



2018 – 2022 Southern Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Annual Update • December 2021

Atkinson - Bacon - Ben Hill - Berrien
Brantley - Brooks - Charlton - Clinch - Coffee
Cook - Echols - Irwin - Lanier - Lowndes
Pierce - Tift - Turner - Ware Counties



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SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION
Waycross - Valdosta

Southern Georgia CEDS Annual Update • December 2021

The 2021 Annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update for the Southern Georgia Economic Development District (EDD) is provided to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) under EDA Investment Number ED19ATL3020014. This update covers the activity period from January 1, 2021, through December 30, 2021.

Current Economic Conditions in the Region

According to STATS America Economic Distress Criteria Statistical Report, the per capita income (PCI) of the SGRC region is 62.6% of the national average. Clinch County has a per capita income less than 50% of the national average (44.4%). Twelve counties in the region have per capita incomes less than 60% of the national average, with Ben Hill County being the lowest at 52.1%.

The global pandemic levied a hard blow to the Southern Georgia EDD and its economy. The negative effects of the pandemic included:

- business closures,
- rural hospitals struggling to meet demand for healthcare,
- students with limited broadband experiencing educational gaps because of inability to participate in online education,
- hospitality industry decimated,
- supply chain disruptions, and
- mass layoffs throughout the region.

Unemployment skyrocketed. In fact, the unemployment rate in the SGRC EDD in February 2020 was 3.7%. Fast forward to April 2020, and the EDD's average unemployment more than doubled to 9.6%, the highest recorded unemployment rate since the onset of the pandemic. Coinciding with this apex of the unemployment rate was the 10,628 unemployment claims filed in the SGRC EDD region during the week of April 4, 2020, the most claims filed in a week's time since the arrival of the coronavirus.

As the pandemic seemingly wanes, Southern Georgia is beginning to recover with more and more businesses reopening and attempting to restaff. However, many businesses are finding it difficult to fill all the available positions. Some attribute this worker shortage to increased unemployment benefits, while others cite childcare issues or concerns about contracting COVID as a deterrent to employment – perhaps it is a combination. In order to attract new employees, some employers have raised starting wages and many are offering “signing bonuses.”

Regional Unemployment Figures (October 2021):

Average unemployment rate = 2.3%

Highest unemployment rate = Turner County, 5.9%

Lowest unemployment rate = Atkinson County, 1.6%

(Continued on next page.)

Although a low employment rate is often touted as an indicator of a strong economy, what it does not show is that a large number of those who have a job are underemployed and are, in fact, members of a sector known as the *working poor*. A study by the United States Department of Labor states that most of the working poor live in families with children, meaning that the poverty of these workers affects many others as well. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) *Profile of the Working Poor*, there are three major labor market problems that can hinder a worker's ability to earn an income above the poverty threshold: periods of unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, and low earnings. Of these three, low earnings continue to be the most common problem among workers.

Also not reflected in the low unemployment numbers are the many discouraged or disengaged people no longer in the workforce. According to the BLS, a discouraged or disengaged worker is a person who is eligible for employment and can work, but who is currently unemployed and has not attempted to find employment in the last four weeks. Discouraged and disengaged workers usually have given up on searching for a job because they found no suitable employment options or failed to secure a job when they applied. Other possible reasons for discouraged and disengaged workers include restrictions that limit employment options for formerly incarcerated individuals and jobs that are perceived as being inaccessible to a specific gender. Another sector not included in the typical unemployment rate are persons marginally attached to the labor force meaning they are neither working nor looking for work but indicate that they want and are available for a job and have looked for work sometime in the past 12 months.

The BLS's U-6 Unemployment Rate includes the unemployed, underemployed, discouraged/disengaged, and marginally attached. For October 2021, the U-6 unemployment rate in the United States was 7.7%, nearly three and a half percentage points higher than the unemployment rate reported for the U.S. Assuming this percentage increase for the SGRC EDD, the actual unemployment rate may well be as high as 5.7%, if not higher.

There is a subset of the unemployed that have completely disengaged from the labor market and are not reflected in the unemployment rate. This fact is reflected in the region's per capita income and poverty data. The average per capita income (PCI) in the SGRC EDD is a mere \$20,420, which is in stark contrast to Georgia's PCI of \$31,067 and the United States' PCI of \$34,103. All but two of the SGRC EDD's eighteen counties are considered to be areas of persistent poverty (more than 20% of a county's population lives below the poverty threshold). The two counties that fall just below the 20% threshold are Brantley and Coffee Counties which have 19.6% and 19.9% poverty rates, respectively.

Regional Income Figures:

Average median household income = \$38,927

Average per capita income = \$20,420

Lowest per capita income = Clinch County, \$15,152

Highest per capita income = Brooks County, \$25,700

Regional Poverty Figures:

Average poverty rate = 25.5%

Highest poverty rate = Clinch County, 40.2%

Lowest poverty rate = Brantley County, 19.6%

(Continued on next page.)

The economic injury in the SGRC region as a result of the coronavirus pandemic is substantial. Southern Georgia must find ways to reverse negative trends, to withstand economic shifts, and to move the region forward through regional initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable economic development. Given the challenges that the Southern Georgia region continues to face, economic resilience is crucial.

The SGRC EDD received a CARES Act Supplemental Award of \$400,000 in August 2020. These funds have been utilized to conduct short-term and long-term economic development planning and coordination to develop the Southern Georgia Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan. This plan was approved by the SGRC's governing Council on September 23, 2021, and has been made a part of this CEDS Update (following the Appendix). Implementation of the Action Plan is underway.

Regional economic prosperity is indisputably linked to the area's ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from disruptions to its economic base. The Southern Georgia EDD is committed to assisting local governments and businesses with their economic recovery and resiliency through the provision of technical assistance and the implementation of the CEDS Action Plan.

Southern Georgia EDD Activities

During the period covered by this update, the staff of the SGRC EDD received notification from the EDA Atlanta Regional Office that the City of Sycamore's EDA Public Works application requesting \$452,900 for improvements to the City's wastewater treatment facility was approved. Since the award in March 2021, the SGRC EDD has been carrying out project implementation activities. Completion of this project will mitigate the potential for future economic injury by allowing the City to provide adequate and sustained sewer service to its 218 residences, 19 businesses (which employ approximately 130 people) , and 5 churches.

The EDD staff took part in planning meetings for over a dozen economic development projects throughout the District. When these projects come to fruition, all will result in private investment and jobs creation in the SGRC EDD. Previous project planning meetings culminated in the receipt of infrastructure funding for two economic development projects. One of these projects will result in the creation of 34 jobs and \$1.8 million in capital investment in the SGRC EDD. The second project is capacity building that will construct a much needed rail spur in a regional industrial park. Both of these projects will generate economic opportunities in the SGRC EDD.

Furthermore, SGRC EDD staff recently submitted three applications for funding for economic development projects in the cities of Adel and Douglas and in Ben Hill County. If funded, these projects will result in the creation of 224 new jobs and \$208 million in capital investment.

The Southern Georgia EDD Lending Division participated in 111 loan projects – lending a total of \$8.8 million, of which \$3.4 million were Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. These loans leveraged \$6.3 million in private investment and created/retained 658 jobs.

Conclusion

Although the District is experiencing economic improvements in several areas, Southern Georgia must still find ways to reverse negative trends, to withstand economic shifts, and to move the region forward through regional initiatives aimed at fostering economic development. Enacting the CEDS Action Plan will positively move the needle on the regional economy in the areas of jobs, wages, tax revenue, and private investment, and will have a strong positive impact on sustainable regional economic growth and diversification.

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CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE

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VISION

The Communities Of The Southern Georgia Regional Commission Will Encourage And Support Quality Education And Economic Development That Fosters The Growth Of Local Employment And Business Opportunities, Without Detracting From The Region's Rural Lifestyle And Small Town Character.



INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A CEDS?

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's (SGRC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy. The SGRC CEDS will analyze the regional economy and serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, a regional plan of action, and the investment priorities and funding sources.

As a performance-based plan, this CEDS will play a critical role in adapting to global economic conditions by fully utilizing the region's unique advantages to maximize economic opportunity for its residents by attracting private investment that creates jobs. The SGRC CEDS is a regionally-owned strategy that is the result of a continuing economic development planning process developed with regional public and private sector participation. This plan sets forth the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic development problems of the Southern Georgia region and clearly defines the measures of success.

The organization responsible for the development of this CEDS is the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC). As recipient of EDA Planning Investment funds (Investment #048306740), the SGRC serves as a designated Economic Development District (EDD). The SGRC's planning district includes the eighteen county governments of Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Cook, Clinch, Coffee, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware, and the 45 municipal governments within those counties.

The SGRC is a multi-jurisdictional planning agency whose membership includes public officials, private individuals, post-secondary education representatives, workforce development representatives, economic development professionals, and other stakeholders throughout the region. The SGRC provides technical, planning, community and economic development assistance, and aging and workforce development services to the Southern Georgia region. The governing authority, or "Council," of the Regional Commission functions as the District Council in administering the District's EDA programs.

This CEDS plan follows the new guidelines released by the US Economic Development Administration in February 2015. The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan developed by city and county elected officials, as well as a diverse group of economic, community and workforce development professionals. The following forms the basis for the SGRC CEDS:

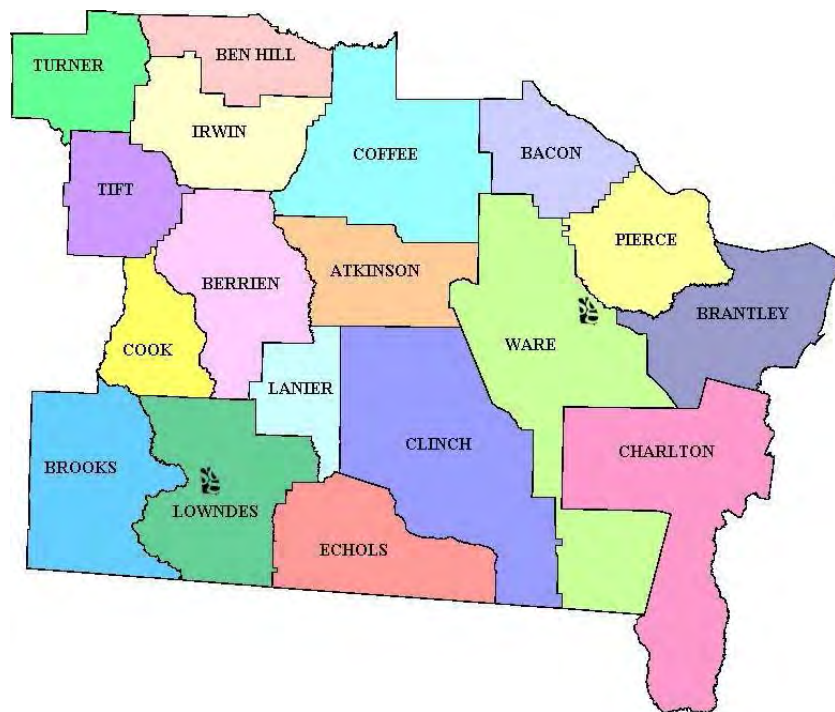
1. Summary Background of economic conditions in the region;
2. SWOT Analysis to identify regional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats;
3. Action Plan based on the feedback from local economic, community, and workforce development professionals;
4. Evaluation Framework to identify and monitor successful development and implementation of the CEDS.

¹[http://www.eda.gov/ceds/files/CEDS-Content-Guidelines- full.pdf?utm_source=EDA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=363d120db5-Innovate_EDA_February_20152_5_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_68e7c83ba4-363d120db5-391738129](http://www.eda.gov/ceds/files/CEDS-Content-Guidelines-full.pdf?utm_source=EDA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=363d120db5-Innovate_EDA_February_20152_5_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_68e7c83ba4-363d120db5-391738129)



OUR REGION

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



SUMMARY BACKGROUND

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) is an economic development planning district located in southern Georgia. The vast region covers South Central to Southeast Georgia. Agriculture, commercial timber production, and other rural development initiatives are all cornerstones of the Southern Georgia economy. However, the evidence of manufacturing is seen throughout the region and has helped to raise the per capita income, jobs creation and retention, and capital investments in some areas of the region.

Valdosta, the major city and county seat of Lowndes, County, is the only designated Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) located in the District. The counties of Lowndes, Brooks, Echols, and Lanier are associated with the MSA. Valdosta has a growing manufacturing, warehouse, and distribution base. It is also home to Moody Air Force Base and Valdosta State University.

The City of Douglas (including Coffee County), the City of Fitzgerald (including Ben Hill County), the City of Tifton (including Tift County), and the City of Waycross (including Pierce and Ware Counties) are defined as Micropolitan Statistical Areas. Micropolitan cities do not have the economic or political importance of large cities, but are nevertheless significant centers of population and production, drawing workers and shoppers from a wide local area. One county, Brantley, is associated with the Brunswick MSA, located outside the SGRC District.

The District has three additional retail trade centers other than Valdosta, including Tifton, Douglas, and Waycross. Southern Georgia has several four-lane transportation arteries and is connected directly to one interstate highway system (I-75) on the western side of the region.



ENVIRONMENT

The SGRC pays special consideration to the environment when planning for future growth patterns. The characteristics of the natural environment including soils, topography, climate, water supply, and wildlife habitats are essential information in defining the region's attributes and possible shortcomings. Through a regional emphasis and understanding of the environment, SGRC staff, including an Environmental Planner and a Historic Preservation Planner, assists in maintaining a higher quality of life and protecting the Southern Georgia region's future for residents of the District.

The region's climate is classified as mild, ranging from almost perfect to hot and sultry. The region experiences all four seasons; however, winter is fairly short and relatively mild. Spring and autumn are very pleasant, and summer can reach high temperatures with a very high heat index.

Most of the Southern Georgia region's consumer water comes from underground aquifers, which are porous underground rock layers containing water. The main aquifer beneath the region is the Floridan aquifer. The aquifer serves as the water supply watershed for all of the region's municipal water systems as well as many agricultural irrigation systems.

ECONOMY

In order for the Southern Georgia region to thrive economically, it must strive to be a community that excels economically while offering good quality of life to its residents. This high quality of life is supported through critical infrastructure that businesses need to succeed.

Supporting the economy is a system of infrastructure that provides the critical services necessary for the well being of residents, the success of businesses and the safety of communities.

The ability to build and maintain these systems is costly and resource intensive. Many of the region's rural communities are in desperate need of improvement. Broadband internet access is also limited in smaller communities, which hinders economic development in many areas.

As the following analysis will show, the lack of critical infrastructure proves to be a challenge for the region's economic success. The region continues to work to improve the critical infrastructure and resources available to developing businesses. This balance of infrastructure and economic development will bring new businesses to the area and ensure economic resiliency for the region.

TOURISM

The 18-county region has a wide variety of attractions and tourist destinations reflecting its great natural and agricultural heritage, as well as the fun loving and adventurous spirit of the local residents. In addition to the two National Wildlife Refuges (Okefenokee and Banks Lake), there are six state parks and natural preserves located within the region (Stephen C. Foster, General Coffee, Reed Bingham, Laura S. Walker, Jefferson Davis Memorial, and Broxton Rocks). Sporting and amusement adventures can be held at South Georgia Motorsports Park in Cook County, and Wild Adventures Theme Park in southern Lowndes County.

Throughout the year, communities within the region hold annual fairs and festivals which draw people from far and wide. For example, Ben Hill County and the City of Fitzgerald hold the annual Wild Chicken Festival celebrating the wild chickens which have made the City famous, Waycross celebrates the heritage and culture of the Okefenokee Swamp during the Swampfest event, Lanier County and the City of Lakeland hold a Flatlanders Frolic Arts and Crafts show, and the City of Hahira in Lowndes County holds their annual Honeybee Festival. These resources and events have a profound impact on the economics of local communities.



WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

The Southern Georgia Region's workforce is experiencing a shift. Historically, the region's major industries were agriculture and forestry. However, in recent decades, in keeping with national trends, the region has shifted from a production economy to a service economy. Although the majority of the region's land area is still used for agriculture and forestry, more jobs are now in service-providing industries than in goods-producing industries.

For many of the occupations projected to show the greatest growth in the coming years, advanced degrees and specialized training are not required. For example, fast food workers, laborers, customer service representatives, and cashiers typically require only a brief training period and do not require higher-level qualifications. However, some of the occupations that are expected to experience growth in the region in the near future do require advanced degrees and/or specialized training, for example: elementary school teachers (100 projected annual openings), registered nurses (90 projected annual openings), and middle school teachers (70 projected annual openings).

1: Georgia Dept. of Labor Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projections Unit

The five occupations projected to have the most annual openings do not typically require a high school diploma. Several of the occupations projected to have the highest level of relative growth (percent change) during the same timeframe require a higher level of education. However, the total number of openings in these occupations is projected to be low. ¹

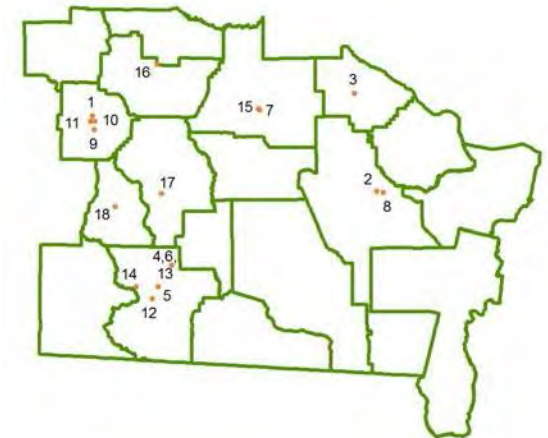
Given the shift in demand, the Southern Georgia Area Workforce Development Board (WDB) has been working with the local educational institutions to ensure individuals have access to a variety of in-demand training programs to meet the specific needs of industries in the region. The strong partnerships have set the stage for future progress. These pathways are one way in which partners are working with all ages to further develop a strong workforce for the emerging students through curriculum in advanced technologies, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), and soft skills.

The Southern Georgia Area WDB envisions the local one-stop workforce development system as the mechanism to promote, encourage, and coordinate the development of a well-trained labor force with skills to not only meet the needs of the

area's current employers, but also to attract new business and industry to the area. It is crucial to continued economic resilience and prosperity that the region continues to develop a diverse set of industry sectors that provide living wage jobs.

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The presence of these colleges and universities draws education industry businesses and retail and service companies into the area to serve the needs of student populations.



- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College | 9. Southern Regional Tech Tifton Campus |
| 2. Coastal Pines Tech | 10. Troy University Tifton Campus |
| 3. Coastal Pines Tech Alma Campus | 11. University of Georgia Tifton Campus |
| 4. Embry Riddle Aeronautical University Moody Campus | 12. Valdosta State University |
| 5. Georgia Military College | 13. Webster University Moody Campus |
| 6. Park University Moody Campus | 14. Wiregrass Tech |
| 7. South Georgia State College | 15. Wiregrass Tech Douglas Campus |
| 8. South Georgia State College Waycross Campus | 16. Wiregrass Tech Fitzgerald Campus |
| | 17. Wiregrass Tech Nashville Campus |
| | 18. Wiregrass Tech Sparks Campus |

SWOT ANALYSIS

In May, June, and July of 2017, the Southern Georgia Regional Commission conducted an analysis of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – also known as a SWOT analysis. The analysis identifies what stakeholders in the Southern Georgia Region believe to be important in each category. The results from this process formed the foundation for the region's Economic Development Strategy Update.

The SWOT analysis feedback came from Economic Development Professionals, the Workforce Development Board, the Regional Commission Council, and other community members. The results of the SWOT are on the following pages. The respondents also ranked regional service priorities (figure on page 10).





State of the Regional Economy, Clusters, Partners for Economic Development, & Global Competitiveness

- Public/private collaboration
- Transportation corridors
- Natural Resources
- Food Processing Industry
- Multiple Grad Sites
- Energy Availability and Cost
- Timber Industry
- Agriculture/Agribusiness
- Value Added Ag
- Diversity of Industry
- Tourism - Authentic Story
- Existing Manufacturing
- Available Raw Product
- Climate
- Low State Income Tax
- Land Availability for New Growth
- Proximity to Florida

S

Strengths

- Tourism/Agri-Tourism
- Lack of Funding for Economic Development
- Underdeveloped Industrial Parks
- Lack of funding for Industrial Parks
- Revitalization of Downtown
- OneGeorgia Competitiveness
- Lack of Marketing Grad Sites
- Not Using Available Resources

W

Weaknesses

- Value Added Ag Growth
- Build Agri-Business Supply Channels
- Downtown Revitalization
- Tax Credits/State Rural Incentives
- Emerging Crop Development
- Develop Tourism
- Joint Tax Credits Apply to Tourism Products
- GDED Assist Tourism Development
- Market Business Environment to Florida
- Shift From Brick and Mortar to Web Based Activities
- Film Industry
- Growth of Minority-Owned Small Business
- Aid in Tax Revenue
- Incentives for Businesses that Provide Transportation
- Natural Resources
- Eco-Tourism
- High-School Industrial Education
- Tax Credits/Business Incentives for Local Entrepreneurs
- Bringing Global Opportunities

O

Opportunities

- Ignoring Community Weaknesses
- Internet Sales Depleting Local Retail
- National Economy
- Closure/Relocation of Businesses
- Poor City/County Relationships
- Rising Cost of Healthcare
- Threats to Rural Healthcare
- Volatility of Travel Market/Tourism
- Lack of Jobs for College Graduates
- Problem with Rate of Poverty
- Overuse/Non Protection of Natural Resources
- Trickle Down Entitlements
- Unfunded State and Federal Mandates

T

Threats



Transportation, Community Facilities, Infrastructure Assets and Broadband

- Transportation Corridors
- Proximity to I-95, I-75, I-10, North Florida Ports, Major Markets, and Regional Airports
- Great Architectural Bones in Downtown Areas
- Rails
- Georgia Ports

S

Strengths

- Lack of Capacity in Rails
- Resistance of Rail Lines to Allow for Growth
- Lack of Reliable Broadband and Cell Service
- Aging and Deteriorating Water & Sewer Infrastructure

W

Weaknesses

- Use Satilla and Alapaha Rivers to Incorporate More Boat Ramps
- Electric Membership Cooperatives - Incentives for Broadband
- Development of Small Cells for Broadband Service
- Water and Sewer Upgrades
- Extension of Gas Services
- Upgrades to Local Meeting Venues in Need of Repair
- Additional Commercial Airlines

O

Opportunities

- Lack of Reliable Broadband and Cell Service
- Rural Hospital Struggles
- 4-Laning Highways Bypass Small Towns Causing More Economic Loss

T

Threats



Education and Workforce Development

- Loyal Workforce
- Strong Network of Technical Colleges
- Quickstart for New Industries
- Cohesiveness Between Technical Colleges and Service Providers
- Seamless Education between K12, Technical Colleges, and Universities
- Targeted Training, Demand Occupations
- Readily Available Knowledge of WIOA Program
- Collaboration between WIOA, Technical College, Economic Development Authority, Industry, and Business
- Southern Georgia Regional Commission Knowledge
- Clusters and Pathways
- STEM and STEAM
- Good Blend of Service Providers

S

Strengths

- Politics
- Turf Guarding
- Skill Set of New Generation of Workers Entering the Workforce
- Mismatch of Skills Needed and Skills Available in Existing Workforce
- Lack of Quality Workforce to Attract New Business
- Lack of Culture of Collaboration
- Quickstart for Existing Businesses
- Low Wages
- Large Section of Population Not Entering Workforce
- Transportation
- Childcare
- Lack of Awareness of Terms of Financial Aid
- 2GA - Atlanta vs. Rest of the State
- Failure to ID Kids Who Qualify for Intervention Programs
- Motivation to Become Trained
- High School Drop Outs
- Failure to Pass Drug Tests

W

Weaknesses

- Marketing of Technical Colleges
- New Strategies for Economic Dev.
- Prepare Workforce to Assume High Skill Jobs
- Hope Career Grant
- Drop Out Prevention
- Increase Collaboration on Trade Based Curriculum in Schools
- Attract More Tech Jobs
- Diversify Job Opportunities
- High School Industrial Education
- Early Childhood Ed. and Learning Centers
- Development of More College and Career Academies
- Apprenticeships, Internships, and Mentor Relations with Industries
- Great Promise Partnership
- Resources with Tech Colleges
- Market Local Jobs in Schools - Incentivize Educated to Stay Local
- Offer More Professional Degrees
- Quality of Life for Different Age Groups/Family

O

Opportunities

- Low Wages
- Lack of Quality Workforce to Attract New Businesses
- Manufacturing automation replacing jobs
- Funding budget cuts
- Failure to Understand What the Economy of the Future Will Require Regarding Skills in the Workforce
- Presidential Threat to Eliminate EDA and WIOA
- Workforce Emigration

