Regional Plan for the 18-county Southern Georgia region. In addition to steering committee meetings, three public open houses were held in libraries in the following cities: Tifton, Valdosta, and Waycross, in order to encourage public engagement in the planning process. The Regional Plan Update is scheduled to be transmitted to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) on April 26, 2023.

Hahira Traffic Studies-

The City of Hahira is partnering with the Valdosta Lowndes MPO (VLMPO), Transport Studio, and Gresham Smith on the Hahira Traffic Studies a set of traffic analyses for two areas within the city, an elementary school and a park. SGRC held two public open house meetings at the Hahira Depot, with the final project report anticipated in April of this year. Transport Studio created an interactive web tool with a social app to gain feedback from the community.

Hahira Area Traffic Studies

Why Plan Now?
The Hahira Area Traffic Studies are a unique opportunity to coordinate transportation investments and land use plans to promote the development character envisioned by the community. With you, we're making plans now to:

- Establish a shared vision
- Optimize land use and transportation network performance
- Promote safe access
- Align new transportation connections with public and private development plans
- Ensure pedestrian-oriented design

Travel safely. Grow intentionally. Keep our character.

We're not starting from scratch.
The master plan recommendations will build on the Comprehensive Plan for Lowndes County and the Cities of Dasher, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Valdosta; Vision2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan; Valdosta-Lowndes Common Community Vision; SGRC Regional Plan; Valdosta Lowndes Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan; the VLPRA Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and other local and regional plans.

A Growing Small Town
The traffic study areas are both destined to be centers of community life. Both locations are desirable to develop because of the success of the Hahira area, its small town charm, great schools, accessible location, and available land.

Hahira Elementary School area

- Access to the school is limited
- Concerns about safety and congestion at and around the school
- Future enrollment will increase traffic
- Residential development ongoing
- Newly paved roads opening soon
- Increasing pressure to grow
- Greenspace zoned to remain agricultural

North Lowndes Park area

- Regional recreation center - track, soccer fields, skate park, playground, multi-purpose fields, baseball/softball, trails, indoor sports facility
- Sports tourism destination with visitors from surrounding states
- Hotels, retail, restaurants for visitors and residents coming in the future
- Limited access to the park
- Truck traffic
- Highway 122 @ I-75 interchange area

Big Idea: Greenways and Trails

- Franks Creek riverwalk trail under I-75
- Pedestrian bridge over I-75
- Multituse path network to and from the park
- Sidewalks and bike paths along streets connect neighborhoods, schools, libraries, activity centers to trails
- Regional trail network connects parks and other major destinations

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Hahira

Images from the story map on the interactive web tool created by Transport Studio.

Area Agency on Aging



Aging Program Manager Linda Gail, Assistant Aging Division Director Shawn Taylor, and Aging Division Director Scott Courson

SGRC-AAA Named First in the State for Seniors Served in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging (SGRC-AAA) Division Director Scott Courson is extremely pleased to announce that the AAA's Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 received the First Place Certificate of Award acknowledging the AAA for serving the highest number of SFMNP participants in Georgia. This is the second consecutive year the SGRC-AAA SFMNP has received this award.

The SGRC-AAA issued and redeemed 3,200 vouchers during the 2022 market season and served more participants than the previous year. The AAA staff who administered the SFMNP include Shawn Taylor, Assistant Director of Aging Services, and Linda Gail, Aging Program Manager.

The upcoming SFMNP program will begin in May 2023 and continue through September 2023. Each person age 60 and older who qualifies for the program will receive \$50 worth of fresh fruits and vegetables from an SFMNP-approved farmer. Assistant Director of Aging Services Taylor said the program will serve more seniors than ever in the SGRC region in the coming market season.

For more information on the SFMNP, contact Shawn Taylor at 888-732-4464 or 912-285-6097. For further information related to the SFMNP, visit the website at www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/senior-farmers-market-nutrition-program.

Small Business Lending

Small Business Lending Program Assists BlueWater Valdosta with SBA 504 Loan



BlueWater Valdosta located in Remerton

BlueWater Valdosta has been a mainstay college bar operating successfully in Remerton for over twenty years. Remerton, once known as Mill Town, is a small municipality entirely landlocked by the City of Valdosta and located just a few miles from Valdosta State University's (VSU) main campus. This area is a popular place for VSU students to live and socialize. It is home to shops, bars, and restaurants where students hang out. BlueWater Valdosta is one of a few businesses with live music performances, DJ-played music for dancing, and all types of beer, wine, and liquor. It is a full-service bar. The current owner, Blain Nobles, took ownership and management in early 2019. Through his leadership, BlueWater weathered the 2020 pandemic very well.

