

In the REGION

SGRC Council & Staff Updates

SGRC Council Member News

During the Southern Georgia Regional Commission’s (SGRC) Council meeting in Pearson on December 13th, Chair Joyce Evans swore in new member Barbara Maefield. Ms. Maefield is the newly elected Mayor of Nahunta, and will be representing Brantley County.



SGRC Service Awards

At December’s SGRC Council meeting, SGRC Loan Department Director, Michelle Frey, was presented a plaque marking her 30 years of dedicated service to the Regional Commission.



Regional Calendar

January 2019

- ⇒ 24 RC Council Meeting, Pearson
- ⇒ 25 Mayor’s Day, Atlanta

February 2019

- ⇒ 13 Lowndes County Bird Supper, Atlanta
- ⇒ 28 RC Council Meeting, Pearson

March 2019

- ⇒ 28 RC Council Meeting, Pearson
- ⇒ 6-8th GMA Newly Elected Officials Institute, Tifton

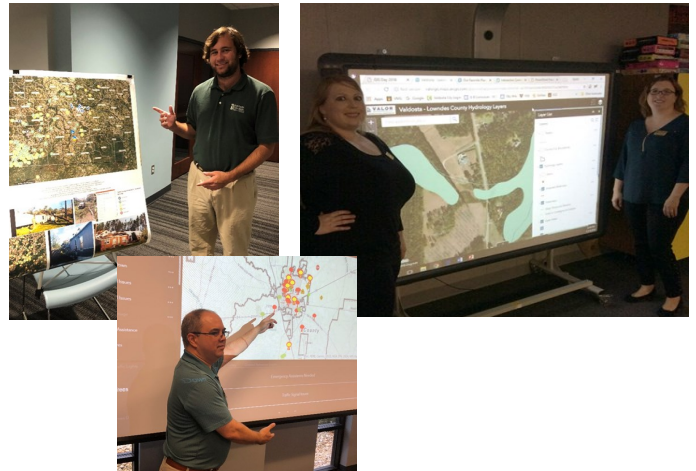
Happy GIS Day!

SGRC has participated in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Day through a variety of events over the last 17 years. From presentations at local schools, to displays at local libraries and tax assessors' offices, SGRC has not only spread the word on what GIS is, but also on how Southern Georgia is leading the pack in local government applications. Each year we highlight at least one way GIS is being used in our communities.

For GIS Day 2018, the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's GIS Team decided to divide and conquer! Michael Rivera and Dylan Owens held a demonstration of our Regional Emergency Center of Operation website/ interactive map at the Willis L. Miller Library in Valdosta to show the data collection services we provide during and after a weather event, and Kristen Varney and Whitney Rountree spent the morning with the Valdosta Middle School's STEM program, educating GIS young participants on and how Global Positioning Systems work. Although the library event focused on demonstration, the middle school event included an exercise and interactive application built for the students to help create GIS data!

If you have a question about this project or how SGRC GIS can help you meet your goals in 2019, please give us a call!

"Held each year on the Wednesday of National Geographic Society's Geography Awareness Week, GIS Day is a global event that celebrates geographic information system (GIS) technology, the innovative technology that uses geography to bring countless benefits to the world." ESRI



Mayor John Gayle was presented with the

Valdosta Mayor Receives Leadership Award

"National Award for Outstanding Elected Official Leadership" by the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) at the AMPO annual conference in San Antonio, Texas. This award recognizes Mayor Gayle's outstanding leadership skills during the T-SPLOST process when he collaborated with the local MPO and elected officials throughout the Southern Georgia Region. Mayor Gayle was nominated for this award by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and peer elected officials throughout the region.



SGRC Provides Baskets of Love for Area Seniors



Annually, during the month of December, staff members of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) participate in a project to donate “baskets of love” to seniors in the region. The project provides seniors with a Christmas they will not soon forget.

SGRC staff members, from both the Valdosta Office and the Waycross Office, volunteered to donate various items for the baskets. Staff of the Aging Division also devoted a portion of their time to the tasks of assembling the baskets and coordinating the delivery of them to area senior centers. Senior center managers assisted by selecting seniors who would most benefit from receipt of the baskets. A total of 40 seniors were given baskets filled with practical items such as blankets, food, cleaning supplies, and toiletries.

As one site manager explained, “The seniors who received the baskets were brought to tears by the items they received. They commented on how the baskets were a blessing because they often go without essential items due to a lack of resources.”

People may not think of paper towels or toothpaste as a gift, but many seniors who have little to no access to basic items greatly need and appreciate these things. Perhaps many are unaware of the number of area seniors living in poverty. According to the 2018 Georgia County Guide, thirteen of the area’s eighteen counties

have a higher percentage of seniors 65 and over living in poverty than that of the state average. Seniors in the Southern region are also more likely to live alone.