T

Threats



Population and Housing

- Retiree Attraction
- Housing Diversity

S
Strengths

- Losing Population
- Aging Population
- Losing Educated and Retaining High-School Drop-Outs
- Lack of Rural Healthcare Affordability
- Decline in Housing Stock
- Low Average Wage, High Housing Cost
- Lack of Large Population Centers Relative to Other Areas

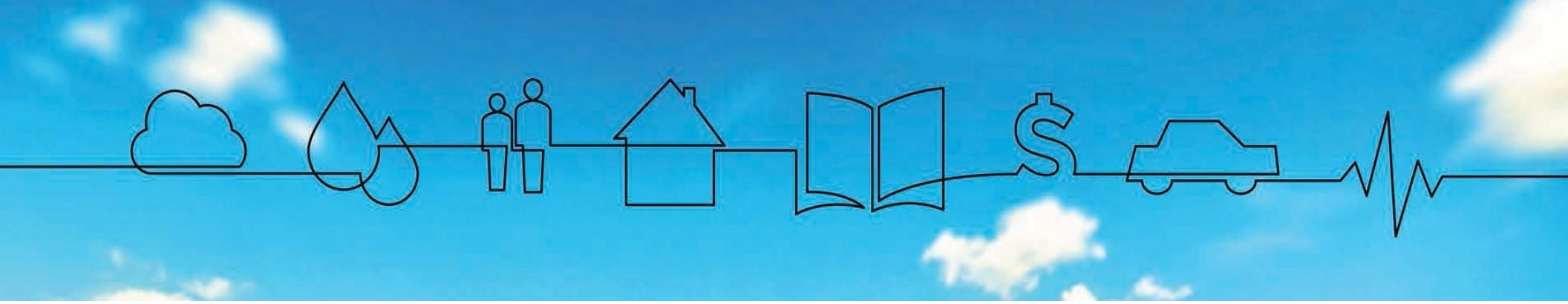
W
Weaknesses

- Creating Functional / Unique Neighborhoods and Living Spaces (Maximize Experience While Minimizing Space)
- Work, Play, Live Neighborhood Spaces for Moody AFB
- Rehabilitation of Dilapidated Housing Close to Downtown Areas (Utilize Funding Available)
- Expand Code Enforcement, Especially in Downtown Areas
- Implement Consistent Zoning
- Educating Students at an Early Age About Local Workforce Opportunities

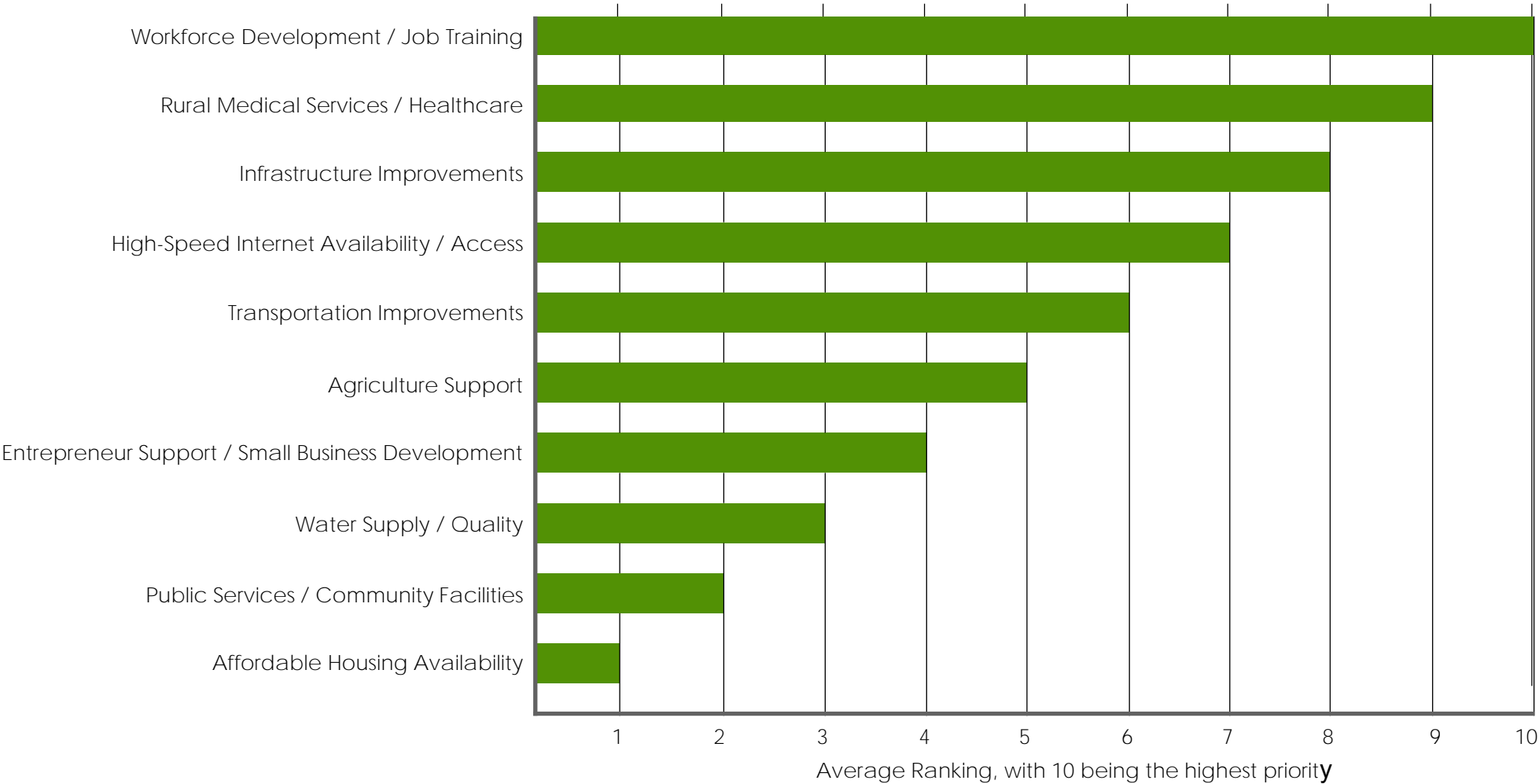
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Opportunities

- Conversion of Usable Agricultural Property into Subdivision
- Emigration of Educated Young Adults

T
Threats



REGIONAL SERVICE PRIORITIES



REGIONAL FACTS

Southern Georgia, Region 11

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
406,586

2019 Estimate
411,922

Male
49.8%

Female
50.2%

Minority
29.6%

Average Median Age
38.5

Age 65+
60,752

Under 18
99,642

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$38,880

Per Capita Income
\$20,493

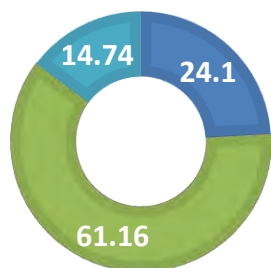
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$27,700

% of People Below
 Poverty Level
25.7%

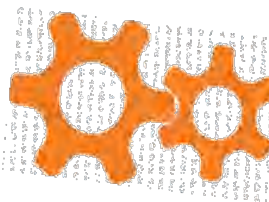
Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
 Region—**16.8%**
 Georgia—**12.0%**
 National—**10.9%**



TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE INCREASE 2010-2019 ¹



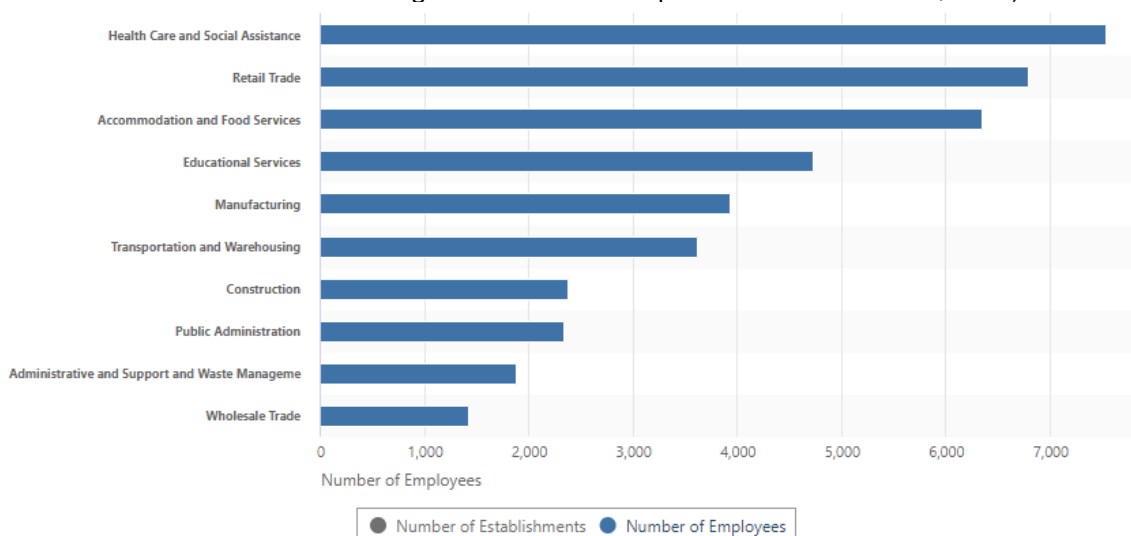
LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Moody Air Force Base
2. Valdosta State University
3. Memorial Satilla Health
4. Pilgrim's Pride Corporation
5. Coffee Regional Medical Center

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in the Southern Georgia Workforce Development Area for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$89,300

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.3%

Rental Vacancy Rate
5.1%

Occupied Housing Units
149,599

% of Units with No Vehicle
 Available
7.9%

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
 2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
 3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
 4. www.feedingamerica.org
 5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

ATKINSON COUNTY

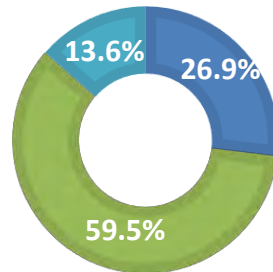
County Seat: Pearson
Founded in 1917

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹ Minority **24.8%**
2019 Estimate Median Age **36.4**
Male **50.7%** Age 65+ **1,117**
Female **49.3%** Under 18 **2,223**



TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



LARGEST EMPLOYERS

1. Langboard
2. Cady Bag Co
3. Atkinson County Pre-K
4. Freedom Trailers, LLC
5. Live Oak Homes

HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$62,700

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.1%

Rental Vacancy Rate
5.5%

Occupied Housing Units
2,880

% of Housing Units with
No Vehicle Available
7.4%

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$37,197

Per Capita Income
\$20,338

Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$27,198

% of People Below
Poverty Level
30.3%

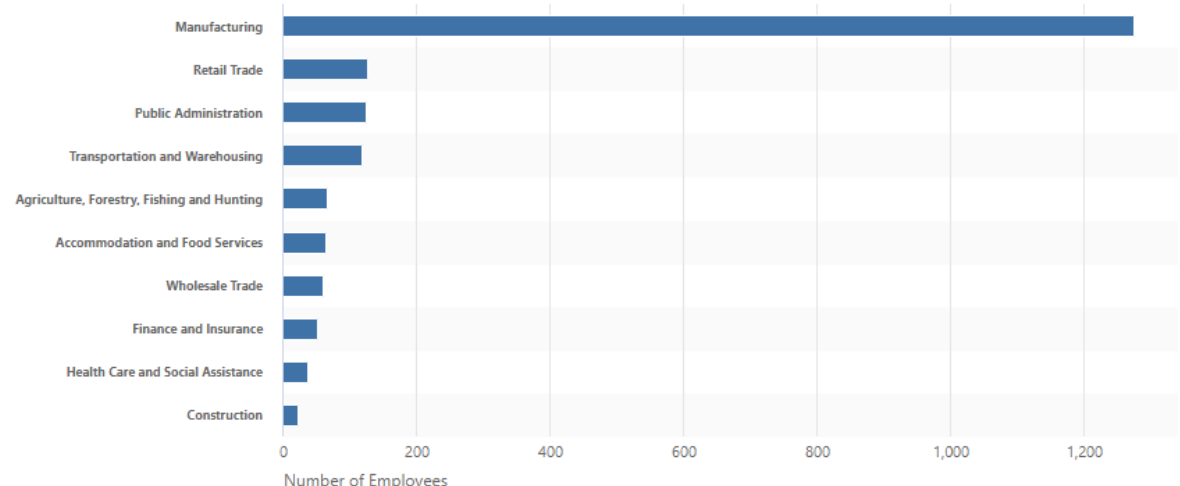
Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Atkinson—**16.9%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Atkinson County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

BACON COUNTY

County Seat: Alma
Founded in 1917

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
11,096
2019 Estimate
11,201
Male
48.9%
Female
51.1%

Minority
20.0%
Median Age
36.7
Age 65+
1,721
Under 18
2,872

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$37,519

Per Capita Income
\$20,326

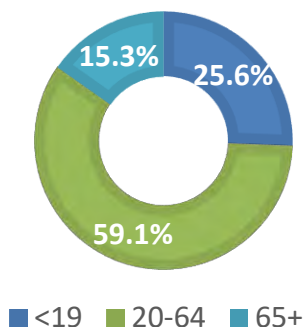
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$28,172

% of People Below
Poverty Level
23.8%

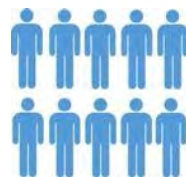
Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Bacon—**16.6%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



TOTAL POPULATION %



POPULATION PERCENTAGE INCREASE 2010-2019 ¹



0.95%



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Bacon County Hospital & Health System
2. Beach Timber Co Inc
3. Twin Oaks Convalescent Center
4. Lee D L & Sons
5. Richmond Banking



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$81,100

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.0%

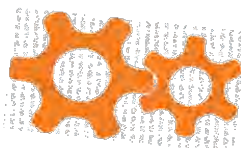
Rental Vacancy Rate
5.6%

Occupied Housing Units
3,874

% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
6.0%

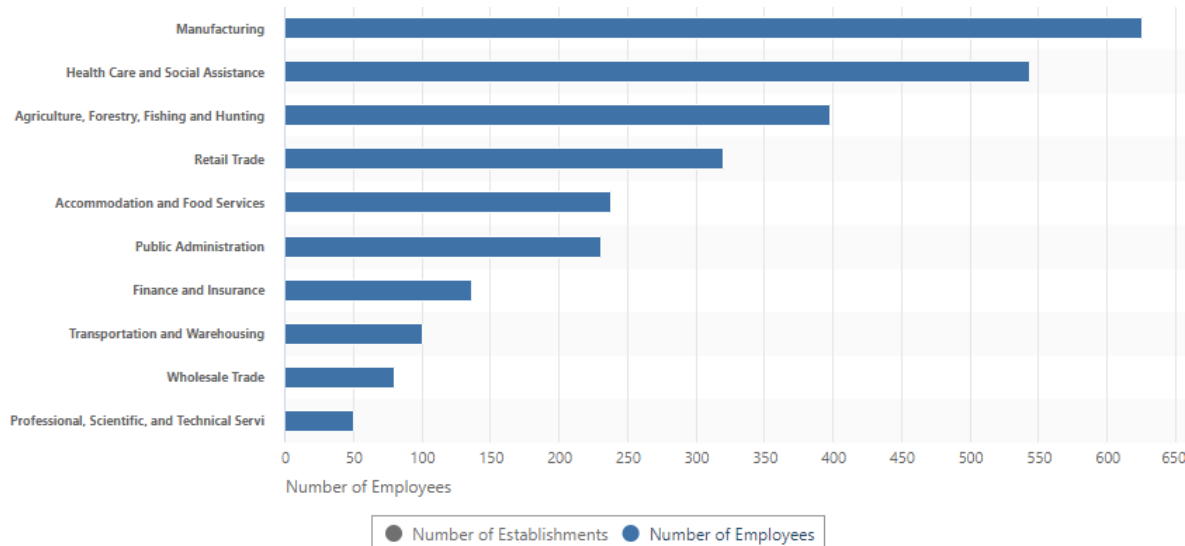
LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Bacon County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.



1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

BEN HILL COUNTY

County Seat: Fitzgerald
Founded in 1906



POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹

17,634

2019 Estimate

17,033

Male

47.8%

Female

52.2%

Minority

40.3%

Median Age

39.9

Age 65+

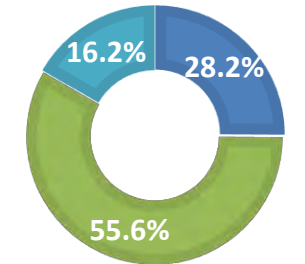
2,850

Under 18

4,274



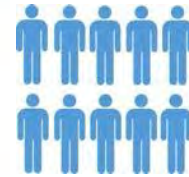
TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+

POPULATION PERCENTAGE

DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



-3.41%



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Walmart SuperCenter
2. Southern Veneer Products
3. Covered Wagon Trailers LLC
4. Hospital Authority-Ben Hill
5. Wiregrass Georgia Technical College



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value

\$83,400

Homeowner Vacancy Rate

3.5%

Rental Vacancy Rate

2.5%

Occupied Housing Units

6,443

% of Units with No Vehicle Available

13.5%



ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income

\$32,229

Per Capita Income

\$17,774

Per Capita Living Wage ³

\$27,872

% of People Below Poverty Level

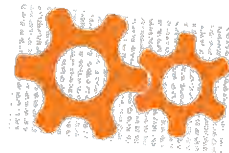
29.6%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴

Ben Hill—**18.7%**

Georgia—**12.0%**

National—**10.9%**

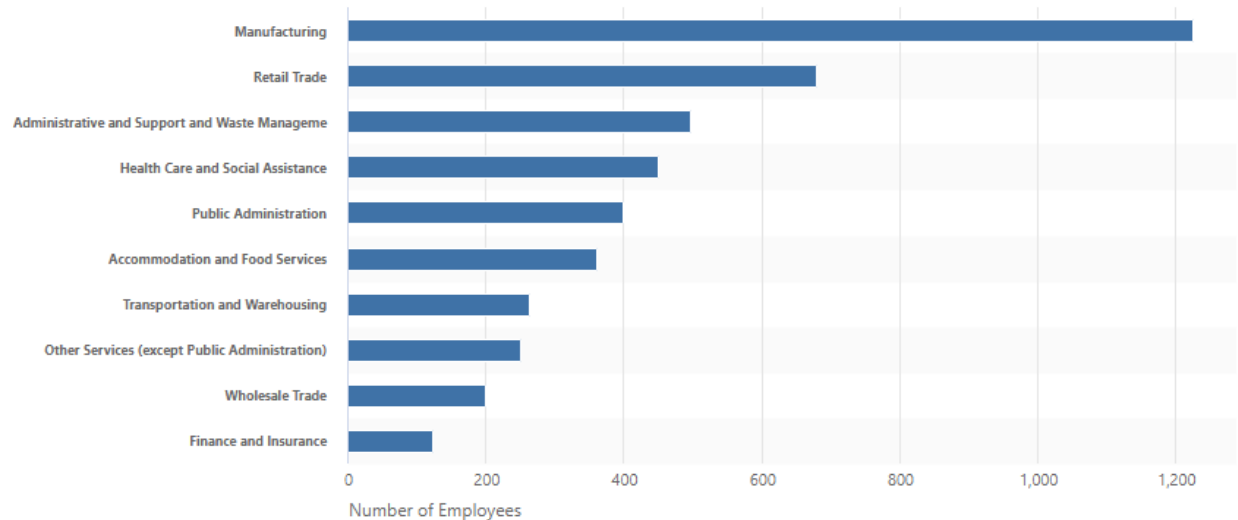


LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Ben Hill County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

BERRIEN COUNTY

County Seat: Nashville
Founded in 1856

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹ Minority
19,286 **17.0%**

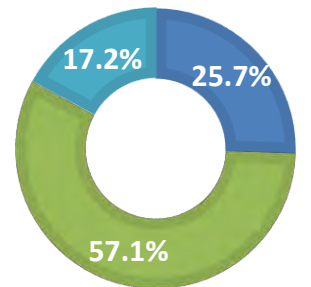
2019 Estimate Median Age
19,152 **39.6**

Male Age 65+
49.0% **3,364**

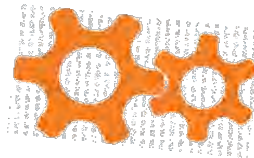
Female Under 18
51.0% **4,648**



TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. D&D Farms
2. Food Lion
3. Berrien Primary School
4. B H Electronics, Inc
5. South Georgia Medical Center Berrien Campus



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$88,000

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
0.7%

Rental Vacancy Rate
3.9%

Occupied Housing Units
7,367

% of Units with No Vehicle Available
8.3%

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$40,415

Per Capita Income
\$19,547

Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$27,228

% of People Below
Poverty Level
24.2%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Berrien—**18.1%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**

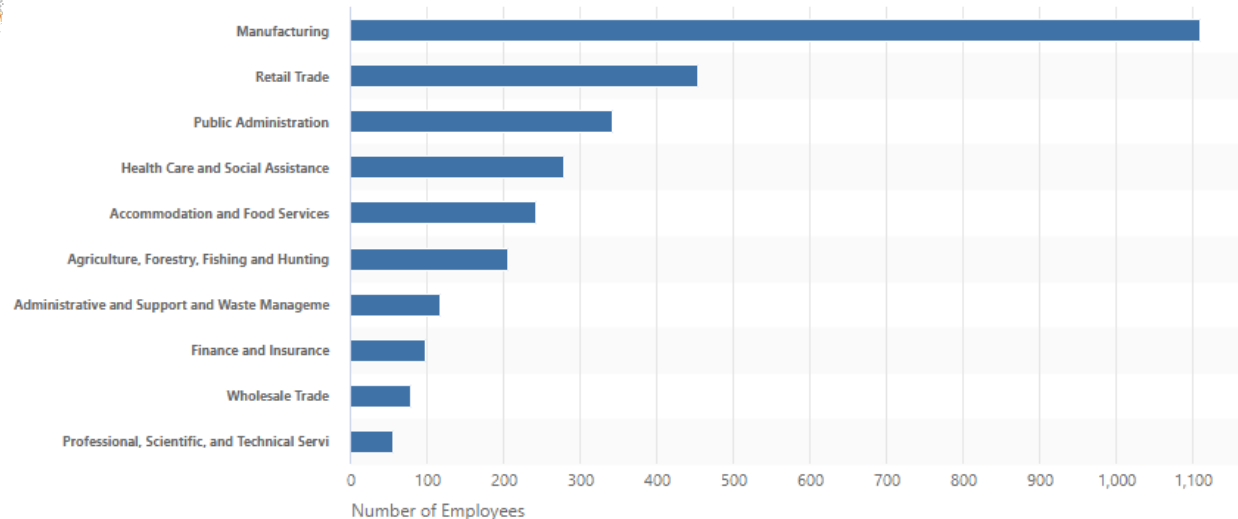


LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Berrien County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

BRANTLEY COUNTY

County Seat: Nahunta
Founded in 1920

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
18,411

2019 Estimate
18,756

Male
49.0%

Female
51.0%

Minority
6.1%

Median Age
41.1

Age 65+
3,008

Under 18
4,458

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$38,857

Per Capita Income
\$20,191

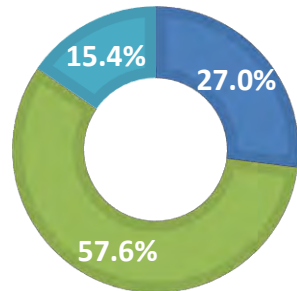
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$29,626

% of People Below
Poverty Level
19.6%

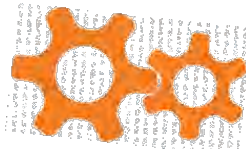
Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Brantley—**16.5%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



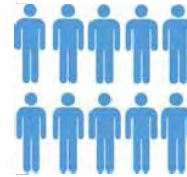
TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE INCREASE 2010-2019 ¹



1.87%



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Cal-Maine Foods, Inc
2. H&S Car Carriers
3. Okefenokee Rural EMC
4. Hoboken Elementary School
5. Bay View Nursing Home

HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$72,300

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
0.7%

Rental Vacancy Rate
1.5%

Occupied Housing Units
6,823

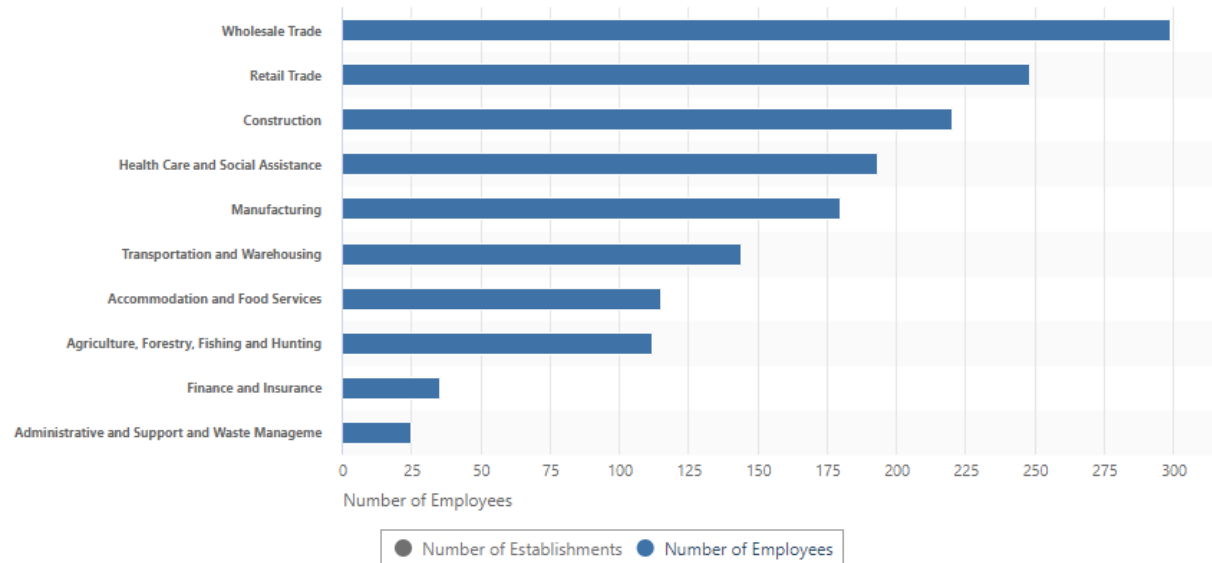
% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
3.1%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Brantley County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.



