

In the REGION

SGRC Accepting Applications for CARES Act Funding for Small Business Loans in South Georgia

In mid-July, the SGRC was tapped to receive an \$825,000 "recovery assistance grant" to encourage business development and job creation in South Georgia. The grant provides revolving loan funds (a type of small business loan), administered by SGRC, to small businesses in Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner and Ware counties. With the necessary paperwork completed, the SGRC began accepting applications the last week of July for small business loans from the CARES Act.

Businesses applying for the loan can expect cash in hand in roughly two weeks, said Rex Dorsey, SGRC Director of Lending. "I would like to think within about two weeks, we should be able to have you money," he said. A few applications have already been submitted to SGRC, Dorsey said.

There has been some confusion about the \$825,000 being a grant, Dorsey said, but the money will be a loan. The federal grant to SGRC includes an interest rate to cover facilitating costs, he said.

The RLF loans will be a minimum of \$25,000 and while SGRC has not yet set a maximum or minimum interest rate, it "should be lower than the market rate" at or below 4%, Dorsey said.

The application process requires two approvals: one from the SGRC board then another from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. Dorsey said his team will try its best to move the loan applications through quickly to provide needed relief to local businesses.

Applications can be found on the SGRC website at <https://sgrc.us/lending.html>. For more information about the SGRC's CARES Act RLF funding, contact Rex Dorsey at (229)-333-5277 or rdorsey@sgrc.us.

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

Community and Economic Development

SGRC Receives EDA CARES Act Funding to Boost Economic Development Programs Critical to Helping the Region Respond to Coronavirus

On August 11, 2020, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced that the Department's Economic Development Administration (EDA) is awarding \$4.1 million in CARES Act Recovery Assistance grants to 11 EDA Economic Development District (EDD) organizations across Georgia to update economic development plans and fortify programs to assist communities in responding to the coronavirus pandemic. The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) is one of the statewide grantees, and will be receiving \$400,000 in CARES Act funding.

"The Trump Administration is eager to allocate these essential CARES Act funds and deliver on our promise to help American communities recover from the impact of COVID-19," said Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. "I am proud of the perseverance and strength shown by our communities coast to coast throughout this pandemic, and these funds will help provide Georgia with resources to make a swift and lasting economic comeback."

"These investments come at a crucial time to help Georgia's and our nation's economy come roaring back and provide hard-working Americans with new opportunities," said Dana Gartzke, Performing the Delegated Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development. "We are pleased to make these investments in Georgia's EDA Economic Develop-

ment Districts to help them prevent, prepare, and respond to coronavirus."

"Communities across Georgia have done a remarkable job at adapting to these uncertain times," said Senator Kelly Loeffler. "These EDA investments will support those efforts by helping small businesses and cities from Athens down to Valdosta not only recover from the coronavirus but also grow their local economies over the long term. I am proud to be working with Secretary Ross and the Trump administration to create jobs and bring our economy roaring back."

"The CARES Act continues to provide direct support to our district and state," said Congressman Earl L. "Buddy" Carter (GA-01). "I thank the Administration for ensuring this funding is going to help our communities recover and respond to COVID-19."

"As communities and businesses throughout Georgia's 12th District continue to respond and recover from the impact of COVID-19, these investments into the Central Savannah River Area, Heart of Georgia and Southern Georgia Regional Commissions are critical," said Congressman Rick Allen (GA-12). "Thanks to President Trump's leadership and funding from the CARES Act, I have no doubt our economy will quickly rebound."

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Community and Economic Development

SGRC Receives EDA CARES Act Funding to Boost Economic Development Programs Critical to Helping the Region Respond to Coronavirus (continued)

The SGRC will utilize the EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant to respond to the coronavirus pandemic by developing and implementing economic recovery strategies to rebuild resilient and sustainable communities. “The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating effect on many sectors of the Southern Georgia economy,” said SGRC Community and Economic Development Director Kimberly Hobbs. “This EDA grant will enable the SGRC to work directly with our communities to assess the region’s needs, and to devise a strategy to meet those needs through coordination, partnerships, and leveraged resources.”

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission is a regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency which serves 45 municipalities in the 18 counties (Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware) of Southern Georgia. The SGRC partners with local governments to increase the prosperity and quality of life in the region through programs including: Area Agency on Aging, Community and Economic Development, Transportation and Environmental Planning, Geographic Information Systems, Information Technology, Workforce Development and Small Business Loans.

EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance, which is being administered under the authority of the bureau’s flexible Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program, provides a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions as they respond to and recover from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. For complete information, please visit <https://www.eda.gov/coronavirus/>.

The mission of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing the nation's regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. An agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce, EDA makes investments in economically distressed communities in order to create jobs for U.S. workers, promote American innovation, and accelerate long-term sustainable economic growth.