These challenges, coupled with the fact that the area is largely rural and sparsely populated, make it all the more difficult for seniors in the area to have their needs met.

SGRC staff members look forward to participating in the project each year. “There is an astonishing number of seniors who lack access to items that we take for granted,” said Shawn Taylor. “It is very rewarding to know that we are making a difference in the lives of so many seniors by providing a happier Christmas.”



“Baskets of Love” pictured above were delivered to needy seniors throughout the region.

“Building Momentum”

SGRC Transportation Outlook for 2019

Transportation in 2019 looks to build on the momentum that started back in 2017, with the first regional roundtable meetings to discuss a regional transportation sales tax, and the passage of HR 848 which created the Georgia House Commission on Transit Governance and Funding. These two initiatives will have a significant impact for many years to come as they serve to improve roads, bridges, and sidewalks and provide greater access and mobility to residents of Southern Georgia.

The House Commission on Transit Governance and Funding is comprised of Georgia legislators, transportation officials, and local representatives charged with studying transit throughout Georgia. The House Commission began its three year task by uniting the 13 transit operators in the Metro-Atlanta area under the newly created Atlanta Transit Link Authority, or ATL, as it is commonly known. The Commission then shifted its focus in 2018 to rural transit, including the Department of Human Services’ Coordinated Transportation, the Department of Community Health’s Medicaid Transportation, and the Department of Transportation’s Rural Public Transportation programs outside of the Metro-Atlanta area. Members of the commission, in conjunction with consultants from Deloitte, traveled across the state to hold greenhouse meeting sessions, as well as to hear presentations from technical colleges, workforce development agencies, aging services providers, and transportation

planners and practitioners. The culmination of their work is expected to be presented as a bill in the 2019 Georgia legislative session to address the needs of coordinated rural public transit throughout the state.

The passage of the regional transportation sales tax in May of 2018 for the collection of an additional penny beginning in October 2018 has drawn statewide attention. Revenue collections for the first two months of the sales tax are above estimates by 9%. Local communities have already begun to see the proceeds from this sales tax in monthly deposits. Many communities are using these funds to help fund local road departments and roadway improvements. GDOT expects the first projects on the regional investment list to be going to construction in the summer of 2019.

For more Transportation information, contact Corey Hull, Amy Martin, or JD Dillard, at 229-333-5277.



SGRC Loan Program Assists The Local Kitchen & Bar

The Local Kitchen and Bar is a hugely popular chef driven restaurant in downtown Tifton that has anchored a steadily growing customer base by creating an exceptional dining experience in the heart of downtown Main Street. However, their success has triggered a need for a larger space, however owners, Chef David Scarbrough and his wife Jennifer Mack, are adamant about staying in the downtown area and maintaining their connection with the community. They have decided to do this by purchasing The Lankford Manor, an historic landmark in downtown Tifton located at 401 Love Avenue. With a few minor renovations, The LOCAL will double the capacity of its current dining room. Plans also include the addition of a large outdoor entertaining and seating area for private parties and live music, as well as The Lankford Bar and Lounge. The LOCAL Pantry will serve as a retail space for local products.

Mr. Scarbrough is a Tifton native who gained his formal chef training all over the country and during a brief stint in France. He excelled in the Southeast and had a longstanding role as the Chef de Cuisine at the world famous Sea Island Resorts on Sea Island, GA. He decided to move back home to Tifton and bring a new style of dining to his hometown. Mrs. Mack is the front of house manager for the LOCAL, gaining this experience from Sea Island Resorts as well.

The SBA 504 loan for The LOCAL at the Lankford, packaged by SGRC Loan Program staff,

provided financing for 40% of the project at a fixed interest rate for 20 years. The additional proceeds for the project were provided by Commercial Banking Company and the borrower's injection (10%). The project has created 12 jobs.

Renovations are underway, and the owners hope to be open at their new Love Avenue location in early 2019. However, you can stop by and check them out at their current location at 212 Main Street South in Tifton.

For more information about the cuisine and menus, including custom cocktails and a vast wine list, visit their website at: <https://www.thelocaltiftononlove.com/>



29th Annual Okefenokee Occasion

The twenty-ninth annual Okefenokee Occasion was held on January 16th at the Historic Railway Depot in Downtown Atlanta. This annual event allows local leaders one-on-one time to share Southern Georgia issues with lawmakers. The Occasion was hosted by government and business leaders from the Southern Georgia counties of Appling, Atkinson, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Irwin, Jeff Davis, Lanier, Pierce, Turner, Ware and Wayne.



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