1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

BROOKS COUNTY

County Seat: Quitman
Founded in 1858

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹ Minority
16,243 **40.4%**

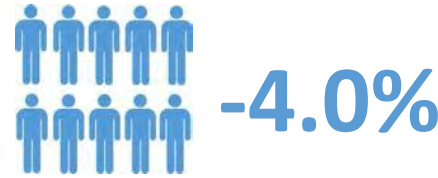
2019 Estimate Median Age
15,590 **42**

Male Age 65+
48.8% **2,944**

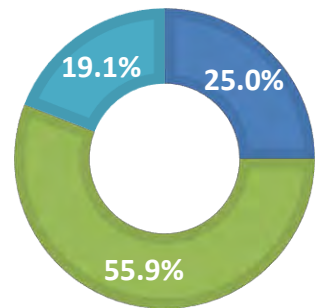
Female Under 18
51.1% **3,455**



POPULATION PERCENTAGE DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Presbyterian Home
2. Crown Healthcare Laundry Svc
3. BCT Gin Co
4. Langboard OSB
5. Fellowship Home at Brookside

HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$107,800

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.3%

Rental Vacancy Rate
9.5%

Occupied Housing Units
6,335

% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
6.5%

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$38,285

Per Capita Income
\$25,700

Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$28,067

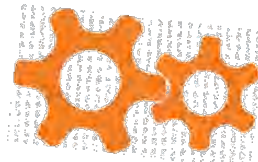
% of People Below
Poverty Level
22.7%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Brooks—**14.6%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting

Health Care and Social Assistance

Retail Trade

Public Administration

Manufacturing

Transportation and Warehousing

Accommodation and Food Services

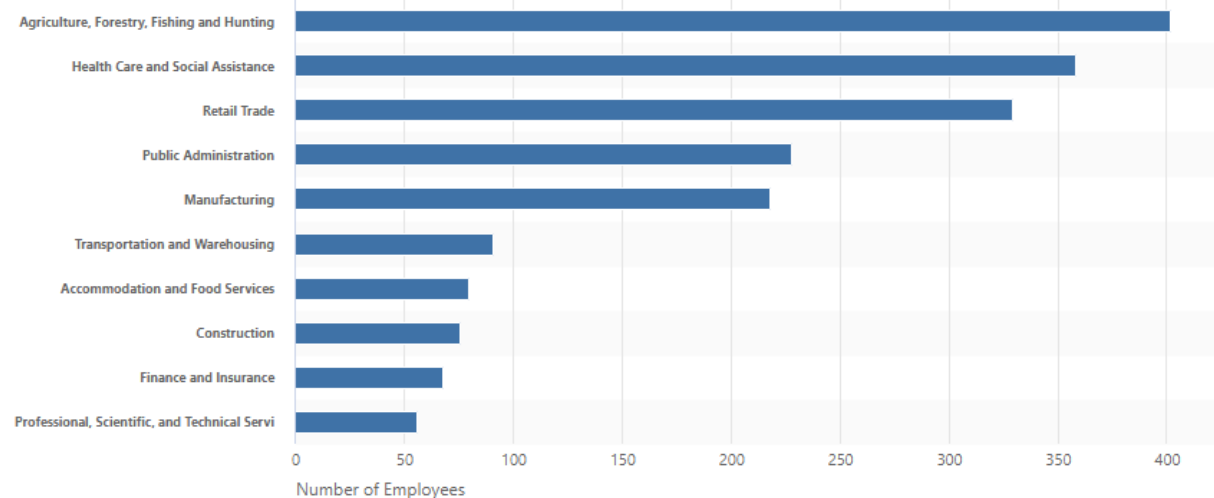
Construction

Finance and Insurance

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Servi

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Brooks County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

CHARLTON COUNTY

County Seat: Folkston
Founded in 1854



POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹ Minority
12,171 **33.6%**

2019 Estimate Median Age
13,040 **41.2**

Male Age 65+
57.2% **1,940**

Female Under 18
42.8% **2,536**

\$ ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$41,961

Per Capita Income
\$18,323

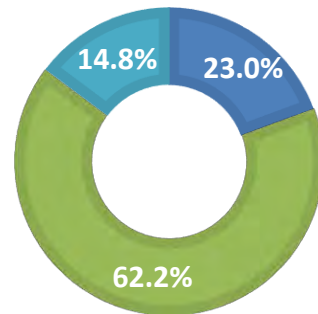
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$28,172

% of People Below
Poverty Level
25.2%

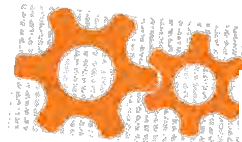
Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Charlton—**17.1%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



TOTAL POPULATION %

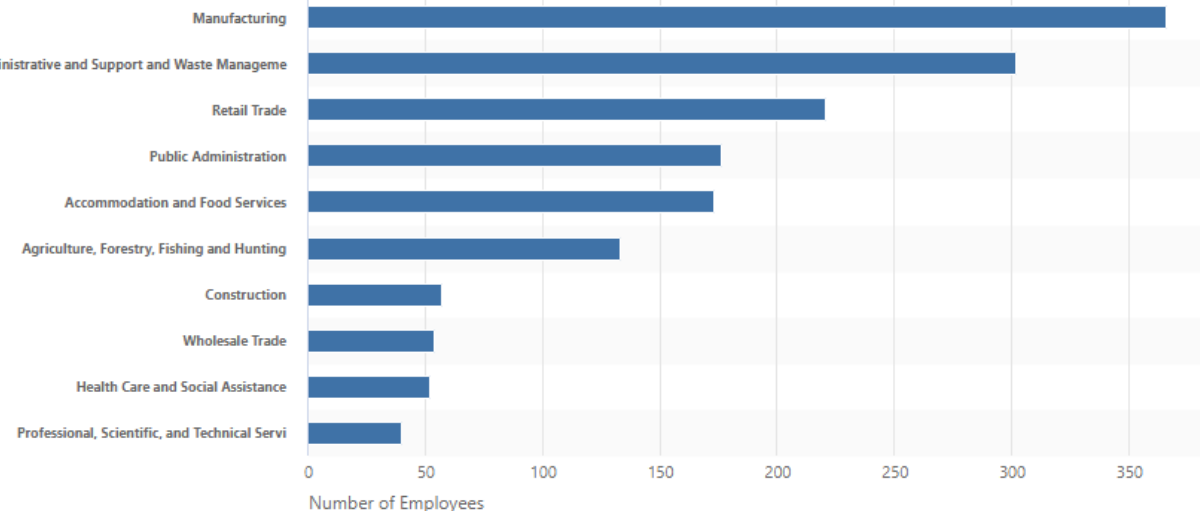


■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



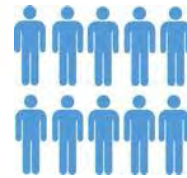
LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

POPULATION PERCENTAGE INCREASE 2010-2019 ¹



7.13%



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$83,300

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.0%

Rental Vacancy Rate
8.6%

Occupied Housing Units
3,675

% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
8.8%

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Charlton County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

CLINCH COUNTY

County Seat: Homerville
Founded in 1850

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
6,798

2019 Estimate
6,686

Male
50.6%

Female
49.4%

Minority
34.4%

Median Age
39.9

Age 65+
1,039

Under 18
1,724

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$27,658

Per Capita Income
\$15,152

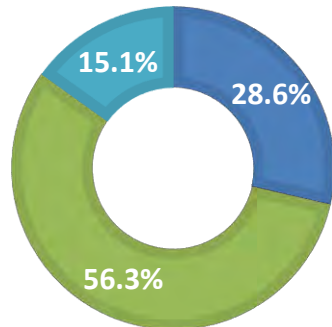
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$27,527

% of People Below
Poverty Level
40.2%

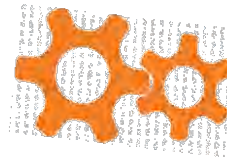
Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Clinch—**21.4%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



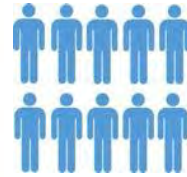
TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



-1.65%

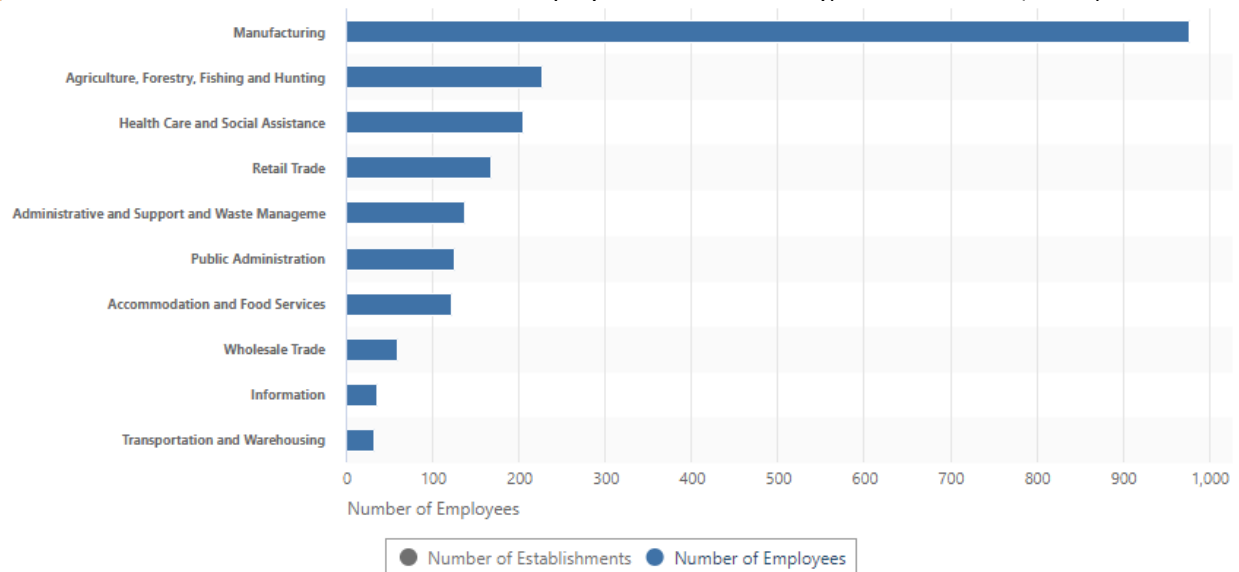


LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Mauser Small Packaging
2. Lee Container Corp
3. Clinch County Primary School
4. Dupont Yard Inc
5. Clinch County High School

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Clinch County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$61,000

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.8%

Rental Vacancy Rate
9.3%

Occupied Housing Units
2,477

% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
9.4%

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

COFFEE COUNTY

County Seat: Douglas
Founded in 1854

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
42,356

2019 Estimate
43,021

Male
51.5%

Female
48.5%

Minority
32.2%

Median Age
36.3

Age 65+
5,873

Under 18
10,559

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$40,859

Per Capita Income
\$19,905

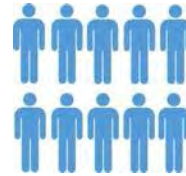
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$28,172

% of People Below
Poverty Level
19.9%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Coffee—**15.5%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**

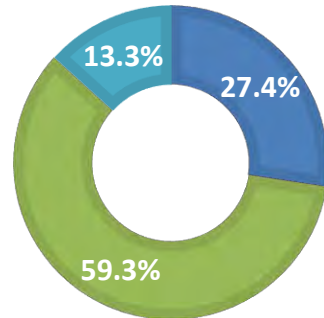


POPULATION PERCENTAGE INCREASE 2010-2019 ¹



1.57%

TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Pilgrim's Pride Corp
2. Coffee Regional Medical Center
3. PCC Airfoils, Inc.
4. Walmart Supercenter
5. Coffee Correctional Facility



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$100,600

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
0.8%

Rental Vacancy Rate
3.2%

Occupied Housing Units
14,438

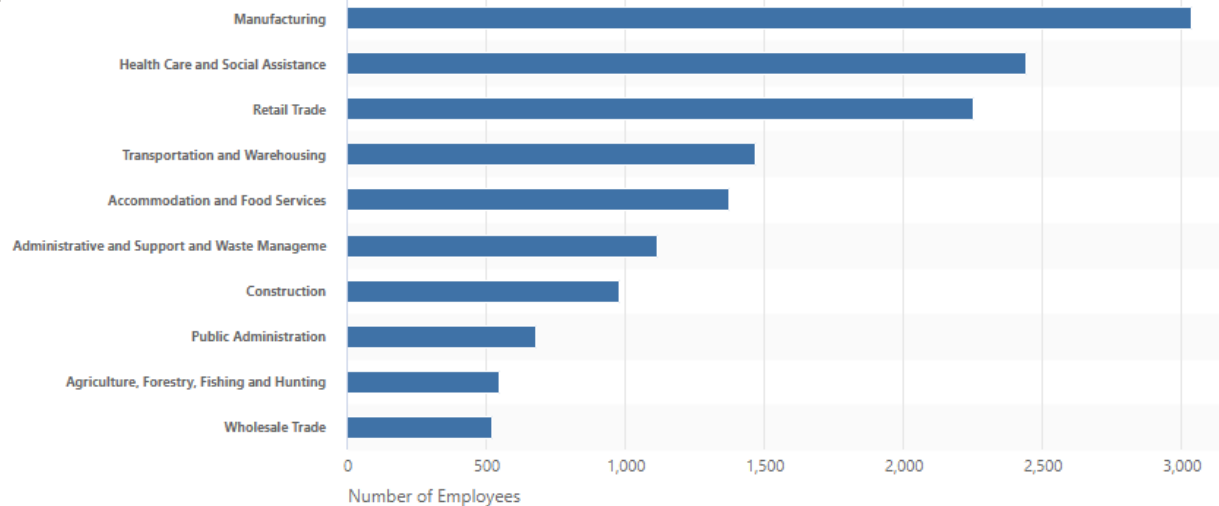
% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
8.3%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Coffee County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

COOK COUNTY

County Seat: Adel
Founded in 1918

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
17,212
2019 Estimate
17,177
Male
47.9%
Female
52.1%
Minority
31.3%
Median Age
37.3
Age 65+
2,729
Under 18
4,396

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$41,854

Per Capita Income
\$20,128

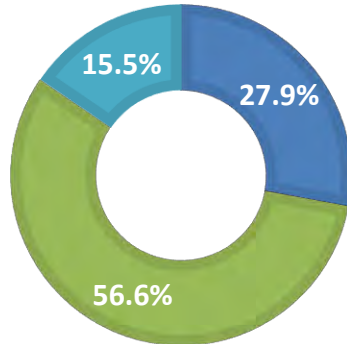
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$28,112

% of People Below
Poverty Level
24.0%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Cook—**16.3%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



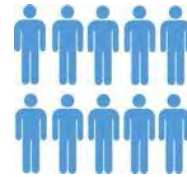
TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



-0.2%

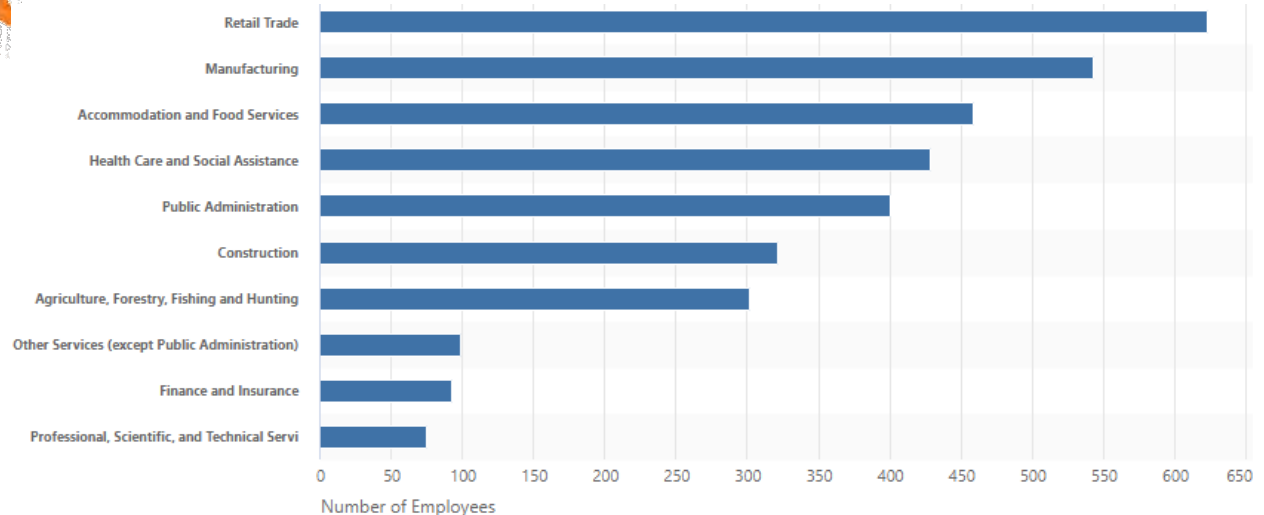


LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Walmart Supercenter
2. Williams Investment Co.
3. Adel Public Works Department
4. Southwell Medical Center
5. Vulcan Steel

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$87,500

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
0.8%

Rental Vacancy Rate
3.8%

Occupied Housing Units
6,217

% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
7.1%

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Cook County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

ECHOLS COUNTY

County Seat: Statenville
Founded in 1858

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
4,034

2019 Estimate
3,981

Male
47.4%

Female
52.6%

Minority
26.2%

Median Age
40.6

Age 65+
641

Under 18
881

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$39,494

Per Capita Income
\$23,885

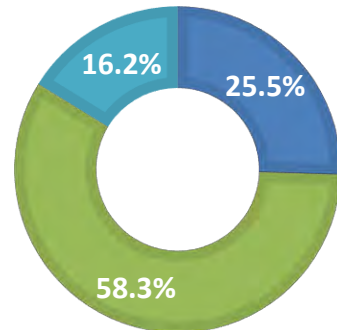
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$28,067

% of People Below
Poverty Level
24.1%

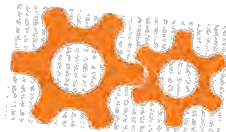
Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Echols—**16.0%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



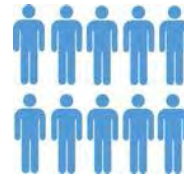
TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



-1.31%

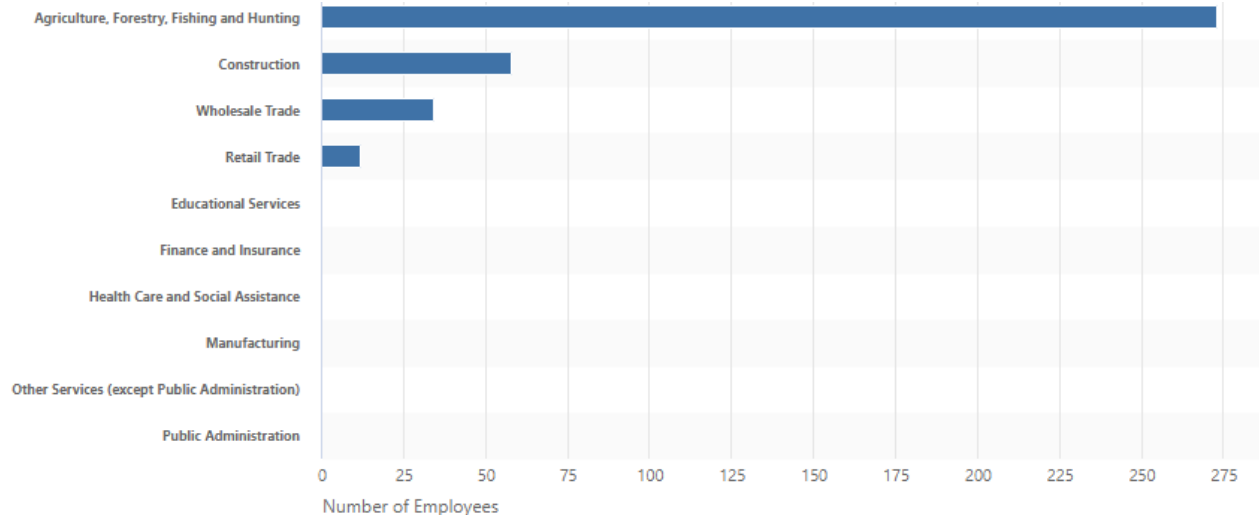


LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Grim Way Farms
2. Echols County Schools
3. Coggins Farm and Produce
4. Big C Freight Inc
5. Corbett Electrical

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$59,100

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.9%

Rental Vacancy Rate
8.7%

Occupied Housing Units
1,561

% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
2.9%

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Echols County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

IRWIN COUNTY

County Seat: Ocilla
Founded in 1818



POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹

9,538

2019 Estimate

9,320

Male

52.6%

Female

47.4%

Minority

30.2%

Median Age

39.7

Age 65+

1,741

Under 18

2,052



ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income

\$37,736

Per Capita Income

\$19,878

Per Capita Living Wage ³

\$27,527

% of People Below

Poverty Level

23.9%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴

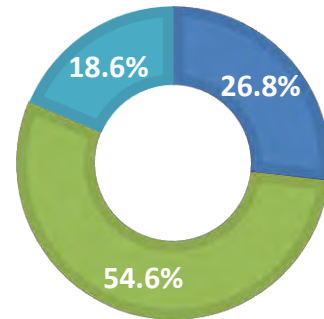
Irwin—**16.9%**

Georgia—**12.0%**

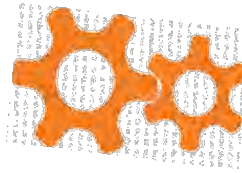
National—**10.9%**



TOTAL POPULATION %

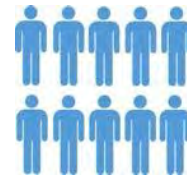


■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE

DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



-2.29%



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Irwin County Hospital
2. Irwin County Elementary School
3. Forrest River Inc. - Cargo Division
4. Irwin County Commission
5. Heritage Healthcare at Oseloa



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value

\$79,800

Homeowner Vacancy Rate

0.0%

Rental Vacancy Rate

2.9%

Occupied Housing Units

3,329

% of Units with No Vehicle

Available

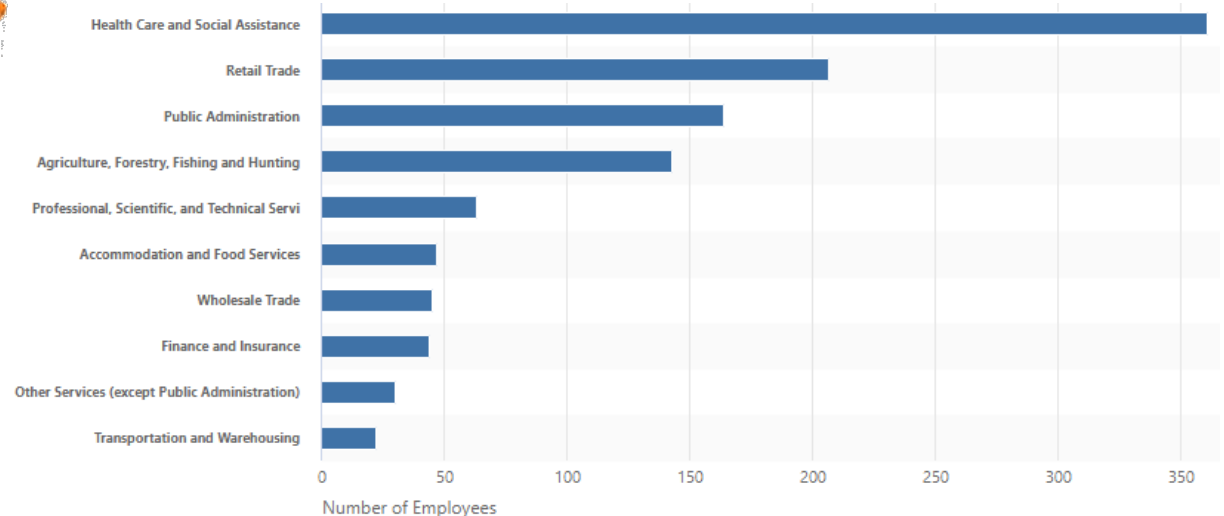
7.7%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Irwin County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