For more information, please contact Kimberly Hobbs at (229)-333-5277, or by email at kkhobbs@sgrc.us.

Transportation and Environmental

SGRC Reports Douglas Sidewalk Master Plan Completed for the City of Douglas

The SGRC has completed a Sidewalk Master Plan for the City of Douglas. This project was funded by the Georgia Department of Transportation and was completed at no cost to the City of Douglas. SGRC staff developed the plan between January and July of 2020, and made several field visits to Douglas to analyze the existing conditions.

The Sidewalk Master Plan brings together material from several previous sidewalk and connectivity plans and provides a comprehensive list of sidewalk projects for the City to implement. The projects all consist of new sidewalks that are to be provided on street sections that currently have no sidewalk. Each project is given a score and rank, produced via a methodology that was developed specifically for this plan. Projects are scored based on the following nine categories: Connectivity to destinations; whether the project would fill a gap in the sidewalk network; presence of a “cow path” where the terrain is worn down by people walking; features increasing the cost of sidewalk installation; speed limit; average daily traffic; history of crashes involving pedestrians; indication of a need for the project in the public involvement phase; and connectivity to the City’s greenway trail.

The plan also includes analysis the demographics of project areas, the crashes that have occurred involving pedestrians, and the distribution of projects among City Council districts. The Appendix (of the plan) includes examples of pedestrian safety outreach materials and a model Complete Streets policy developed for the City of Douglas. An interactive map was developed on which community members could vote on proposed sidewalk projects and suggest new projects. Additionally, open discussions



Sidewalk in Douglas, Georgia

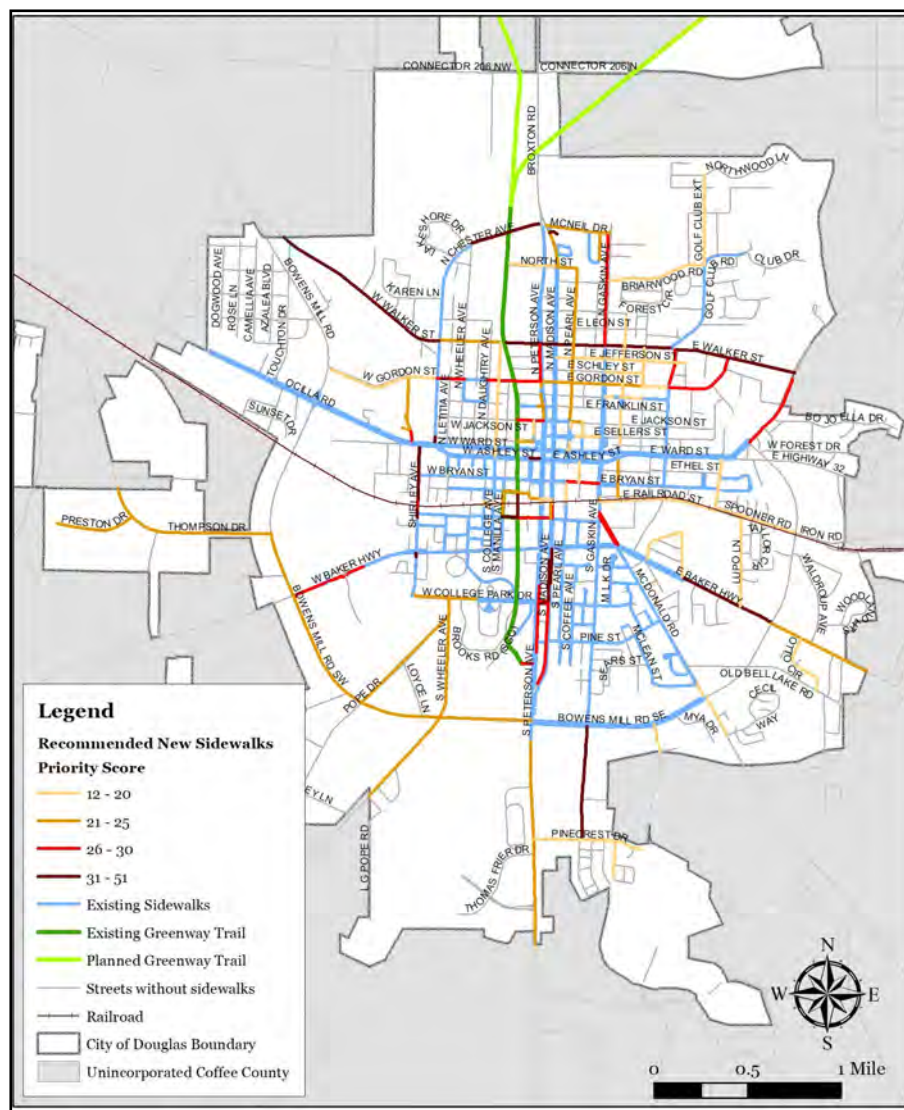
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Transportation and Environmental

SGRC Reports Douglas Sidewalk Master Plan Completed for the City of Douglas (continued)

were held on social media, with a high level of public input, which influenced the final content of the plan. The final plan can be downloaded from the SGRC website at: <https://sgrc.us/bike-ped-planning.html>. The Douglas City Council will decide which projects will be implement first, as funding allows.