Nobles sought funding through the SGRC and Commercial Banking Company (CBC) to enable him to purchase the building, put on a new roof, and install a new HVAC system. An SBA 504 loan was the perfect option for financing the project. The Small Business Administration (SBA) approved the financing and will provide 40% of the funds at a low, fixed rate for 20 years, while CBC will provide 50% of the funds in participation. Nobles will provide 10% as a down payment. With this project, BlueWater will create three more jobs. The loan closed April 5, 2023, with an anticipated funding date of May 17th.

Geographic Information Services (GIS)

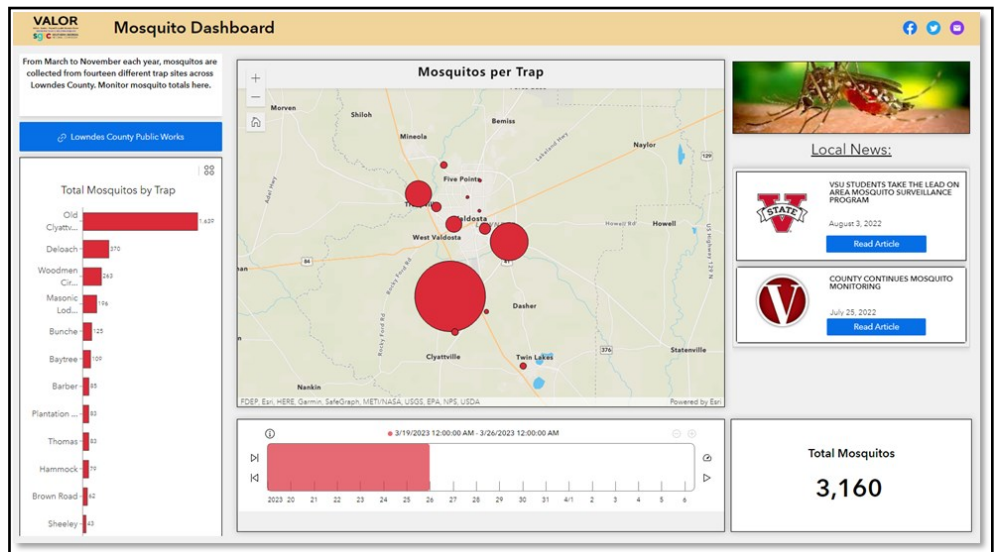
GIS Division Assists VSU and Lowndes County with Mosquito Monitoring

The Valdosta State University (VSU) West Nile Virus Surveillance Lab began trapping mosquitos last month to start the 2023 season. VSU is providing valuable data to Lowndes County and the SGRC to aid in the fight against mosquito-borne diseases. Collection reports are provided weekly throughout the spring, summer, and fall months to assist in GIS mapping efforts. This data will help decision-makers to make informed choices about where and how to target mosquito control efforts, ultimately reducing the risk of disease transmission.

Mosquito-borne diseases, such as West Nile Virus, threaten public health. These diseases are transmitted through mosquito bites, making it crucial to identify and control mosquito populations in high-risk areas. With the help of this data dashboard, decision-makers will have access to up-to-date information on mosquito populations, enabling them to prioritize resources and target mosquito control efforts effectively.

The collaboration between Valdosta State University, Lowndes County, and the SGRC is an excellent example of data leveraged to address public health concerns. The proactive approach of providing data each week underscores the importance of community partnerships in addressing health issues.

In the warmer months, it is critical to protect against mosquito bites. While individuals can take measures such as wearing long-sleeved clothing and using insect repellent, community-wide efforts such as targeted mosquito control are essential in reducing the risk of disease transmission. The data provided by Valdosta State University will play a vital role in these efforts and ultimately lead to healthier communities. For more information on SGRC-GIS services, contact Rachel Strom at rstrom@sgrc.us.



Mosquito Monitoring GIS Dashboard.

Contact the SGRC

SGRC Council 2023 Meeting Schedule

May 25, 2023 – 11:00 am
SGRC Waycross Office

June 22, 2023 – 11:00 am
The Venue in Pearson

~ **July- No Meeting** ~

August 24, 2023 – 11:00 am
SGRC Waycross Office

September 28, 2023 – 11:00 am
The Venue in Pearson

~ **October- No Meeting** ~

*Area Officials Appreciation Dinner
October 26, 2023 (subject to change)

~ **November- No meeting** ~
(combined with December meeting)

December 7, 2023 – 11:00 am
SGRC Valdosta Office
(subject to change)



**SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION**

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