LANIER COUNTY

County Seat: Lakeland
Founded in 1920

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
10,078

2019 Estimate
10,380

Male
48.4%

Female
51.6%

Minority
26.0%

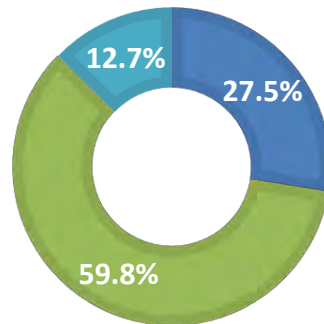
Median Age
35.6

Age 65+
1,434

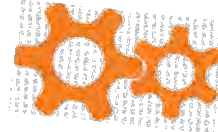
Under 18
2,617



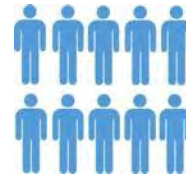
TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE INCREASE 2010-2019 ¹



2.99%



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Affinity Building Systems
2. Lakeland Villa Convalescent Center
3. FMB Bancshares, Inc.
4. Lanier Elementary School
5. Georgia Department of Corrections



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$114,900

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.0%

Rental Vacancy Rate
10.4%

Occupied Housing Units
3,714

% of Units with No Vehicle Available
7.9%

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$40,986

Per Capita Income
\$19,207

Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$28,067

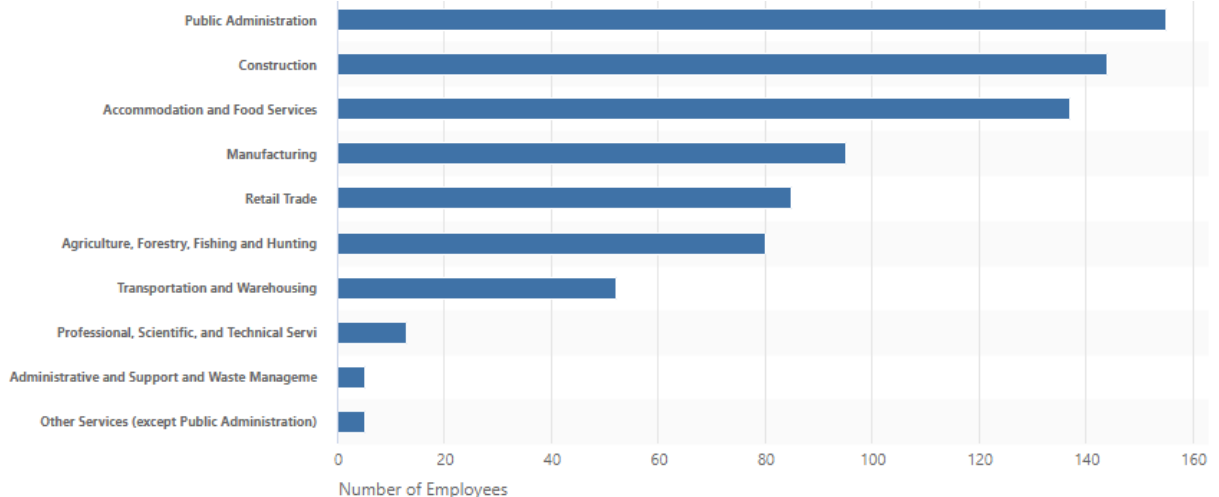
% of People Below Poverty Level
23.1%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Lanier—**16.1%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Lanier County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

LOWNDES COUNTY

County Seat: Valdosta
Founded in 1825

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹ Minority
109,233 **43.0%**

2019 Estimate Median Age
115,364 **30.5**

Male Age 65+
48.7% **13,703**

Female Under 18
51.3% **27,682**

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$42,441

Per Capita Income
\$23,348

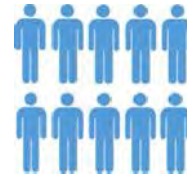
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$28,067

% of People Below
Poverty Level
24.4%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Lowndes—**15.3%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**

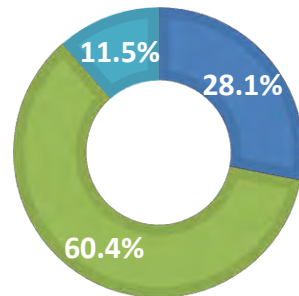


POPULATION PERCENTAGE INCREASE 2010-2019 ¹

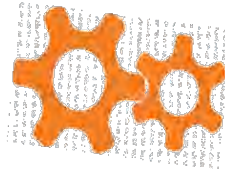


5.61%

TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+

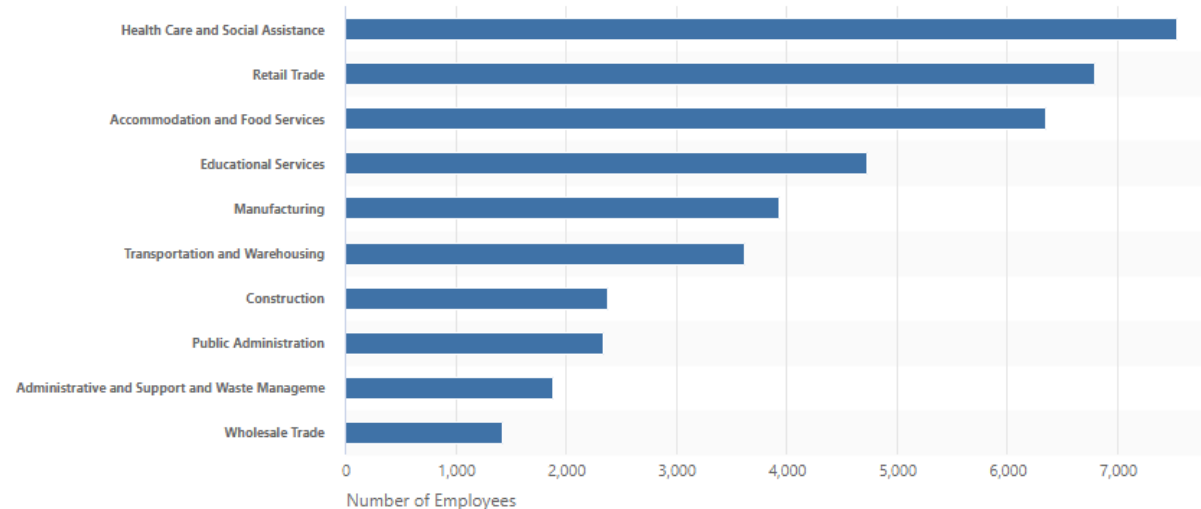


LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Moody Air Force Base
2. Valdosta State University
3. Valdosta Administrative
4. Home Depot Rapid Employment
5. Wild Adventures Theme Park

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$140,600

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
2.8%

Rental Vacancy Rate
10.7%

Occupied Housing Units
41,282

% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
8.4%

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Lowndes County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

PIERCE COUNTY

County Seat: Blackshear
Founded in 1857



POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹

18,758

2019 Estimate

19,250

Male

50.4%

Female

49.6%

Minority

14.3%

Median Age

39.4

Age 65+

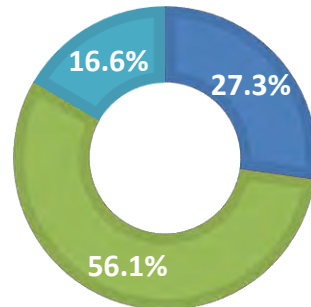
3,228

Under 18

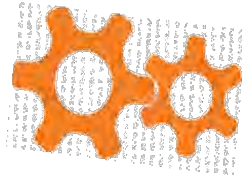
4,818



TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income

\$42,804

Per Capita Income

\$22,268

Per Capita Living Wage ³

\$28,172

% of People Below

Poverty Level

22.1%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴

Pierce—**15.5%**

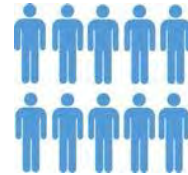
Georgia—**12.0%**

National—**10.9%**



POPULATION PERCENTAGE

INCREASE 2010-2019 ¹



2.62%

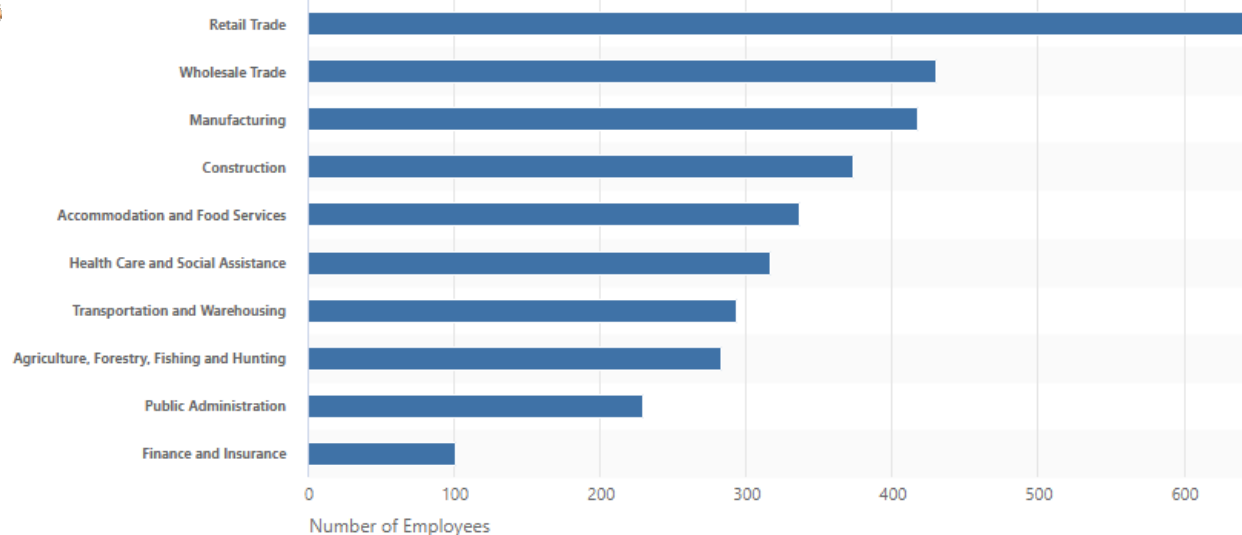


LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Stewart Distribution Wholesale
2. Blackshear Elementary
3. Thom's Transport Co
4. Pierce County Nursing Home
5. Mac 44 Forestry LLC

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value

\$104,400

Homeowner Vacancy Rate

0.4%

Rental Vacancy Rate

2.6%

Occupied Housing Units

7,048

% of Units with No Vehicle

Available

4.3%

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Pierce County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

TIFT COUNTY

County Seat: Tifton
Founded in 1905

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
40,118

2019 Estimate
40,541

Male
48.5%

Female
51.5%

Minority
35.5%

Median Age
36.2

Age 65+
5,859

Under 18
10,077

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$45,639

Per Capita Income
\$22,974

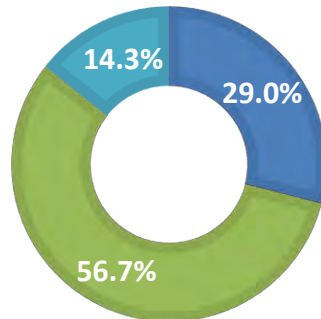
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$27,542

% of People Below
Poverty Level
23.3%

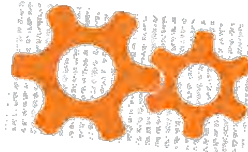
Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Tift—**15.1%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



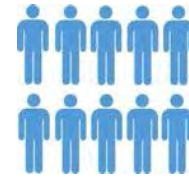
TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE INCREASE 2010-2019 ¹



1.05%



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Target Distribution Center
2. Lewis Taylor Farms, Inc.
3. Wal-Mart Supercenter
4. Heatcraft Refrigeration Products
5. Coastal Plain Experiment Station



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$118,100

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
0.5%

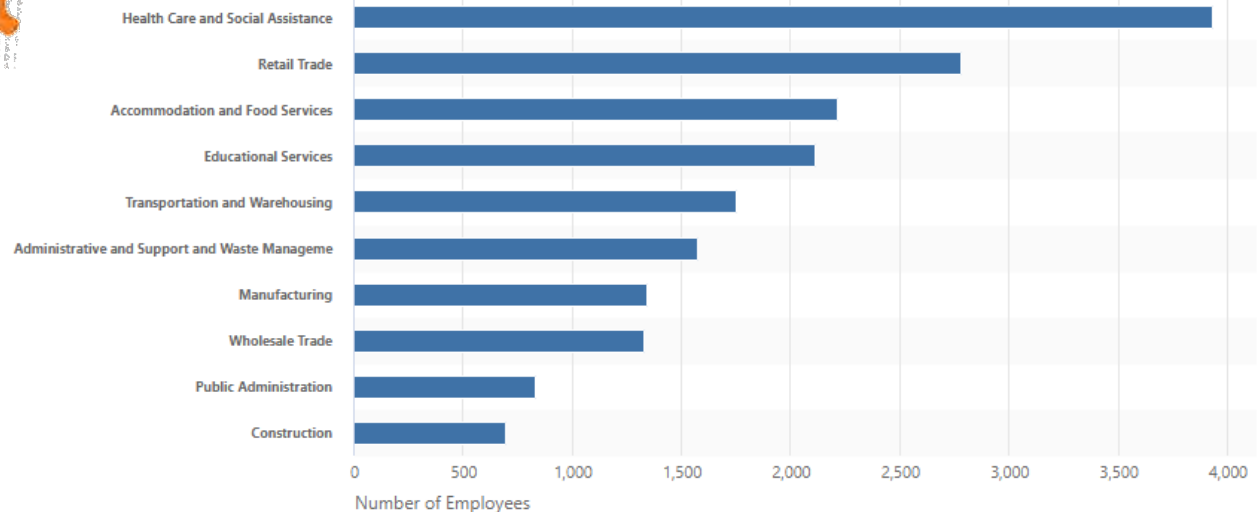
Rental Vacancy Rate
1.0%

Occupied Housing Units
15,144

% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
9.8%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Tift County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

TURNER COUNTY

County Seat: Ashburn
Founded in 1905

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
8,930

2019 Estimate
7,943

Male
47.9%

Female
52.1%

Minority
42.7%

Median Age
40.3

Age 65+
1,547

Under 18
1,934

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$37,039

Per Capita Income
\$19,527

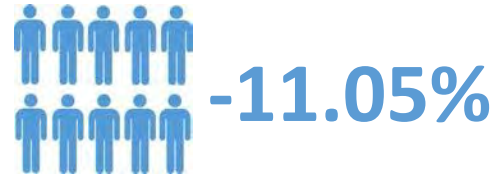
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$27,527

% of People Below
Poverty Level
36.6%

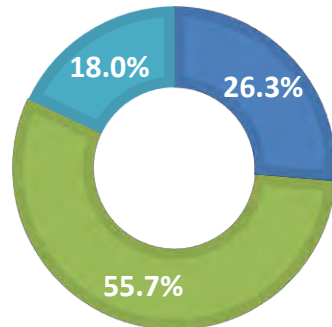
Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
Turner—**18.6%**
Georgia—**12.0%**
National—**10.9%**



POPULATION PERCENTAGE DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+

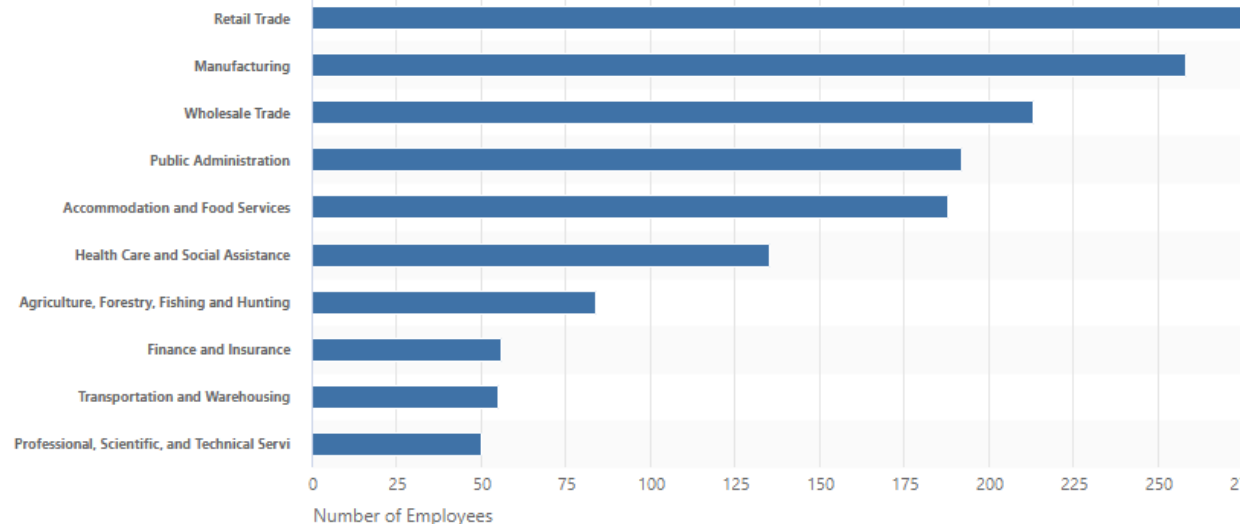


LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Concordia LLC
2. Piggly Wiggly
3. Golden Peanut & Tree Nuts
4. Turner County Elementary School
5. UFP Ashburn

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$79,700

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
3.2%

Rental Vacancy Rate
0.6%

Occupied Housing Units
3,169

% of Units with No Vehicle
Available
14.7%

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Turner County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

WARE COUNTY

County Seat: Waycross
Founded in 1824

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹

36,312

2019 Estimate

35,593

Male

50.3%

Female

49.7%

Minority

35.2%

Median Age

39.5

Age 65+

6,014

Under 18

8,395

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income

\$36,869

Per Capita Income

\$20,411

Per Capita Living Wage ³

\$26,193

% of People Below

Poverty Level

24.9%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴

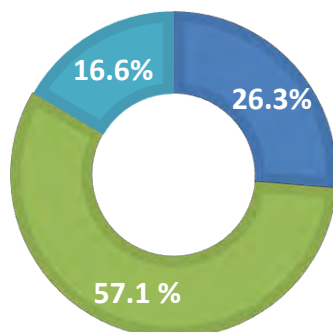
Ware—**16.7%**

Georgia—**12.0%**

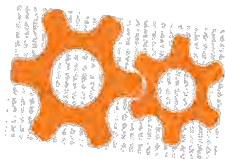
National—**10.95%**



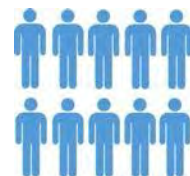
TOTAL POPULATION %



■ <19 ■ 20-64 ■ 65+



POPULATION PERCENTAGE DECREASE 2010-2019 ¹



-1.98%



LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Memorial Satilla Health
2. Walmart Supercenter
3. Ware State Prison
4. Mall at Waycross
5. Baptist Village Retirement Community



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value

\$83,100

Homeowner Vacancy Rate

1.4%

Rental Vacancy Rate

1.7%

Occupied Housing Units

13,823

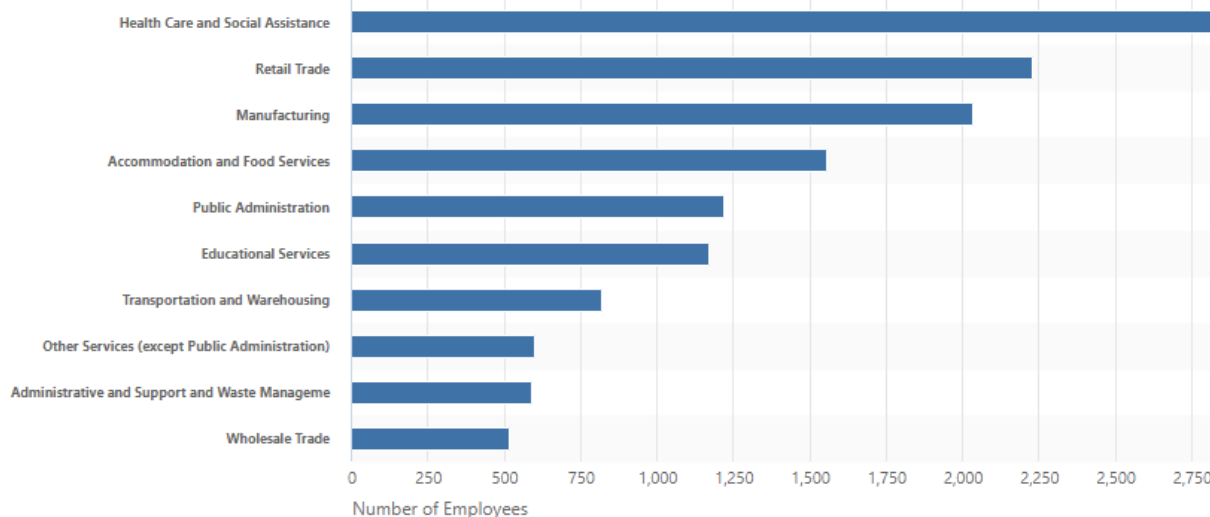
% of Units with No Vehicle

Available

8.0%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



● Number of Establishments ● Number of Employees

Industry Employment Distribution

This section shows the industries with the highest number of employees in Ware County, GA for the 2nd Quarter, 2021.

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
4. www.feedingamerica.org
5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer



ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The economies of the SGRC region have become more diversified over the past twenty years; however, this diversity did not make the region immune to the national recession. The District has suffered from the ill-effects of numerous industry and business closures that occurred during the recession and resulted in lingering economic distress and persistent unemployment. The economic base for the south-central area of the region is generated from within the south-central area and north-central Florida. The southeastern economic base is generated from within the southeast area, the Georgia coastal area, and northeast Florida.

Southern Georgia is finding ways to reverse negative trends and to move the region forward through regional initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable economic development. Goals for economic development are being integrated with land use and transportation goals and coordinated with the concerns related to natural resources, preservation of the water quality, agriculture, and connectivity in the region.

Barriers to economic prosperity in Southern Georgia are numerous. One of many barriers continues to be the lack of adequate funding to fully serve the planning and economic development needs of this extremely large and distressed region.

Given the challenges that the Southern Georgia region continues to face, economic resilience is crucial. Regional economic prosperity is linked to the area's ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from disruptions to its economic base. According to the Economic Development Administration, in order to develop economic resilience, regions should focus on both steady – state and responsive initiatives with the following two-pronged approach ¹:

- 1. Planning for and implementing resilience through specific goals or actions to bolster the long-term economic durability of the region (steady-state), and*
- 2. Establishing information networks among the various stakeholders in the region to encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, education and non-profit sectors to collaborate on existing and potential future challenges (responsive).*

The Southern Georgia region has narrowed its focus to the following initiatives, developed from the two-pronged approach:

¹. <http://www.eda.gov/ceds/content/economic-resilience.htm>

Steady-State Initiatives:

- Engaging in comprehensive planning efforts that involve extensive participation from the community to define and implement a collective vision for resilience
- Undertaking initiatives to broaden the industrial base by identifying emerging clusters that build on the region's unique SWOT
- Constructing and developing a resilient workforce that adapts to a shifting economy
- Maintaining geographic information systems (GIS) that link with business establishment data bases to track regional and local "churns"

Responsive Initiatives:

- Conducting pre-disaster recovery planning to define key responsibilities and actions
- Establishing regular communication of business community needs and issues through the SGRC Economic Development Professionals Advisory Committee
- Establishing strong leadership succession plans
- Further developing broadband through the use of small cells for reliable communication



A goal of this CEDS is to identify where investment can be made to further diversify the region's economic base. Creating local businesses and industries will result in stronger local economies and therefore, economically resilient regions. Through the CEDS Strategy Committee and the SWOT Analysis, four target sectors for growth were identified to support regional economic resilience:

1. *State of Regional Economy, Clusters, Partners & Resources for Economic Development, and Global Competitiveness*
2. *Transportation, Community Facilities/Infrastructure Assets, and Broadband*
3. *Education and Workforce Development*
4. *Population and Housing*

These four target sectors formed the foundation for many development decisions made during the CEDS planning process.