For more information, please contact Corey Hull, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services, via email at chull@sgrc.us or phone at (229)-333-5277.



Pictured above is a map of City of Douglas Sidewalk Master Plan with recommended new sidewalk projects by priority score

Local Government Services

SGRC Planning Division Developing an Urban Redevelopment Plan and Enterprise Zone for City of Douglas

The SGRC Planning Division staff is currently developing an Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) for the City of Douglas. Thanks to Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Act (O.C.G.A. § 36-61-1), a URP gives local governments broad powers to redevelop blighted areas using code enforcement and eminent domain. Covering the entire City, the URP will function as a guiding document for the redevelopment and targeting of public investments throughout the redevelopment area. Among many other advantages, an URP permits the use of tax-exempt bonds for redevelopment purposes.



Pictured above is a structure surveyed in the city of Douglas

The URP includes a survey of building conditions throughout the entire City, classifying each structure as either “Sound,” “Deteriorating,” or “Dilapidated.” SGRC staff has braved the heat to perform this important field work

during the months of July and August. An additional section of the URP will provide an analysis of the suitability of parcels throughout the City for redevelopment, in view of existing zoning requirements.

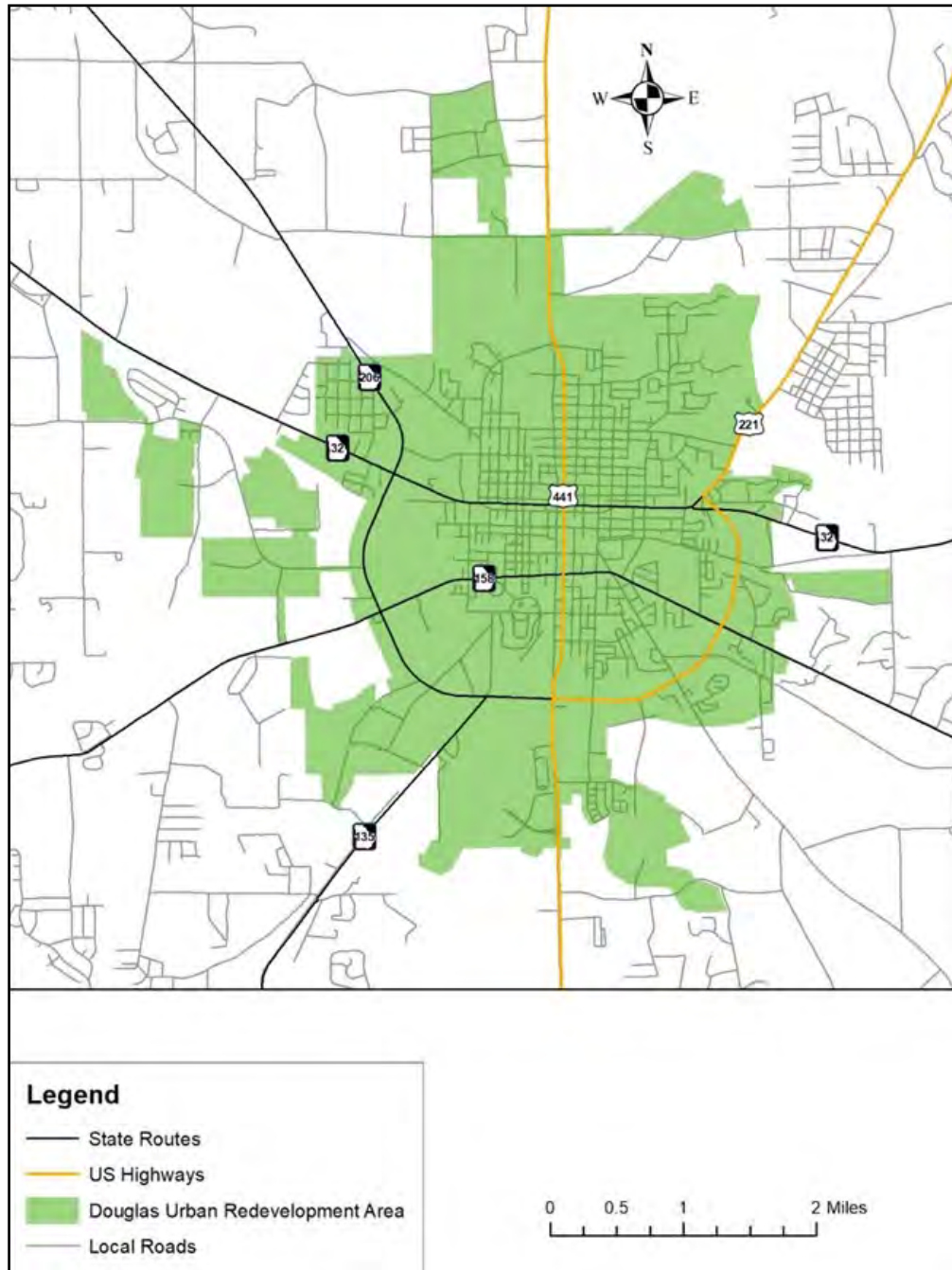
In tandem with the URP, the SGRC is preparing an Enterprise Zone ordinance for the City of Douglas. According to state law (O.C.G.A. § 36-88-4), within an Enterprise Zone, businesses that create and maintain five or more full-time jobs can be exempted from all property taxes for five years, with lesser property tax exemptions continuing for another five years thereafter. Having an URP in place is one of the criteria for establishing an Enterprise Zone.