REGIONAL CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Locating and analyzing the region's economic clusters was crucial to developing the target sectors, and, therefore, the region's CEDS. The wide array of economic clusters in the 18-county Southern Georgia EDD region illustrates the diversity of the district's economy, and a critical component of the region's economic resilience. Currently, there are 15 strongly traded clusters¹ in Southern Georgia.

Distribution and eCommerce is the most dominant regional traded cluster, employing nearly 8,500 people in the region. Subclusters making up this regional cluster include warehousing/storage, wholesale of electrical and electronic goods, wholesale of apparel and accessories, and others.

Wood Products is the second most dominate cluster, employing just over 2,300 people in the region. Subclusters making up this region cluster include wood processing, wood components/products, and prefabricated wood buildings.

Of the region's 18 counties, the majority have numerous clusters making up their local economies.

The cluster analysis identifies areas of potential development and expansion within the four target sectors that will enhance economic resilience and growth in the Southern Georgia region.



1. Source: <http://clustermapping.us>

STRATEGIC TARGET SECTORS



State of Regional Economy, Clusters, Partners & Resources for Economic Development, and Global Competitiveness



Transportation, Community Facilities / Infrastructure Assets, and Broadband



Education and Workforce Development



Population and Housing

ACTION PLAN

The Southern Georgia Regional CEDS, based primarily on community input, examines the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in order to identify regional priorities and needs.

From this analysis, the CEDS Committee set forth goals and objectives to be achieved by solving the economic problems of the region. All strategic projects, programs, and activities identified in the CEDS will work to fulfill the Goals and Objectives of the CEDS. The goals represent broad, primary regional expectations.

The CEDS Strategy Committee developed four goals from the Strategic Target Sectors for the CEDS:

Goal 1: Promote economic development strategies that encourage entrepreneurship, support existing industries, attract new employers, and stimulate tourism.

Goal 2: Protect, expand, and enhance critical infrastructure and connectivity for existing and future community growth.

Goal 3: Facilitate growth and development of an educated, skilled, prepared workforce by utilizing available programs and resources.

Goal 4: Create an inviting sense of place through rural renewal and other strategies in order to retain population and to attract new members to our community.



State of Regional
Economy, Clusters,
Partners and
Resources for
Economic
Development and
Global
Competitiveness

Goal 1



Promote economic development strategies that encourage entrepreneurship, support existing industries, attract new employers, and stimulate tourism.

The region covers 18 counties from the coastal region to west of I-75 and from the Florida border to north of Ashburn. While the Region has a strong agricultural foundation, four distinct regional economies exist grouped around the larger retail centers Valdosta, county seat of Lowndes County, also part of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in the region; Waycross with its ties to the coastal region; Douglas; and Tifton. Southern Georgia is also well known for its abundant and accessible natural resources including the Okefenokee Swamp, agricultural lands, timber and water supply.

If prudently and conservatively managed, these resources will increasingly serve as economic attractors for many years to come, even as other regions experience declines in the quality and quantity of those resources. The Region as a whole should also invest in providing ample start-up opportunities for the graduates from the Region's universities and technical colleges. This would serve to retain this very skilled workforce in the area, thereby stimulating the economy further through secondary and tertiary effects.





GOAL 1: Strategies and Objectives

Coordinate economic development initiatives with a variety of economic development entities.

- Promote coordination among all economic development entities in the region.
- Promote region-wide export data study.
- Promote coordination between the local governments and area businesses and agencies to identify ways to attract and retain more young, workforce age population to the region.

Coordinate local, state, and federal economic development planning and implementation.

- Facilitate ongoing economic development programs that result in improvements in the regional tax base and jobs.
- Provide adequate transportation systems to meet the needs of existing and new businesses and industries including a connection of all counties to interstate highways with four-lane roads.

Promote regional collaboration for even stronger networks between 18 counties.

- Strengthen and expand existing entrepreneurial support networks in rural areas.
- Promote business and entrepreneur learning opportunities.
- Focus on ways to encourage and facilitate regional tourism.

Support Economic Innovation

- Market the region as a location of choice for companies' headquarters in target industries.
- Improve access to capital for all types of businesses.
- Identify ways to help traditional manufacturers to repurpose assets and adopt advanced technologies.

METRICS

- Revenue growth for key industries
- Number of businesses and entrepreneurs receiving services from community colleges and workforce development programs
- Number of new entrepreneurs/businesses
- Volume of small business lending and private investment

Transportation,
Community
Facilities,
Infrastructure
Assets, and
Broadband

Goal 2



Protect, expand, and enhance critical infrastructure and connectivity for existing and future community growth.

Existing and future transportation infrastructure has a great impact on the region's and individual communities' growth and development, including potential for economic development, land use practices, and quality of life for residents.

The region needs to work with its communities in seeking to enhance the transportation infrastructure by constructing missing connections, improving safety, prioritizing projects to promote economic development, and also by providing for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure which will serve to enhance quality of life for residents and to provide for tourism opportunities and connections.

Water and sewer infrastructure are important services offered throughout the region, primarily in the incorporated areas, often acting as an engine to neighborhood rehabilitation or economic development. Many jurisdictions are faced with aged and outdated infrastructure, systems at or near capacity, and the need for expansion of water and sewer lines to meet increasing demand in services. Limited funds force postponement of all except the most urgent projects.

Broadband internet access is another important service becoming increasingly prevalent to economic development in the region. As business and industry progress and modernize, communities depend on reliable broadband internet access to develop, attract, retain and expand their economies. It also allows local businesses to compete in national and global markets, a possibility previously challenging and even unattainable for rural communities. Broadband has also become absolutely crucial to the progression of schools and essential in educating the future workforce. Broadband even plays an important role in healthcare, allowing critical access for rural medical facilities.

For the benefit of the region as a whole, future major infrastructure projects should be coordinated locally and regionally to efficiently provide services and properly direct future growth while minimizing impacts on the environment.





GOAL 2: Strategies and Objectives

Ensure that the region's transportation systems are intact to facilitate growth.

- Encourage local governments to review their comprehensive plans, study growth patterns, and plan growth according to transportation attributes.
- Encourage local governments to establish transportation systems.
- Encourage local governments to implement the Southern Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian plan.

Improve broadband access in rural communities.

- Identify areas where High Speed Internet & Broadband are needed.
- Identify locations where additional bandwidth is needed.
- Develop small cells in communities without reliable broadband access.
- Provide incentives for broadband; i.e. Electric Membership Cooperatives.

Ensure public facilities are adequate to accommodate existing and future growth.

- Strive to provide industrial parks/properties with all the necessary infrastructure and transportation links to attract new and expanding businesses and industries to the area.
- Assess availability of speculatively built buildings and other buildings.
- Provide availability of adequate financing and/or financial incentives to attract new and expanding businesses and industries to the region.

Facilitate upgrades and improvements to water and sewer infrastructure.

- Continue to monitor grant opportunities and inform local communities about upcoming deadlines and assist local governments in the grant preparation and application process.
- Coordinate local government infrastructure capital improvement plans with available funding opportunities.
- Research and make available various state and federal grants and loan programs that can be utilized for local and regional infrastructure development.

METRICS

- Volume of water and sewer capacity
- Number of grants funded for local infrastructure improvements
- Number of new businesses and industries recruited to the region
- Number of communities with broadband access

Education and Workforce Development

Goal 3



Facilitate growth and development of an educated, skilled, prepared workforce by utilizing available programs and resources.

Workforce development through education and training is a critical need for economic development in Southern Georgia. Statistics show that a high poverty, low diversity region can turn away both potential employers and a potential workforce. Low literacy and educational attainment can cripple the attempts at industry diversification towards high skill/high wage job growth. If higher paying industries are to be recruited to the region, then higher skilled employees must be trained and made available. Education and training are recognized as critical needs.

Fortunately, there are a number of regionally significant programs available that are making a difference in the lives of educated and/or untrained workers in the region, and the CEDS Committee has recognized several opportunities for growth and development of the workforce.

In an effort to utilize available programs and resources, the region will market Technical Colleges and Workforce Development Programs in the area and the resources they have available. Programs such as the Hope Career Grant and Great Promise Partnership give students options, but many of them are unaware of the resources available.

Connecting students with resources will help to develop a competent workforce, and also incentivize the younger generation to stay local by recognizing the opportunities available to them.

Through the analysis of the economy and recognizing clusters of industry, the region can continue to develop a beneficial and productive workforce. In order for the economy to thrive, it is critical that a skilled, prepared, diverse workforce accommodates the needs of the region.





GOAL 3: Strategies and Objectives

Develop a well trained professional, technical, and skilled workforce capable of accommodating new industry and maintaining existing industry.

- Improve educational attainment by reducing high school drop-out rates
- Market Workforce Development Programs that enable youth and adults to pursue higher education opportunities.

Create and maintain long-term, meaningful employment opportunities sufficient to establish a sound and balanced economic base in which average per capita income and employment levels are consistently comparable to those of the State and Nation.

- Encourage private/public partnerships between counties, cities, local businesses, and schools for the development of work programs and career education programs such as career academies for young adults.
- Support educational institutions to provide learning/skill development opportunities.

Launch Workforce initiatives to align training and educational opportunities to target industries for critical, in-demand occupations.

- Facilitate the incorporation of applied economics, soft skills, and work ethics in the middle and high school classrooms to prepare students with job ready knowledge.
- Inventory statewide and local K-12 and community college programs that serve targeted industries.
- Collaborate with Workforce Development Board and partners to

address workforce skill development at all ages - primary, secondary, adult, and senior - with a special focus on upgrading skills of the under-skilled population.

Improve efforts to prepare workers for available jobs.

- Work closely with business and industry to ensure that the system is not only producing workers to meet its immediate needs, but making adjustments in anticipation of future needs and technological changes.
- Work closely with core partners and other agencies to move individuals from the labor market to further education and training in order to advance in their careers and upgrade their contributions to the workplace.
- Provide support services to adults, youth, and dislocated workers during the pursuit of education and training.

METRICS

- Number of jobs created/retained after implementation of the CEDS
- Number of industry recognized certificates issued for specific training programs
- Number of students in career and technical education programs that are linked to in-demand jobs
- Number of workers trained, placed, or otherwise impacted by workforce sector initiatives

Population and Housing

Goal 4



Create an inviting sense of place through rural renewal and other strategies in order to retain population, and to attract new members to our community.

Understanding population/demographic trends in the region forms the basis for assessing and formulating policies and projects in economic development, land use, and community facilities and services, infrastructure and housing. While some areas in the region have experienced population growth, specifically a rise in senior population, the younger generation tends to leave the area after high school and college to pursue higher education and higher paying jobs.

Creating greater diversity in the population will contribute to a greater diversity in the workforce skills and cultural backgrounds which can contribute to a more well-rounded society with a higher quality of life for all. Therefore, local jurisdictions and the Regional Commission can expand their efforts for the region to appeal to all ages. One way to accomplish this is through creating an inviting sense of place through rural housing renewal.

A community specific and region-wide effort should be undertaken to provide an adequate and diverse supply of quality housing stock in the region to serve the existing and future workforce. This will assist to sustain and improve the economy by attracting and retaining prospective employers.

Various age groups and cultures require distinct needs for housing, medical services, recreation and transportation. A current housing inventory not only allows a community to determine its housing needs, but also to assess the adequacy of their current housing stock in regards to age and condition, number and types, owner or renter occupied, costs and commuting distance. When a community supplies quality housing for its workforce, it also provides a valuable marketing tool for recruitment of new employers.





GOAL 4: Strategies and Objectives

Revitalize downtowns throughout the region.

- Provide technical assistance to help jurisdictions become Main Street Communities.
- Collaborate to develop county-wide historic preservation plans.
- Encourage local governments to inventory their historic and cultural resources in the area.
- Promote downtown areas for tourism and recreation.
- Increase Code Enforcement in communities surrounding downtown areas.

Facilitate vibrant, attractive communities.

- Create welcoming, functional neighborhoods with "work, play, live" atmospheres to invite younger families to the region.
- Rehabilitate dilapidated housing throughout the region.
- Encourage local governments to participate in CHIP, CDBG, and USDA housing programs.
- Work with local governments to develop ordinances for manufactured home usage and placement.

Develop strategies for creating and sustaining a diverse population.

- Seek additional funding streams to address senior population program sustainability.
- Expand evidence based programs to help seniors live healthier and more independent lives.
- Market "unique" aspects of community to attract younger population.
- Implement Economic Development and Workforce CEDS goals to attract younger population.

Raise awareness about the importance of local planning in ensuring connections between transportation, housing, services, and job centers to create healthier, safer communities.

- Facilitate collaboration and communication among partners for investments in housing and public services.
- Continue to utilize Southern Georgia Regional Commission services for transportation, housing, and land use planning.

METRICS

- Number of Main Street Communities
- Number of Code Enforcement violations issued
- Resources available to aging population
- Population demographics
- Number of grants awarded for housing rehabilitation



EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The Evaluation Framework is the Implementation schedule for the CEDS. The performance measures for each goal are referenced with responsible entities and within an estimated timeframe for completion.

Goal	Performance Measures	Responsible Entity	Timeframe Short (1-3 years) Mid (3-5 years) Long (5+ years) Ongoing
Goal 1: State of Regional Economy, Clusters, Partners and Resources for Economic Development, and Global Competitiveness			
	Region-wide export data study	SGRC, Chambers, Economic Dev Authorities	Short
	Organize regional entrepreneurial networking sessions	WDB, Chambers	Short
	Complete target sector reports	SGRC, Chambers, Industrial & Economic Dev Authorities	Short
	Develop a marketing program to promote agricultural products from local farms	Chambers, Industrial & Economic Dev Authorities	Mid
	Develop county/region-wide tourism plan	SGRC, Chambers	Long
	Expand ag business and agri-tourism through value-added ag product businesses, locally made and locally grown	Chambers, Economic Development Authorities, Local Governments	Long
Goal 2: Transportation, Community Facilities, Infrastructure Assets, and Broadband			
	Identify areas where internet and broadband is needed	SGRC, Local Governments	Short
	Identify areas where bandwidth is needed	SGRC, Local Governments	Short
	Develop Small Cells	Local Governments, Service Providers	Long
	Provide incentives for broadband	Local Governments, State	Long
	Monitor grant opportunities for infrastructure improvements	SGRC	Ongoing
	Market proximity to major ports	Industrial/Dev Authorities	Ongoing
	Continue to evaluate transportation and make critical improvements	SGRC, Local Governments	Ongoing
	Assess industrial parks/properties	Industrial/Dev Authorities	Short



Goal	Performance Measures	Responsible Entity	Timeframe Short (1-3 years) Mid (3-5 years) Long (5+ years) Ongoing
Goal 3: Education and Workforce Development			
	Reduce High School drop-out rates	SGRC Region	Ongoing
	Inventory statewide and local K-12 and community college programs that serve targeted industries	WDB, SGRC	Mid
	Advertise services available through and promote continued utilization of skills centers through the Workforce Investment Opportunity Program and Labor Department	WDB	Ongoing
	Create a Youth Entrepreneurship program to train and encourage area youth to start new businesses as a career option	SGRC Region, Chamber	Mid
	Advertise Technical College and Workforce Development resources	Technical Colleges, Workforce Development Board	Ongoing
Goal 4: Population and Housing			
	Continue to foster and support the rehabilitation/reconstruction of affordable housing	Local Governments	Ongoing
	Develop a plan to attract more middle to high-end housing units to attract the workforce commuters in this area	Economic Development Authorities, Chambers, Local Governments	Mid
	Increase Code Enforcement	Local Governments	Mid
	Implement the HOME/CHIP rehab programs	Local Governments, SGRC	Short
	Develop local loan pool from banks for housing assistance/repair/ or demolition	SGRC Region	Long
	Main Street Organization and Promotions committee continue coordinating a variety of events to market downtown	Main Street Communities	Short
	Seek additional funding streams to address senior population program sustainability	SGRC, Economic Development Authorities, Local Governments	Mid

Appendix

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION COUNCIL

County Representative		Municipal Representative	Private Sector Representative
Atkinson	Lace Futch	Robert Johnson	Janice McKinnon
Bacon	Vacant	Larry Taylor	Lisa Coley
Ben Hill	Steve Taylor	Jim Puckett	Jason Dunn
Berrien	Ronnie Gaskins	John Clayton	Lisa Smart
Brantley	Skipper Harris	Barbara Maefield	Vacant
Brooks	Patrick Folsom	Nancy Dennard	Zurich Deshazor
Charlton	James Everett	Lee Gowen	Dana O'Quinn
Clinch	Roger Metts	Willie Hardee, Jr.	Vacant
Coffee	Oscar Paulk	Tony Paulk	Adam Smith
Cook	Audie Rowe	Buddy Duke	Derry Bennett
Echols	Bobby Walker	N/A	Cheryl Garner
Irwin	Scott Carver	Matt Seale	Mona Paulk
Lanier	Dennis Fender	Bill Darsey	John Fitton
Lowndes	Joyce Evans	Vivian Miller-Cody	Anthony Payton
Pierce	Neal Bennett	Keith Brooks	Andy Brannen
Tift	Tony McBrayer	Julie Smith	Vacant
Turner	Dana Whiddon	Sandra Lumpkin	Vacant
Ware	Elmer Thrift	Michael-Angelo James	Barbara King
Governor's Office	Norman "Bo" Lovein III	Lt. Governor's Office	Keith Stone
	Guy Daughtrey		
	Jonathan Jones	Speaker's Office	Vacant

SOUTHERN GEORGIA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Member Name	Title	Entity	Board Category
Frank Bannamon	Recruiter/Retention Specialist	McKinney Medical Center, Inc.	Business Representative
Keith Bryant	Human Resources Director	Clinch Memorial Hospital	Business Representative
Melissa Dark	Executive Director	Fitzgerald Ben Hill Chamber of Commerce	Business Representative
Elton Dixon	President	Enay Coaching, LLC	Business Representative
Jennifer Gainey	Human Resources Manager	Satilla EMC	Business Representative
Jonathan Gray	Complex Manager	Cal-Maine Foods, Inc.	Business Representative
Heather Green	President	Adel-Cook County Chamber of Commerce	Business Representative
Sean Panizzi	Branch Manager	Teamtemps Personal Staffing, Inc.	Business Representative
Lisa Smart	Executive Director	Berrien Co. Chamber of Commerce & Development Authority	Business Representative
Darlene Tait	Human Resources Supervisor	AJM Packaging	Business Representative
Courtney Taylor	Human Resources Manager	Optima Chemical Group	Business Representative
Katrena Felder	Executive Director of Adult Education	Coastal Pines Technical College	Education & Training
Shannon McConico	Dean of Student Affairs	Wiregrass Georgia Technical College	Education & Training
Leigh Wallace	Executive VP & VP of Student Affairs	Southern Regional Technical College	Education & Training
Grady Burrell	Assistant Business Agent	International Brotherhood of Teamsters	Workforce
Myrtice Edwards	Program Coordinator	Telamon Corporation	Workforce
Melvin Johnson	Director	Lee Street Resource Center	Workforce
Ben Lott	Business Representative	International Union of Painters & Allied Trades	Workforce
Merrill Kemp-Wilcox	Strategic Partnership Coordinator	Georgia Partnership for Excellence on Education	Workforce
Kevin Ellis	Executive Director	Alma/Bacon County Development Authority	Government & Economic Dev.
Jennifer Gillard	Rehabilitation Unit Manager	Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency	Government & Economic Dev.
Curtis Griffin	Deputy Director	Waycross/Blackshear Housing Authority	Government & Economic Dev.
William Palmer	Career Center Manager	Georgia Department of Labor	Government & Economic Dev.
Jamon Williams	Regional Coordinator	Georgia Department of Labor	Government & Economic Dev.

Southern Georgia EDD Regional Data

% Poverty Rate				Median Household Income			Per Capita Income			Unemployment**	
County	2021*	2015	2010	2021*	2015	2010	2021*	2015	2010	#	%
Atkinson	33.3	29.9	28.0	\$ 34,877	\$ 30,403	\$ 33,834	\$ 18,565	\$ 16,228	\$ 15,456	74	1.6
Bacon	23.8	20.4	16.5	\$ 36,964	\$ 37,698	\$ 31,429	\$ 19,634	\$ 18,109	\$ 17,110	102	2.3
Ben Hill	29.6	36.2	26.9	\$ 32,705	\$ 30,643	\$ 30,134	\$ 17,563	\$ 15,497	\$ 15,529	181	3.4
Berrien	24.2	25.3	23.1	\$ 40,415	\$ 31,812	\$ 32,202	\$ 19,547	\$ 16,660	\$ 16,049	167	2.2
Brantley	19.6	20.9	21.4	\$ 38,857	\$ 36,301	\$ 37,343	\$ 20,191	\$ 16,774	\$ 18,905	172	2.3
Brooks	22.7	27.8	17.0	\$ 38,285	\$ 31,686	\$ 41,309	\$ 25,700	\$ 19,473	\$ 20,346	151	2.1
Charlton	25.2	18.0	19.8	\$ 41,961	\$ 41,059	\$ 40,850	\$ 18,323	\$ 17,586	\$ 16,652	108	2.2
Clinch	40.2	34.6	25.7	\$ 27,658	\$ 29,125	\$ 31,963	\$ 15,152	\$ 18,256	\$ 16,709	60	2.0
Coffee	19.9	26.0	21.3	\$ 40,859	\$ 34,523	\$ 35,202	\$ 19,905	\$ 16,796	\$ 16,664	445	2.4
Cook	24.0	25.1	23.3	\$ 41,854	\$ 34,230	\$ 31,390	\$ 20,128	\$ 18,858	\$ 16,528	169	2.0
Echols	24.1	30.1	32.1	\$ 39,494	\$ 32,667	\$ 32,390	\$ 23,885	\$ 17,350	\$ 14,201	36	1.8
Irwin	23.9	22.3	25.4	\$ 37,736	\$ 36,729	\$ 38,376	\$ 19,878	\$ 18,614	\$ 16,561	100	2.8
Lanier	23.1	30.6	20.4	\$ 40,986	\$ 36,904	\$ 37,522	\$ 19,207	\$ 16,860	\$ 16,894	87	2.2
Lowndes	21.2	25.3	21.6	\$ 45,683	\$ 37,248	\$ 39,096	\$ 24,708	\$ 19,353	\$ 20,041	1,253	2.4
Pierce	22.1	20.0	15.4	\$ 42,804	\$ 41,685	\$ 37,062	\$ 22,268	\$ 21,601	\$ 18,283	171	2.0
Tift	23.3	27.7	22.8	\$ 45,639	\$ 34,830	\$ 36,847	\$ 22,974	\$ 19,560	\$ 18,394	455	2.1
Turner	33.6	24.8	25.4	\$ 37,039	\$ 29,763	\$ 30,763	\$ 19,527	\$ 17,215	\$ 15,973	194	5.9
Ware	24.9	26.2	20.5	\$ 36,869	\$ 35,247	\$ 35,517	\$ 20,411	\$ 18,341	\$ 18,295	340	2.3
Avg Total	25.5	26.2	22.6	\$ 38,927	\$ 34,586	\$ 35,179	\$ 20,420	\$ 17,952	\$ 17,444	237	2.4
Difference	+ 10.4	+ 7.7	+ 6.9	\$ - 19,773	\$ - 14,756	\$ - 14,168	\$ - 10,647	\$ - 7,475	\$ - 7,690		0.0
State Total	15.1	18.5	15.7	\$ 58,700	\$ 49,342	\$ 49,347	\$ 31,067	\$ 25,427	\$ 25,134	125,465	2.4
Difference	+ 12.1	+ 10.6	+ 8.8	\$ - 23,916	\$ - 18,896	\$ - 16,735	\$ - 13,683	\$ - 10,603	\$ - 9,890		- 1.9
US Total	13.4	15.6	13.8	\$ 62,843	\$ 53,482	\$ 51,914	\$ 34,103	\$ 28,555	\$ 27,334	6,896,000	4.3

*2015-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimate

**GDOL, October 2021

Table 1. Indust1y Projections for Multiple Industries in Southern Georgia Workforce Investment Area in 2012-2022

Industry	Industry Code	2012 Estimated Employment	2022 Projected Employment	Total 2012-2022 Employment Change	Annual Avg. Percent Change	Total Percent Change
Total All Industries	000000	146,010	164,850	18,840	1.22%	12.90%
Accommodation and Food Services	72	13,210	13,880	670	0.50%	5.08%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	56	6,230	9,060	2,830	3.81%	45.36%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	11	5,140	4,070	-1,070	-2.31%	-20.85%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	71	1,180	1,450	270	2.08%	22.85%
Construction	23	4,720	6,190	1,470	2.75%	31.20%
Educational Services	61	14,920	18,960	4,040	2.43%	27.10%
Finance and Insurance	52	3,050	3,420	370	1.15%	12.09%
Health Care and Social Assistance	62	18,960	24,260	5,300	2.50%	27.95%
Information	51	1,970	2,010	40	0.20%	2.03%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	55	830	870	40	0.50%	5.07%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	21	50	40	-10	-2.11%	-19.23%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	81	4,560	5,080	520	1.09%	11.46%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	54	2,850	3,970	1,120	3.37%	39.29%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	53	1,260	1,610	350	2.43%	27.14%
Utilities	22	580	600	20	0.36%	3.62%
Wholesale Trade	42	4,620	5,710	1,090	2.14%	23.57%

Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projections Unit

Table 2. Occupations by Projected Growth

The table below shows the occupations with the highest estimated annual openings in Southern Georgia Workforce Investment Area, Georgia for the 2012 - 2022 time period.

Occupation	2012 Estimated Employment	2022 Projected Employment	2012- 2022 Annual Percent Change	Estimated Annual Openings	Total 2012- 2022 Employment Change
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers Including Fast Food	5,030	5,670	1.2	250	640
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	3,030	3,630	1.8	150	600
Customer Service Representatives	1,980	2,560	2.6	110	580
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,810	2,370	2.7	100	560
Team Assemblers	2,500	2,950	1.7	90	450
Registered Nurses	2,740	3,170	1.5	90	430
Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1,260	1,660	2.8	70	400
Nursing Assistants	2,210	2,590	1.6	80	380
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	2,610	2,980	1.3	80	370
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	1,550	1,910	2.1	70	360
Office Clerks General	3,120	3,470	1.1	110	350
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,490	1,840	2.1	70	350
General and Operations Managers	1,960	2,300	1.6	70	340
Construction Laborers	1,420	1,760	2.2	70	340
Childcare Workers	1,310	1,640	2.3	70	330
Retail Salespersons	5,510	5,830	0.6	220	320
Receptionists and Information Clerks	1,260	1,580	2.3	60	320
Teacher Assistants	1,190	1,470	2.1	60	280
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,590	1,870	1.6	60	280
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,790	2,050	1.4	60	260
Correctional Officers and Jailers	2,010	2,230	1.0	80	220
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	2,070	2,140	0.3	70	70
Cashiers	4,470	4,520	0.1	200	50
Waiters and Waitresses	2,250	2,280	0.1	110	30
Farmworkers and Laborers, Crop, Nursery, and Greenhouse	2,040	1,590	-2.5	60	-450

Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projections Unit

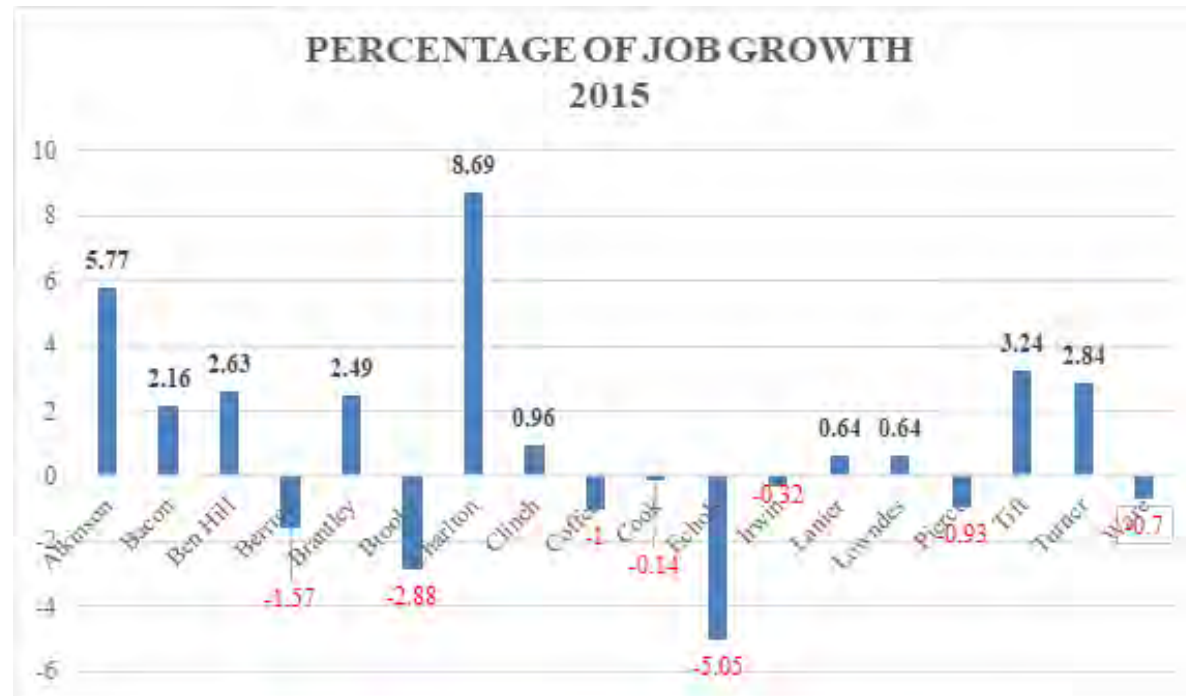
Educational Attainment of Workforce 25 years & older 2015-2019 ACS 5-year est., Table S1501

County	Less than 9 th Grade	9 th to 12 th Grade, no diploma	High School Graduate, GED or equivalent	Some College, no degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree	Total
Atkinson	869	836	1,805	694	360	262	374	5,200
Bacon	398	1,001	3,116	1,548	603	468	301	7,534
Ben Hill	552	1,286	5,052	1,981	1,035	841	414	11,161
Berrien	768	1,999	5,597	2,297	1,022	977	533	13,193
Brantley	661	2,039	5,691	2,109	1,137	552	579	12,768
Brooks	636	1,009	3,875	2,434	1,146	1,394	571	11,065
Charlton	1,049	1,316	3,670	1,678	626	355	451	9,145
Clinch	382	984	1,503	933	186	261	182	4,431
Coffee	2,220	4,632	10,497	5,041	2,152	2,206	1,469	28,217
Cook	606	1,752	4,108	2,246	1,065	951	574	11,302
Echols	296	425	1,170	453	175	166	105	2,790
Irwin	208	949	2,507	990	641	542	401	6,238
Lanier	482	890	2,593	1,131	626	734	394	6,850
Lowndes	2,195	4,309	22,551	14,840	8,192	12,197	5,388	69,672
Pierce	702	1,451	5,543	2,451	1,187	864	764	12,962
Tift	1,435	3,227	8,942	4,495	3,020	2,488	2,183	25,790
Turner	375	671	2,116	1,089	662	363	287	5,563
Ware	1,360	3,195	9,600	4,591	2,022	2,452	1,258	24,478

Employment Comparison– Georgia Trend April 2017

County	Rank in Region 2015	Year 2015 Employment	Rank in Region 2017	Year 2017 Employment	Rank in State 2014	Rank in State 2015	Rank in State 2017	% Average Annual Growth 2011-2017
Lowndes	1	48,169	1	49,612	17	17	17	1.39
Tift	2	18,685	2	19,596	37	37	38	1.49
Coffee	4	15,691	3	16,933	41	42	42	2.66
Ware	3	14,589	4	15,186	45	45	45	0.95
Ben Hill	5	5,549	5	5,336	86	87	88	-1.15
Bacon	6	4,180	6	4,412	99	98	97	4.49
Pierce	7	3,915	7	4,126	101	99	99	2.29
Cook	8	3,909	8	4,072	98	100	100	0.66
Berrien	9	3,412	9	3,195	104	104	109	-2.64
Brooks	10	3,018	10	2,900	111	111	114	-1.66
Clinch	11	2,483	11	2,509	121	119	118	0.42
Atkinson	15	1,953	12	2,414	130	128	119	9.85
Brantley	12	2,125	13	2,241	124	124	124	1.68
Turner	13	2,109	14	2,137	127	125	127	0.33
Charlton	14	2,005	15	1,974	126	127	128	-1.34
Irwin	16	1,769	16	1,711	129	130	134	-2.79
Lanier	17	1,580	17	1,648	137	137	136	3.56
Echols	18	755	18	692	150	152	152	-2.01
Fulton				842,267	1	1	1	2.72
Taliaferro				191	159	159	159	3.23
State Total				4,370,882	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.54

Source: US Census Bureau

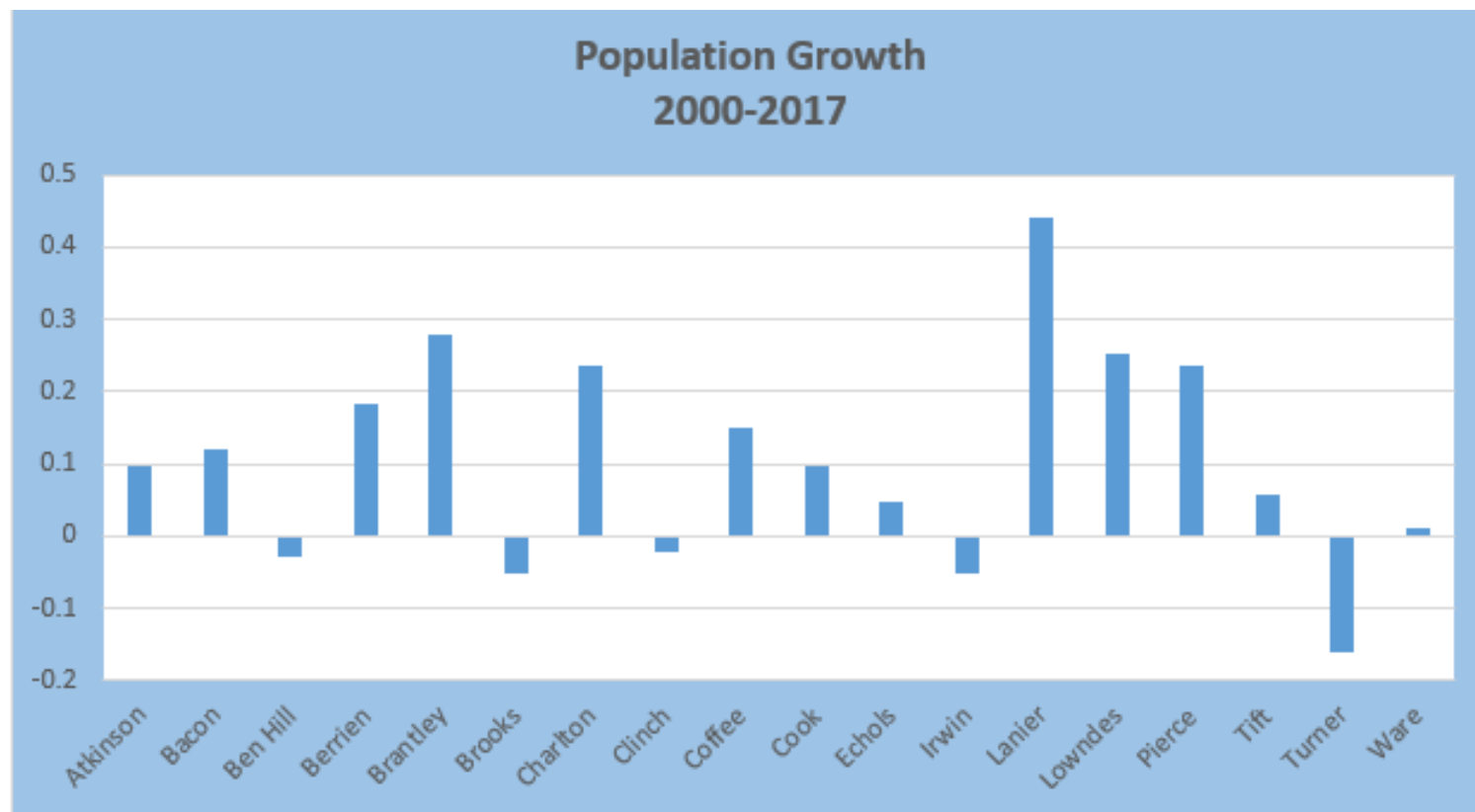


Employment Comparison

- Eight of the eighteen counties experienced a loss of employment for the period 2011 – 2015.
- Six of the eighteen experienced a loss in 2017. Ten counties gained employment; Lanier (3.56), Bacon (4.49), Atkinson (9.85), Pierce (0.95), Brantley (1.68), Cook (9.85), Lowndes (1.39), Tift (1.49), Ware (0.95), and Turner (0.33). *(As seen on previous page)*
- Of the eight counties that lost employment, five had a larger loss percentage than that of the State of Georgia.

Source: SGRC Regional Plan Update

Population Change from 2000-2017



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Lowndes, Pierce, Bacon, Cook, and Brantley Counties have had the highest population growth. The most population loss has been in Turner and Charlton Counties. Overall, the regional population is quite steady.

Identification of Community and Private Sector Partners

The following is a listing of initially identified Community and Private Sector Partners:

Local Governments:

Atkinson County
City of Pearson
City of Willacoochee
Bacon County
City of Alma
Ben Hill County
City of Fitzgerald
Berrien County
City of Alapaha
City of Enigma
City of Nashville
City of Ray City
Brantley County
City of Hoboken
City of Nahunta
Brooks County
City of Barwick
City of Morven
City of Pavo
City of Quitman
Charlton County

City of Folkston
City of Homeland
Clinch County
City of Argyle
City of Dupont
City of Fargo
City of Homerville
Coffee County
City of Ambrose
City of Broxton
City of Douglas
City of Nicholls
Cook County
City of Adel
City of Cecil
City of Lenox
City of Sparks
Echols County
Irwin County
City of Ocilla
Lanier County
City of Lakeland

Lowndes County
City of Dasher
City of Hahira
City of Lake Park
City of Remerton
City of Valdosta
Pierce County City
of Blackshear City
of Patterson City
of Offerman Tift
County
City of Omega
City of Tifton
City of Ty Ty
Turner County
City of Ashburn
City of Rebecca
City of Sycamore
Ware County
City of Waycross

Other Stakeholders:

Area Agency on Aging
Boards of Education
Business & Industry
Chambers of Commerce
Development Authorities
Historic Preservation Boards
Hospitals/Medical Centers
Housing Authorities
Main Street Organizations
Private Citizens
Southern Georgia Regional Commission
State and Federal Agencies
Technical Colleges
Universities/Colleges
Workforce Development Board

Identification of Participation Techniques – Part I

We will and/or have employed the following participation techniques to involve the communities and private sector partners in the CEDS in order to create awareness of the plan and to gather a broad range of input into the development of the plan, and then continue participation for the implementation and evaluation of the plan. Some of the participation techniques are more intended to disseminate information, others to solicit input and participation.

Informational Techniques:

CEDS Update & Implementation Webpage

This webpage will be part of the Regional Commission website where all the information regarding the CEDS update and subsequent implementation activities will be displayed. The webpage will provide information on all meetings, PDF draft documents and will also include contact information for staff to provide more information, clarifications or details upon request.

Facebook Information Sharing Page

The Facebook page “Southern Georgia Regional Commission Information Center” will serve as an information clearing house to distribute information on meetings, progress, and provide opportunity for comments, especially for those stakeholders that are not able to attend meetings.

E-mail

E-mails will be utilized to notify and invite stakeholders to workshops, meetings and other events.

Identification of Participation Techniques – Part II

Participation Techniques:

Work Sessions

Work sessions with stakeholders provide input and feedback on the identification and assessment of the economic development problems and opportunities, and the implementation program including the goals and objectives, plans of action, and the performance standards proposed by staff.

Surveys

A short survey solicited input from Stakeholders on issues and opportunities and performance standards. The survey was distributed by e-mail and made available during various stakeholder meetings.

Quarterly CEDS Implementation Meeting

A regularly scheduled quarterly meeting will be held to discuss the implementation of the CEDS with the stakeholders and partners and to evaluate the status of activities, initiatives and investment priorities.

Webpage and Facebook Page

Both the webpage and Facebook page will not only provide information but are also geared towards providing comments, engaging in discussion, and contacting staff.

Additional Evaluation Framework

The following are the additional performance measures that will be used to evaluate the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's successful development and implementation of the CEDS. These performance measures are: the number of jobs created after the implementation of the CEDS, the number and types of investments that will be undertaken in the region, the number of jobs retained in the region, the amount of private sector investments in the region after the implementation of the CEDS, and the changes in the economic environment of the region.

1. Number of jobs created/retained and private investment made after implementation of the CEDS.

- Quarterly reporting from regional ED Pros (Chamber of Commerce's, Better Hometown and MainStreet Programs, and Development Authorities) on jobs creation/retention and private investment in their local communities.
- Quarterly updates from the Southern Georgia Regional Commission Loan Program division on new private investment in the region.
- Local businesses/industries in region advertise successful growth and job retention through PSA's, newspaper, local television and radio.
- Compare Census statistics
- Evaluate tax digest; increase/decrease
- Evaluate sales tax; increase/decrease
- Increase/decrease in business licenses
- Governors listing of imminent business/industry closures

2. Number and types of public investment undertaken in the region.

- Semi-annual reporting from the Regional Commission, Local Governments, and the Workforce Development Board on new investments in region.

3. Changes in the economic environment of the region.

- Local governments, ED Pros, and the Workforce Development Board report major changes to the region's economic environment to the Regional Commission.



Special thanks to Michael Rivera with the Southern Georgia Regional Commission for contributing several of the beautiful images featured in this CEDS.

Southern Georgia Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan

Published September 2021

Atkinson - Bacon - Ben Hill - Berrien
Brantley - Brooks - Charlton - Clinch - Coffee
Cook - Echols - Irwin - Lanier - Lowndes
Pierce - Tift - Turner - Ware Counties



sgirc
SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION
Waycross - Valdosta

SOUTHERN GEORGIA ECONOMIC RECOVERY & RESILIENCY PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) is an Economic Development District (EDD) located in Service Delivery Region 11, which includes Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware Counties. The vast region covers South Central to Southeast Georgia where agriculture, commercial timber production, manufacturing, and other rural development initiatives are all cornerstones of the economy.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, radical shifts occurred in the economy and everyday life throughout the SGRC EDD region, Georgia, and the United States. Georgia's statewide shelter-in-place order issued in April 2020 brought with it closures of schools, colleges, businesses, and many local governments. There were mass layoffs throughout the region, school students were suddenly faced with the challenge of online learning, the unemployed were desperately searching for resources, and many hospitals were at maximum capacity treating those struck ill by the coronavirus.

In August 2020, the SGRC received Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the purpose of assisting the region with pandemic recovery and increasing resilience. With this funding, the SGRC has worked directly with the communities to assess the region's needs, and to devise a strategy to meet those needs through coordination, partnerships, and leveraged resources. The result of these efforts is the development of this Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan which assesses the region's current community and economic needs, devises strategies to address these needs, and identifies methods to strengthen economic resilience.

Development of this plan pinpointed four strategic target sectors as the foundation for economic recovery and resiliency in the SGRC EDD. These target sectors are: Business, Industry, & Workforce; Housing; Broadband; and Health & Wellbeing. Implementation of the action plan for each of these target sectors will improve the economy and quality of life in the region, and will prepare the region to endure future shocks to the economic base.

The Southern Georgia Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan will be incorporated into the SGRC EDD's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

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CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS

SGRC Council

Region 11 Economic Development Professionals
Working Group

SGRC Workforce Development Board

SGRC Planning, Community & Economic Development, and
GIS Divisions

18 Counties & 45 Municipalities of the SGRC

Economic Development Administration

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS ECONOMIC RESILIENCE?

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) defines economic resilience with the following overview¹ in their content guidelines for creating an impactful CEDS document:

It is becoming increasingly apparent that regional economic prosperity is linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions (i.e., 'shocks') to its economic base. Many definitions of economic resilience limit its focus on the ability to quickly recover from a disruption. However, in the context of economic development, economic resilience becomes inclusive of three primary attributes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether. Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity. Often, the shocks/disruptions to the economic base of an area or region are manifested in three ways:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending;
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region's economic activity; and/or

- Other external shocks (a natural or man-made disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, the impacts of climate change, etc.).

At the regional or community level, economic development practitioners are instrumental in building the capacity for economic resilience. Economic development professionals and organizations often become the focal point for post-incident coordination, information dissemination, responding to external inquiries, and the lead grant administrator for federally-funded recovery initiatives.

In building economic resilience, it is critical that economic development organizations consider their role in the pre- and post-incident environment to include **steady-state** and **responsive** initiatives.

Steady-state initiatives tend to be long-term efforts that seek to bolster the community or region's ability to withstand or avoid a shock. Responsive initiatives can include establishing capabilities for the economic development organization to be responsive to the region's recovery needs following an incident.

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¹ U.S. EDA. Economic Resilience. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Content Guidelines: Recommendations for Creating an Impactful CEDS | U.S. Economic Development Administration (eda.gov)

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS ECONOMIC RESILIENCE?

Examples of ***steady-state*** economic resilience initiatives include:

- Engaging in comprehensive planning efforts that involve extensive involvement from the community to define and implement a collective vision for resilience that includes the integration and/or alignment of other planning efforts (e.g., hazard mitigation plans) and funding sources;
- Undertaking efforts to broaden the industrial base with diversification initiatives, such as targeting the development of emerging clusters or industries that (a) build on the region's unique assets and competitive strengths; and (b) provide stability during downturns that disproportionately impact any single cluster or industry;
- Adapting business retention and expansion programs (e.g., economic gardening or other enterprise supports) to assist firms with economic recovery post-disruption;
- Building a resilient workforce that can better shift between jobs or industries when their core employment is threatened through job-driven skills strategies and support organizations;
- Maintaining geographic information systems (GIS) that link with municipal business licenses, tax information, and other business establishment data bases to track local and regional “churn” and available development sites. GIS can also be integrated with hazard information to make rapid post-incident impact assessments;

- Ensuring redundancy in telecommunications and broadband networks to protect commerce and public safety in the event of natural or manmade disasters;
- Promoting business continuity and preparedness (i.e., ensuring businesses understand their vulnerabilities—including supply chains—in the face of disruptions and are prepared to take actions to resume operations after an event); and
- Employing safe development practices in business districts and surrounding communities. Strategies may include locating structures outside of floodplains, preserving natural lands that act as buffers from storms, and protecting downtowns and other existing development from the impacts of extreme weather.

Some examples of ***responsive*** economic resilience initiatives include:

- Conducting pre-disaster recovery planning to define key stakeholders, roles, responsibilities, and key actions;
- Establishing a process for regular communication, monitoring, and updating of business community needs and issues (which can then be used after an incident) ;
- Establishing/using a capability to rapidly contact key local, regional, state, and federal officials to communicate business sector needs and coordinate impact assessment efforts; and
- Establishing/using coordination mechanisms and leadership succession plans for short, intermediate, and long-term recovery needs.

INTRODUCTION

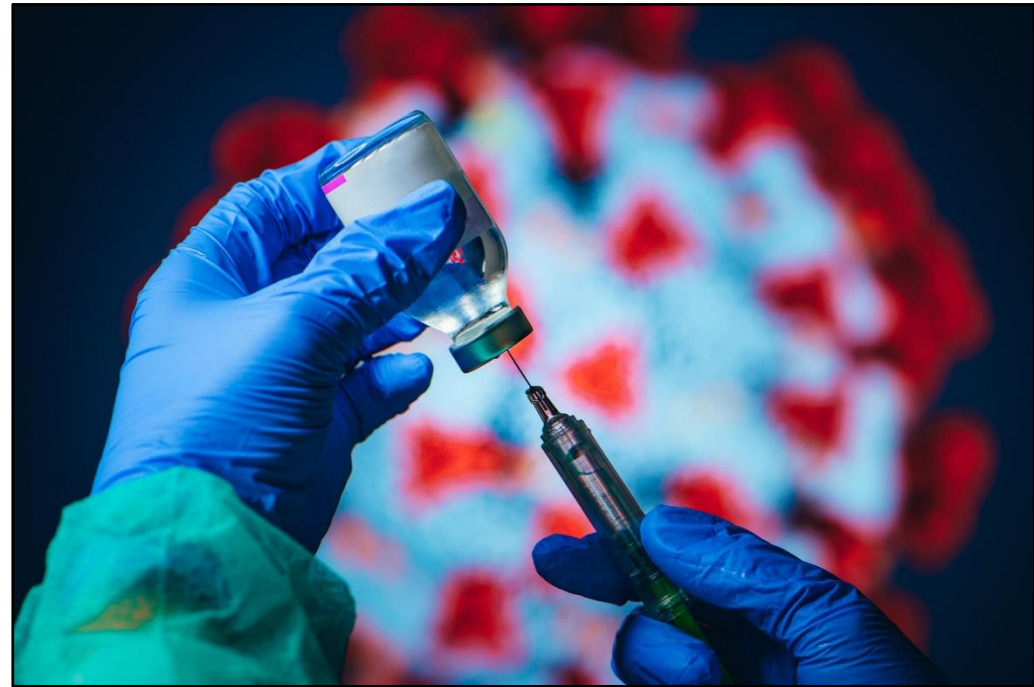
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021 is by far the most significant public health emergency to affect the region. As of September 17, 2021, 1,181,648 cases of COVID-19, 21,235 confirmed deaths, and 3,342 probable deaths had been reported in the state of Georgia. Over 11 million COVID-19 tests have been administered in Georgia, with 1,178,288 of those test results being positive. Within the 18-county region there have been 43,074 cases and 1,130 deaths. Statewide, 46% of Georgia residents are fully vaccinated, and 53% have been administered at least one dose. In the SGRC EDD region, 32% of people are fully vaccinated, and 37% have received at least one vaccination shot.²

A statewide lockdown during the spring of 2020 had a profound economic impact on the region. Widespread business closures resulted in high unemployment and financial uncertainty. School closures disrupted parents' ability to work and the shift to remote learning impacted K-12 students and college students alike.

A crucial need that surfaced at the onset of the pandemic was food insecurity and the need for emergency food supplies. Many food pantries that typically provide emergency food across the region opted to suspend their operations to protect

(Continued on Next Page)



² Georgia Department of Public Health. Daily Status Report. <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-19-daily-status-report>

INTRODUCTION

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

their vulnerable volunteers. In an effort to fill the service gap, regional food banks like Second Harvest shifted their operations to the preparation and distribution of food boxes via strategically placed drive through locations that often experienced mile-long vehicle lines.

Food insecurity was especially high for senior residents. This was due in part to the fact that they were homebound for safety reasons, were afraid to go out shopping, were no longer able to visit local food pantries as needed, and/or were no longer able to attend senior center programs where they normally received a hot meal each day. The SGRC Area Agency on Aging (AAA) experienced a 52% increase in calls for assistance to its Aging and Disability Resource Connection toll-free number.

In response to the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by seniors during the pandemic, the SGRC AAA made adjustments to continue to provide much needed services. Senior centers that were closed adapted to provide virtual senior center activities. Meals were offered via contactless delivery or pickup at senior centers, and Home Delivered Meal Sites began weekly delivery of frozen or shelf-stable meals for home-delivered meal clients (all hot daily meal deliveries ceased). Although the SGRC AAA's sole Adult Day Care site in Valdosta closed to in-person clients in March 2020, the site provided telephonic activities for clients instead.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the most basic of human needs—food, shelter, safety—became top priorities. In addition, mental health, social isolation, loneliness, and emotional wellness surfaced as priority issues with possible long-term implications.



Photo courtesy The Tifton Gazette, 5-7-20

INTRODUCTION

THE STATE OF THE REGION

The global pandemic has levied a hard blow to the Southern Georgia EDD and its economy. The negative effects of the pandemic included:

- business closures,
- rural hospitals struggling to meet demand for healthcare,
- students with limited broadband experiencing educational gaps because of inability to participate in online education,
- hospitality industry decimated,
- supply chain disruptions, and
- mass layoffs throughout the region.

Unemployment skyrocketed. In fact, the unemployment rate in the SGRC EDD in February 2020 was 3.7%. Fast forward to April 2020, and the EDD's average unemployment more than doubled to 9.6%, the highest recorded unemployment rate since the onset of the pandemic. Coinciding with this apex of the unemployment rate was the 10,628 unemployment claims filed in the SGRC EDD region during the week of April 4, 2020, the most claims filed in a week's time since the arrival of the coronavirus.

As the pandemic seemingly wanes, Southern Georgia is beginning to recover with more and more businesses reopening and attempting to restaff. However, many businesses are finding it difficult to fill all of the available positions. Some attribute this worker shortage to increased unemployment benefits, while others cite childcare issues or



concerns about contracting COVID as a deterrent to employment – perhaps it is a combination. In order to attract new employees, some employers have raised starting wages and many are offering “signing bonuses.”

Nevertheless, there is a subset of the unemployed that have completely disengaged from the labor market and are not reflected in the unemployment rate. This fact is reflected in the region's per capita income and poverty data. The average per capita income (PCI) in the SGRC EDD is a mere \$20,420, which is in stark contrast to Georgia's PCI of \$31,067 and the United States' PCI of \$34,103. All but two of the SGRC EDD's eighteen counties are considered to be areas of persistent poverty (more than 20% of a county's population lives below the poverty threshold). Reengagement of this pool of potential workers is crucial to the economic health of the region.

The economic injury in the SGRC region as a result of the coronavirus pandemic is substantial, and the Southern Georgia EDD is committed to assisting local governments, businesses, and stakeholders with their economic recovery through the implementation of the resiliency, mitigation, and economic recovery action items identified in this plan.

INTRODUCTION

RESILIENCY FRAMEWORK

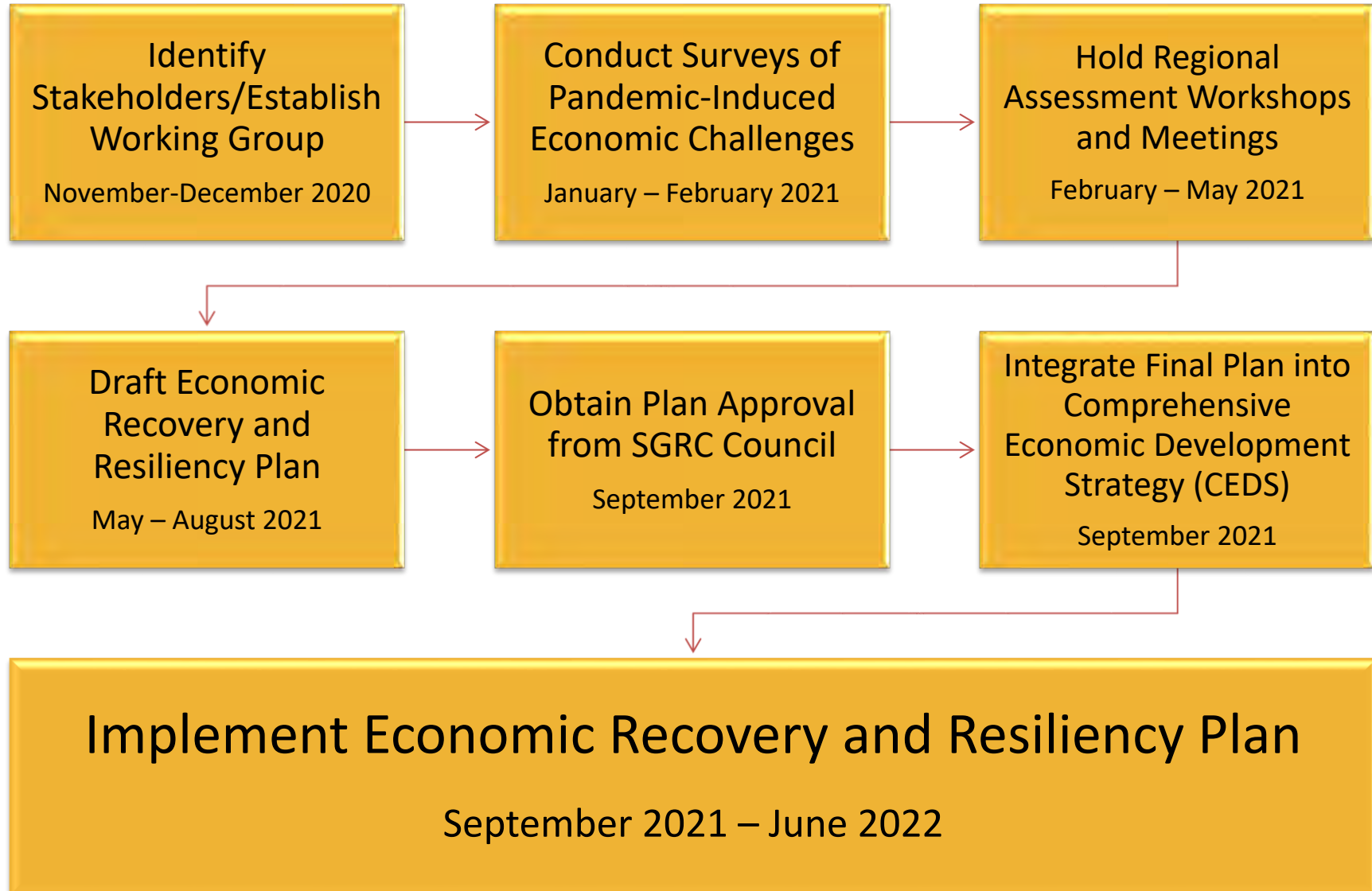
Economic resilience is the ability of a community or region to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from various disruptions to its business and industrial base. These disruptions can be caused by a variety of things, including a downturn in the national or local economy as a result of the pandemic. A resiliency framework in the face of a pandemic is a multi-dimensional effort emphasizing engagement and support from all aspects of the community, including economic development practitioners. Some examples include:

- Efforts to broaden the industrial base or local sectoral specialization with diversification initiatives (e.g., moving away from a local or regional economy overly dependent on one industry that might be susceptible to downturns caused by the pandemic);
- Enhancing business retention and expansion programs to strengthen existing high-growth sectors and industries, development and construction of high-performance and resilient infrastructure and buildings to mitigate future risk and vulnerability;
- Comprehensive planning efforts that involve extensive engagement from the community to define and implement a collective vision for economic recovery; and
- Investing and enhancing community human capital development through workforce training to broaden the skills base of the regional workforce.
- Deploying technologies such as broadband to support dynamic, diverse economies that better withstand acute disruptions.

Resilience (within the context of economic development) is strengthened when it includes methods and measures to mitigate the potential for future economic injury, promote a faster “up-time” for economic anchors (e.g., key businesses and/or industries), and strengthen local and regional capacity to troubleshoot and address vulnerabilities within the regional economy.³ All communities, whether those in locations likely to experience significant natural disasters or those dealing with immediate or pending economic shifts, must be able to recognize their vulnerabilities. Once those vulnerabilities have been identified, the communities should develop goals, strategies, and actions that can mitigate the effects of an economic incident and support long-term recovery efforts.

PLANNING FOR A RESILIENT REGION

Following the award of EDA CARES Act funding, SGRC staff created a timeline for the preparation of the Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan:



PLANNING FOR A RESILIENT REGION

A two-pronged approach was used to gather data for this plan: surveys and regional assessment workshops/meetings. The first survey was distributed to the region's economic development professionals for the purpose of measuring the immediate economic effect of the pandemic. This effort was followed by the distribution of a comprehensive survey to local government staff, elected officials, economic and workforce development professionals, business & industry leaders, and the general public via Constant Contact, email, and social media.

The results of these surveys were used as a foundation for the discussions that took place during the Regional Assessment Workshops and Meetings, all of which were held between February 2021 and May 2021. During these workshops and meetings, SGRC-EDD staff:

- 1) facilitated the prioritization of the region's economic issues exacerbated by the pandemic;
- 2) helped to identify opportunities to foster economic recovery; and
- 3) assisted with recognizing ways to strengthen economic resiliency.

Furthermore, a key goal of the workshops/meetings was also to consider action steps that could be taken to support economic recovery in strategic target areas of the regional economy.



Regional Assessment Workshop

PLANNING FOR A RESILIENT REGION

REGIONAL ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

In the initial survey taken in January 2020, the region's economic development professionals were asked:

What has been the single most devastating economic effect of COVID-19 in your area, and what is needed to address it?

Here are some of their responses...

The mental aspect of COVID will probably be the single most devastating economic effect. Folks giving up on their businesses, shoppers scared to enter stores, pressures from the lockdowns, not getting back to whatever normal was, fear of getting sick, and the fear of change and the unknown will effect economic development in some way.

Independently-owned entertainment, tourism, and hospitality related assets that are based indoors like downtown restaurants. This also includes small businesses that rely on festivals, Christmas parades, sporting events, concerts, etc. for revenue boost that puts them in the black for the year...(a business owner) once told me that softball and baseball tournaments were his largest revenue days. These businesses are the ones that advertise locally, make charitable contributions to local non-profits and school systems so the loss is felt on multiple levels.

(The) single most devastating economic effect of COVID-19 has been the workforce absenteeism from quarantines from exposure/testing positive and caring for family members out of school, etc. People having to quarantine (or care for children) and not be able to work has hampered the ability of industries to reach and/or maintain full production capacities. Multiple industries have reported an increase in demand since the beginning of the pandemic, but lack the labor capacity to meet production requirements.

Recently we've witnessed a rash of "mom and pop" owned small businesses closing or informing us that they are considering closing. While some are still profitable, the risk of COVID is outweighing the financial reward. It should be noted that most of the businesses are owned by individuals 60 years old or older. Some are still doing business the way they have for years...Throw in supply chain disruptions that are preventing "mom and pops" from obtaining inventory and available inventory being bought up by larger retailers, and you have to wonder if we are going to witness a lot of store fronts being vacated.

PLANNING FOR A RESILIENT REGION

REGIONAL ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Following the initial survey, a comprehensive survey was distributed region-wide. Here are the major findings...



TOP 3

Most Impacted Industries

1. Restaurant/Service Industry
2. Healthcare Facilities
3. Retail Establishments

Economic Development Funding Needs

1. Connecting employers with talented workforce
2. Broadband infrastructure improvements
3. Job training and workforce development

Community Development Funding Needs

1. Affordable housing/rehabilitation of substandard housing
2. Improvements to public spaces (parks, recreation facilities, youth & senior facilities, health departments, etc.)
3. Water, sewer, and street infrastructure improvements

Nearly

50%

Of respondents indicated **pandemic recovery** would take **12-24** months

Over

60%

Of respondents said support of existing business and industry would **improve resilience** and protect against **economic disruption**

STRATEGIC TARGET SECTORS

The regional assessment findings identified **four strategic target sectors** for economic recovery and resiliency.



Business, Industry, and
Workforce



Housing



Broadband



Health and Wellbeing

STRATEGIC TARGET SECTOR 1



BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND WORKFORCE

BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND WORKFORCE

NEEDS/ISSUES

- Number of unemployed, underemployed, and unskilled adults
- High school seniors without plans for employment or post secondary education after graduation
- Work-age individuals not engaged in the workforce
- Loss of educated/trained workforce to larger urban areas
- Increased work absenteeism due to COVID-19 illness and/or exposure
- Lack of skilled workforce, both hard and soft skills
- Siloed workforce training programs
- Disconnect between workforce training programs and employee needs of business and industry
- Limited employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated
- Infrastructure improvements (road, water, sewer, rail, etc.) to attract new business and industry
- Creation of more manufacturing jobs that pay above average wages

GOAL

Promote strategies that develop a skilled workforce through job training and education, support business and industry, and provide adequate infrastructure to further economic development.

ACTION PLAN

- ❖ Establish a coalition of workforce development professionals to coordinate the removal of barriers to region-wide job training programs
- ❖ Identify employment opportunities that will be in high demand in the future and match educational offerings for these jobs
- ❖ Develop a workforce participation encouragement program for individuals disengaged from the work force
- ❖ Identify potential fund sources for workforce development initiatives
- ❖ Launch an incubator to grow knowledge-based business in order to retain college and university graduates, and to provide support for start-ups and entrepreneurs
- ❖ Pursue funding for infrastructure upgrades that support private investment and job creation/retention
- ❖ Provide support for existing businesses (tool-box type small grants and façade improvement local grants)
- ❖ Support programs that connect high school students with potential after-graduation jobs and educational opportunities
- ❖ Share best practices of businesses with successful reintegration employment programs for the previously incarcerated

STRATEGIC TARGET SECTOR 2



HOUSING

HOUSING

NEEDS/ISSUES

- Deteriorating housing stock in need of rehabilitation, reconstruction, or demolition
- Limited access to affordable, workforce housing
- Shortage of developers/contractors building mid-range housing subdivisions
- Negative mindset concerning multi-family affordable housing
- Pandemic-induced cost increase and shortage of building materials
- Safe, sanitary housing for low to moderate income families

GOAL

Facilitate the construction of affordable housing developments while also addressing substandard housing through rehabilitation and reconstruction.

ACTION PLAN

- ❖ Support construction of affordable, workforce housing
- ❖ Develop incentive programs that encourage the construction of affordable housing developments
- ❖ Establish best practices to ensure economical, but structurally sound construction
- ❖ Educate the public about the benefits of multi-family affordable housing
- ❖ Inventory housing conditions in neighborhoods targeted for redevelopment
- ❖ Pursue funding for housing rehabilitation, reconstruction, and demolition in declining neighborhoods
- ❖ Identify barriers to the development of affordable housing
- ❖ Encourage local governments to participate in programs related to housing and community development such as the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH)
- ❖ Support neighborhood cleanup efforts and encourage the provision of designated collection points for bulk trash
- ❖ Evaluate code enforcement efforts region-wide, and urge active enforcement to address code violations

STRATEGIC TARGET SECTOR 3



BROADBAND

BROADBAND

NEEDS/ISSUES

- Many unserved and underserved areas throughout the region
- Insufficient broadband service hinders businesses that rely on connectivity
- Deployment of broadband to unserved areas
- Student connectivity vital to successful remote learning
- Lack of broadband is a barrier to accessing telehealth services
- Few local governments designated as Broadband Ready in the region

GOAL

Provide broadband to all unserved and underserved people throughout the region.

ACTION PLAN

- ❖ Upgrade network capabilities to in-building wireless for all county and city facilities
- ❖ Build out primary and redundant 10G fiber links to county and city facilities
- ❖ Identify broadband service providers willing to participate in public-private partnerships to expand existing networks
- ❖ Reduce obstacles to broadband infrastructure investment
- ❖ Assist local governments in amending comprehensive plan to include the promotion of broadband deployment, and with adopting Broadband Ready Community Ordinance
- ❖ Assist local governments with obtaining Broadband Ready Designation
- ❖ Identify and pursue grant funding and financing sources to facilitate the construction of broadband infrastructure
- ❖ Promote affordable access to broadband

STRATEGIC TARGET SECTOR 4



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

NEEDS/ISSUES

- Limited access to healthcare and mental health services
- Increased exposure of essential workers to COVID-19
- Strained resources at hospitals and other healthcare facilities
- Improvements to public spaces for outdoor recreation
- Low vaccination rates and pandemic fatigue
- Protection of at-risk populations
- Implementation of senior citizen well-being programs

GOAL

Advance healthcare initiatives and partnerships that ensure healthy lives and well being for children, youth, adults, and seniors.

ACTION PLAN

- ❖ Promote improvements to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
- ❖ Coordinate with nonprofit to offer financial literacy classes to students and adults
- ❖ Ensure appropriate amounts of medical supplies are available (PPE, oxygen, etc.) from a variety of sources
- ❖ Build outdoor venues for meeting space
- ❖ Partner with Area Agency on Aging to implement AARP Age-Friendly Community initiatives
- ❖ Improve public outdoor spaces such as parks and recreation facilities
- ❖ Identify funding to retrofit public facilities like health departments, mental health centers, senior centers, etc. to facilitate the implementation of COVID-19 protocols
- ❖ Assess the region to identify areas of food insecurity and work to improve food access in these areas

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND WORKFORCE

- Number of jobs created/retained, and amount of new private investment
- Number of job training program participants
- Number of grants awarded for infrastructure upgrades
- Amount of technical assistance provided to local governments
- Number of disengaged workers trained, placed, or otherwise impacted by workforce sector initiatives

BROADBAND

- Number of grants awarded for broadband deployment
- Reduction in the number of unserved locations
- Increase in the number of people being served
- Number of Broadband Ready Community Ordinances adopted by local governments
- Number of local governments receiving Broadband Ready Designation

HOUSING

- Number of designated GICH communities
- Number of grants awarded for housing rehabilitation and reconstruction
- Number of affordable housing developments
- Number of incentive programs initiated by local governments
- Number of properties remedying code enforcement violations

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Reduction in the number of food deserts in the region
- Number of grants awarded for construction or rehabilitation of public facilities
- Number of outdoor spaces improved
- Number of Age-Friendly Community initiatives implemented
- Number of bicycle and pedestrian facilities improved or constructed

REGIONAL PROJECTS TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Industrial Park Infrastructure Improvements

Development of New Industrial Parks/Expansion of Existing Parks at Capacity

Regional Business Retention and Expansion Program

Increased Water and Wastewater Capacity

Tourism Product Development

Workforce Engagement Program

Airport Enhancements and Improvements

Workforce Housing Developments

Establishment of Enterprise and Opportunity Zones for Incentivized Development

Long-range Infrastructure Planning



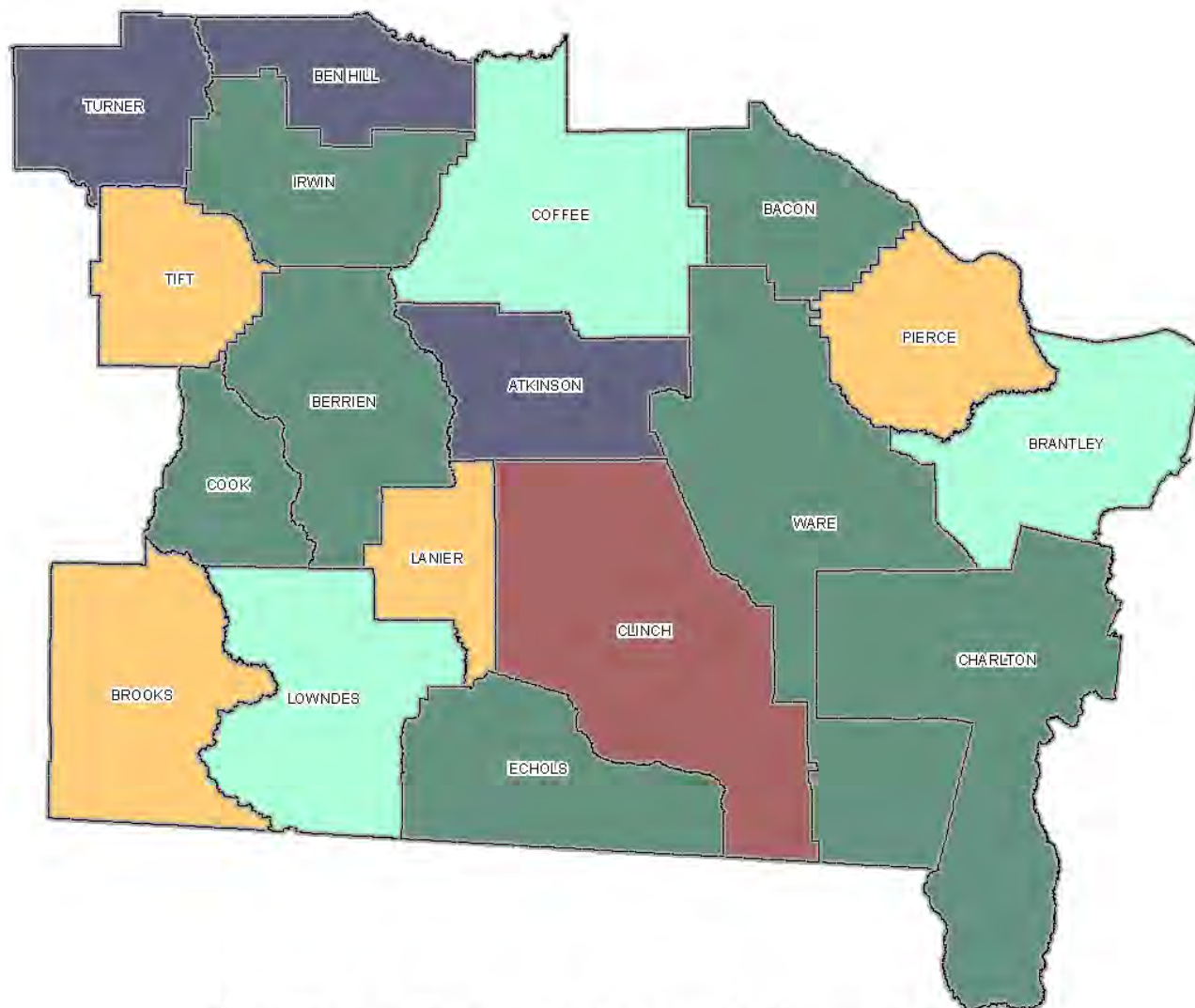
Appendix

SOUTHERN GEORGIA EDD REGIONAL DATA

% Poverty Rate				Median Household Income			Per Capita Income			Unemployment**	
County	2021*	2015	2010	2021*	2015	2010	2021*	2015	2010	#	%
Atkinson	33.3	29.9	28.0	\$ 34,877	\$ 30,403	\$ 33,834	\$ 18,565	\$ 16,228	\$ 15,456	108	2.3
Bacon	23.8	20.4	16.5	\$ 36,964	\$ 37,698	\$ 31,429	\$ 19,634	\$ 18,109	\$ 17,110	125	2.8
Ben Hill	29.6	36.2	26.9	\$ 32,705	\$ 30,643	\$ 30,134	\$ 17,563	\$ 15,497	\$ 15,529	272	5.0
Berrien	24.2	25.3	23.1	\$ 40,415	\$ 31,812	\$ 32,202	\$ 19,547	\$ 16,660	\$ 16,049	210	2.8
Brantley	19.6	20.9	21.4	\$ 38,857	\$ 36,301	\$ 37,343	\$ 20,191	\$ 16,774	\$ 18,905	209	2.8
Brooks	22.7	27.8	17.0	\$ 38,285	\$ 31,686	\$ 41,309	\$ 25,700	\$ 19,473	\$ 20,346	191	2.7
Charlton	25.2	18.0	19.8	\$ 41,961	\$ 41,059	\$ 40,850	\$ 18,323	\$ 17,586	\$ 16,652	118	2.4
Clinch	40.2	34.6	25.7	\$ 27,658	\$ 29,125	\$ 31,963	\$ 15,152	\$ 18,256	\$ 16,709	75	2.5
Coffee	19.9	26.0	21.3	\$ 40,859	\$ 34,523	\$ 35,202	\$ 19,905	\$ 16,796	\$ 16,664	655	3.5
Cook	24.0	25.1	23.3	\$ 41,854	\$ 34,230	\$ 31,390	\$ 20,128	\$ 18,858	\$ 16,528	215	2.6
Echols	24.1	30.1	32.1	\$ 39,494	\$ 32,667	\$ 32,390	\$ 23,885	\$ 17,350	\$ 14,201	39	2.0
Irwin	23.9	22.3	25.4	\$ 37,736	\$ 36,729	\$ 38,376	\$ 19,878	\$ 18,614	\$ 16,561	146	4.1
Lanier	23.1	30.6	20.4	\$ 40,986	\$ 36,904	\$ 37,522	\$ 19,207	\$ 16,860	\$ 16,894	108	2.8
Lowndes	21.2	25.3	21.6	\$ 45,683	\$ 37,248	\$ 39,096	\$ 24,708	\$ 19,353	\$ 20,041	1,636	3.1
Pierce	22.1	20.0	15.4	\$ 42,804	\$ 41,685	\$ 37,062	\$ 22,268	\$ 21,601	\$ 18,283	200	2.4
Tift	23.3	27.7	22.8	\$ 45,639	\$ 34,830	\$ 36,847	\$ 22,974	\$ 19,560	\$ 18,394	544	2.6
Turner	33.6	24.8	25.4	\$ 37,039	\$ 29,763	\$ 30,763	\$ 19,527	\$ 17,215	\$ 15,973	171	5.2
Ware	24.9	26.2	20.5	\$ 36,869	\$ 35,247	\$ 35,517	\$ 20,411	\$ 18,341	\$ 18,295	433	2.9
Avg Total	25.5	26.2	22.6	\$ 38,927	\$ 34,586	\$ 35,179	\$ 20,420	\$ 17,952	\$ 17,444	303	3.0
Difference	+ 10.4	+ 7.7	+ 6.9	\$- 19,773	\$- 14,756	\$- 14,168	\$-10,647	\$ - 7,475	\$ - 7,690		- 0.2
State Total	15.1	18.5	15.7	\$ 58,700	\$ 49,342	\$ 49,347	\$ 31,067	\$ 25,427	\$ 25,134	164,744	3.2
Difference	+ 12.1	+ 10.6	+ 8.8	\$- 23,916	\$- 18,896	\$- 16,735	\$-13,683	\$ -10,603	\$ - 9,890		- 2.7
US Total	13.4	15.6	13.8	\$ 62,843	\$ 53,482	\$ 51,914	\$ 34,103	\$ 28,555	\$ 27,334	9,221,000	5.7

*2015-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimate

**GDOL, August 2021



Map Legend

SGRC Counties

Poverty Percentage

19.6% - 21.2%

21.3% - 23.3%

23.4% - 25.2%

25.3% - 33.6%

33.7% - 40.2%

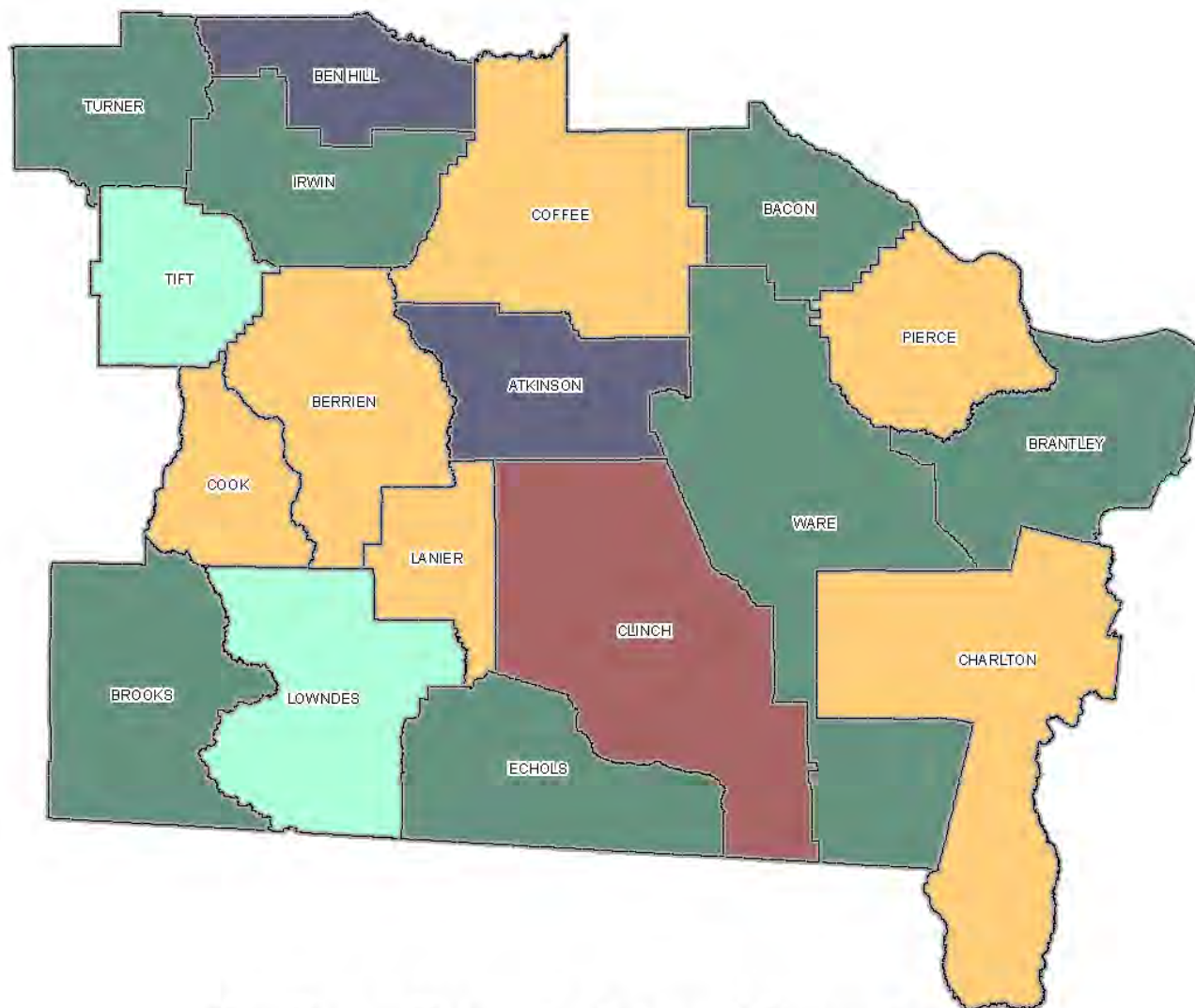
0 5 10 20
Miles

Southern Georgia Regional Commission 2021 Poverty Rate Percentage

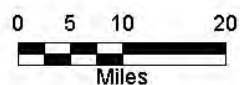
Map created September 2021 for general planning purposes only. Refer all questions on data accuracy and availability to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission.

sgrc SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Source: US Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey



Map Legend

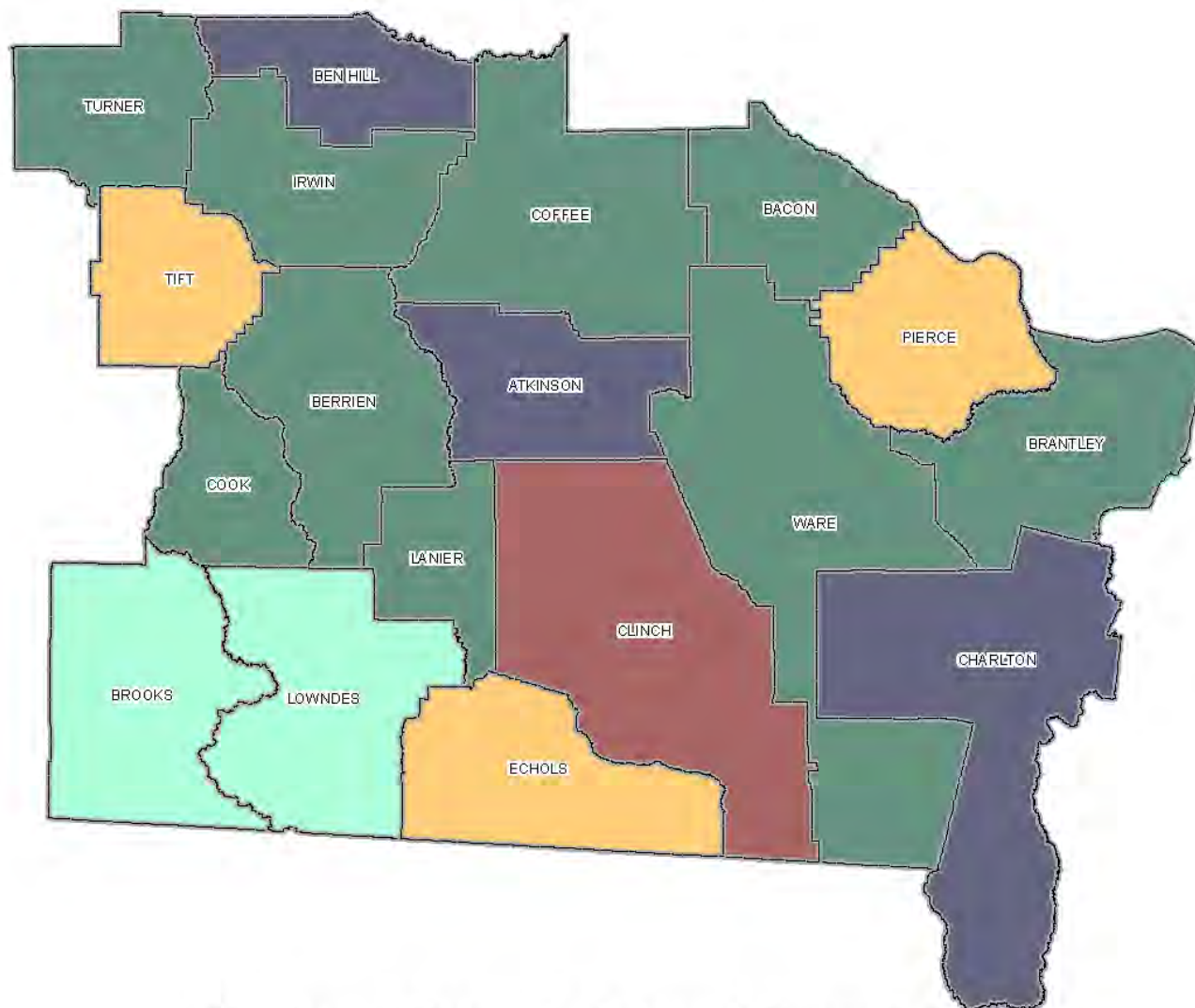


Southern Georgia Regional Commission 2021 Median Household Income

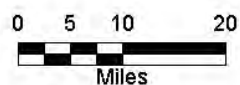
Map created September 2021 for general planning purposes only. Refer all questions on data accuracy and availability to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission.

sgrc SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Source: US Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey



Map Legend



Southern Georgia Regional Commission 2021 Per Capita Income

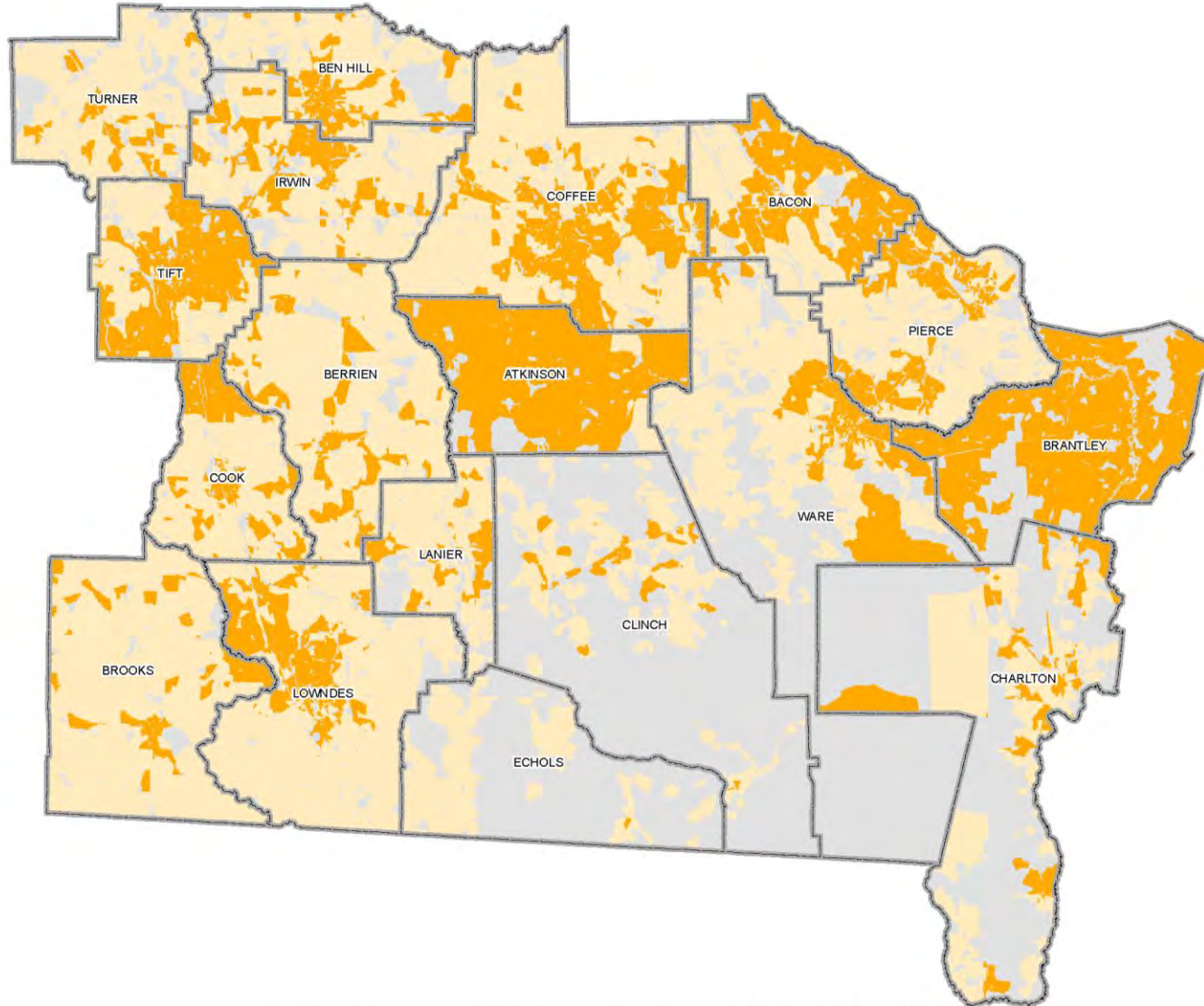
Map created September 2021 for general planning purposes only. Refer all questions on data accuracy and availability to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission.

sgrc SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Source: US Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

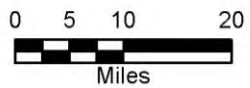
Educational Attainment of Workforce 25 years & older 2015-2019 ACS 5-year est., Table S1501

County	Less than 9 th Grade	9 th to 12 th Grade, no diploma	High School Graduate, GED or equivalent	Some College, no degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree	Total
Atkinson	869	836	1,805	694	360	262	374	5,200
Bacon	398	1,001	3,116	1,548	603	468	301	7,534
Ben Hill	552	1,286	5,052	1,981	1,035	841	414	11,161
Berrien	768	1,999	5,597	2,297	1,022	977	533	13,193
Brantley	661	2,039	5,691	2,109	1,137	552	579	12,768
Brooks	636	1,009	3,875	2,434	1,146	1,394	571	11,065
Charlton	1,049	1,316	3,670	1,678	626	355	451	9,145
Clinch	382	984	1,503	933	186	261	182	4,431
Coffee	2,220	4,632	10,497	5,041	2,152	2,206	1,469	28,217
Cook	606	1,752	4,108	2,246	1,065	951	574	11,302
Echols	296	425	1,170	453	175	166	105	2,790
Irwin	208	949	2,507	990	641	542	401	6,238
Lanier	482	890	2,593	1,131	626	734	394	6,850
Lowndes	2,195	4,309	22,551	14,840	8,192	12,197	5,388	69,672
Pierce	702	1,451	5,543	2,451	1,187	864	764	12,962
Tift	1,435	3,227	8,942	4,495	3,020	2,488	2,183	25,790
Turner	375	671	2,116	1,089	662	363	287	5,563
Ware	1,360	3,195	9,600	4,591	2,022	2,452	1,258	24,478



Map Legend

- SGRC Counties
- Served & Unserved Areas**
- Served
- Unserved
- No Locations



2021 Georgia Broadband Availability by County

Map created August 2021 for general planning purposes only. Refer all questions on data accuracy and availability to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission.

sgrc SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION COUNCIL

County Representative		Municipal Representative	Private Sector Representative
Atkinson	Lace Futch	Robert Johnson	Janice McKinnon
Bacon	Vacant	Larry Taylor	Lisa Coley
Ben Hill	Steve Taylor	Jim Puckett	Jason Dunn
Berrien	Ronnie Gaskins	John Clayton	Lisa Smart
Brantley	Skipper Harris	Barbara Maefield	Vacant
Brooks	Patrick Folsom	Nancy Dennard	Zurich Deshazor
Charlton	James Everett	Lee Gowen	Dana O’Quinn
Clinch	Roger Metts	Willie Hardee, Jr.	Vacant
Coffee	Oscar Paulk	Tony Paulk	Adam Smith
Cook	Audie Rowe	Buddy Duke	Derry Bennett
Echols	Bobby Walker	N/A	Cheryl Garner
Irwin	Scott Carver	Matt Seale	Mona Paulk
Lanier	Dennis Fender	Bill Darsey	John Fitton
Lowndes	Joyce Evans	Vivian Miller-Cody	Anthony Payton
Pierce	Neal Bennett	Keith Brooks	Andy Brannen
Tift	Tony McBrayer	Julie Smith	Vacant
Turner	Dana Whiddon	Sandra Lumpkin	Vacant
Ware	Elmer Thrift	Michael-Angelo James	Barbara King
Governor’s Office	Norman “Bo” Lovein III	Lt. Governor’s Office	Keith Stone
	Guy Daughtrey		
	Jonathan Jones	Speaker’s Office	Vacant

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS COMMITTEE

Kevin McGovern Atkinson County Development Authority	Jeff Brown Clinch County Development Authority	Kathy Walker Lake Park Chamber of Commerce	Elizabeth McLean Georgia Department of Economic Development
Kevin Ellis Alma/Bacon County Development Authority	Phil Martin Clinch County Chamber of Commerce	Matt Carter Pierce County Development Authority	Amanda Peacock Georgia Department of Economic Development
Jason Dunn Fitzgerald-Ben Hill Development Authority	John Henry Douglas-Coffee County Economic Development Authority	Sarah Gove Pierce County Chamber of Commerce	Lori Hennesy Georgia Department of Economic Development
Melissa Dark Fitzgerald-Ben Hill Chamber of Commerce	Lisa Collins Cook County Economic Development Commission	Bethany Strickland City of Blackshear Main Street & Economic Development	Kelly Lane Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Lisa Smart Berrien County Development Authority	Heather Green Adel-Cook County Chamber of Commerce	Melody Cowart Tifton-Tift County Chamber of Commerce	Scott Purvis Georgia Power
Nancy Pesce Nashville Main Street Program & Economic Development	Cathy Stott Ocilla-Irwin County Chamber of Commerce & Industrial Authority	Abbey McLaren Tifton Main Street & Economic Development	Jenny Robbins Georgia EMC
Mel Baxter Brantley County Development Authority	Andrea Schruijer Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority	Ashley Miller Ashburn-Turner County Chamber of Commerce & Development Authority	Saralyn Stafford Carl Vinson Institute of Government
Stephanie Mata Brooks County Development Authority	Christie Moore Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce	Jonathan Lupo Waycross and Ware County Development Authority	Brandy B. Wilkes Wiregrass Georgia Technical College
Ashley Gowen Okfenokee Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development	Ellen Hill Valdosta Main Street	Rene' Bolden Waycross-Ware Chamber of Commerce	Dennis Lee Southern Regional Technical College
Pete Snell Coastal Pines Technical College			

SOUTHERN GEORGIA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Member Name	Title	Entity	Board Category
Frank Bannamon	Recruiter/Retention Specialist	McKinney Medical Center, Inc.	Business Representative
Keith Bryant	Human Resources Director	Clinch Memorial Hospital	Business Representative
Melissa Dark	Executive Director	Fitzgerald Ben Hill Chamber of Commerce	Business Representative
Elton Dixon	President	Enay Coaching, LLC	Business Representative
Jennifer Gainey	Human Resources Manager	Satilla EMC	Business Representative
Jonathan Gray	Complex Manager	Cal-Maine Foods, Inc.	Business Representative
Heather Green	President	Adel-Cook County Chamber of Commerce	Business Representative
Sean Panizzi	Branch Manager	Teamtemps Personal Staffing, Inc.	Business Representative
Lisa Smart	Executive Director	Berrien Co. Chamber of Commerce & Development Authority	Business Representative
Darlene Tait	Human Resources Supervisor	AJM Packaging	Business Representative
Courtney Taylor	Human Resources Manager	Optima Chemical Group	Business Representative
Katrena Felder	Executive Director of Adult Education	Coastal Pines Technical College	Education & Training
Shannon McConico	Dean of Student Affairs	Wiregrass Georgia Technical College	Education & Training
Leigh Wallace	Executive VP & VP of Student Affairs	Southern Regional Technical College	Education & Training
Grady Burrell	Assistant Business Agent	International Brotherhood of Teamsters	Workforce
Myrtice Edwards	Program Coordinator	Telamon Corporation	Workforce
Melvin Johnson	Director	Lee Street Resource Center	Workforce
Ben Lott	Business Representative	International Union of Painters & Allied Trades	Workforce
Merrill Kemp-Wilcox	Strategic Partnership Coordinator	Georgia Partnership for Excellence on Education	Workforce
Kevin Ellis	Executive Director	Alma/Bacon County Development Authority	Government & Economic Dev.
Jennifer Gillard	Rehabilitation Unit Manager	Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency	Government & Economic Dev.
Curtis Griffin	Deputy Director	Waycross/Blackshear Housing Authority	Government & Economic Dev.
William Palmer	Career Center Manager	Georgia Department of Labor	Government & Economic Dev.
Jamon Williams	Regional Coordinator	Georgia Department of Labor	Government & Economic Dev.

Identification of Community and Private Sector Partners

The following is a listing of initially identified Community and Private Sector Partners:

Local Governments:

Atkinson County
City of Pearson
City of Willacoochee
Bacon County
City of Alma
Ben Hill County
City of Fitzgerald
Berrien County
City of Alapaha
City of Enigma
City of Nashville
City of Ray City
Brantley County
City of Hoboken
City of Nahunta
Brooks County
City of Barwick
City of Morven
City of Pavo
City of Quitman
Charlton County

City of Folkston
City of Homeland
Clinch County
City of Argyle
City of Dupont
City of Fargo
City of Homerville
Coffee County
City of Ambrose
City of Broxton
City of Douglas
City of Nicholls
Cook County
City of Adel
City of Cecil
City of Lenox
City of Sparks
Echols County
Irwin County
City of Ocilla
Lanier County
City of Lakeland

Lowndes County
City of Dasher
City of Hahira
City of Lake Park
City of Remerton
City of Valdosta
Pierce County City
of Blackshear City
of Patterson City
of Offerman Tift
County
City of Omega
City of Tifton
City of Ty Ty
Turner County
City of Ashburn
City of Rebecca
City of Sycamore
Ware County
City of Waycross

Other Stakeholders:

Area Agency on Aging
Boards of Education
Business & Industry
Chambers of Commerce
Development Authorities
Historic Preservation Boards
Hospitals/Medical Centers
Housing Authorities
Main Street Organizations
Private Citizens
Southern Georgia Regional Commission
State and Federal Agencies
Technical Colleges
Universities/Colleges
Workforce Development Board



sgrc

**SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION**

Waycross - Valdosta