The City of Douglas URP and Enterprise Zone are expected to be complete by the end of the calendar year. For additional information, contact the SGRC Planning Division at (229)-333-5277.

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Local Government Services

SGRC Planning Division Developing an Urban Redevelopment Plan and Enterprise Zone for City of Douglas (continued)



Pictured above is a map of the city of Douglas with the Urban Redevelopment Area colored in green

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

SGRC-AAA Announces Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program for 2020 Begins in August

The SGRC-AAA coordinates with local approved farmers to provide fresh produce to area seniors across the region through the Georgia Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). Through this program, low-income seniors are provided twenty dollars worth of vouchers that can be used to purchase fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables from certified Georgia farmers at local farmers' markets. The SGRC-AAA administers the program through a partnership with the Georgia Department of Human Services - Division of Aging Services and the Georgia Department of Public Health. SFMNP vouchers are distributed once per year during the peak Georgia fruit and vegetable growing season at participating senior centers throughout Georgia. The program also provides nutrition education on the importance of eating healthy fruits and vegetables. To qualify for the vouchers, applicants must be age 60 or older and meet the specific income guidelines set forth by SFMNP.



In the past, SFMNP certified farmers have traveled to each county and held Senior Farmers' Market events for senior center participants and eligible senior citizens in the county. However, due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19), senior center sites are closed to participants and senior citizens are strongly encouraged to shelter in place and adhere to social distancing protocols. Therefore, it will not be practical, nor possible, for farmer's to have the typical SFMNP events for the Summer of 2020.

The SFMNP administrators have been responsive to these changes, modified the voucher process, and provided a means for the program to continue for participants this summer. The new process will be: SFMNP vouchers will be issued to eligible participants; senior center staff will serve as a proxy and sign for the participants; farmers will deliver bags of fresh fruit and vegetables to senior centers and home-delivered meal sites; and bags of fresh fruit and vegetables will be delivered to the homes of participants, along with their home-delivered meals. The SGRC-AAA is very pleased that the SFMNP will continue to operate this year, beginning in August, and that area senior citizens will continue to receive the fresh fruits and vegetables that they have come to enjoy. For additional information, please contact Shawn Taylor, Lead Program Manager, by phone at (912)-285-6097 or via email at staylor@sgrc.us.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

SGRC-AAA Featured in the Georgia Council on Aging *Senior Issues Newsletter* for August 2020

GCOA's Senior Issues Newsletter



Senior Issues Newsletter August 2020

Area Agency on Aging Spotlight

Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging



Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging (AAA) develops, provides, and coordinates person-centered programs and services for older individuals, at-risk adults and persons with disabilities who desire to live in the community with support, versus a long-term care facility, for as long as possible. Our vision is to assist our clients to live longer, live safely, and live well. The Southern Georgia AAA serves 18 counties and 45 municipalities in the region. The AAA is located in Waycross, Georgia, and is a division of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC).

The SGRC-AAA's Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) provides screening specialists who are available to evaluate individuals for a variety of programs and services through a process called "Intake and Assistance". ADRC offers a wealth of information and resources for individuals who need services, along with their caregivers and/or family members, and other healthcare professionals. Everyone is encouraged to call the ADRC because it operates with a "No Wrong Door" approach. ADRC screening specialists have access to thousands of resources and can make linkages to needed services such as: Nursing Home Transitions, Caregiver Education Programs, Care Consultation, Assistive Technology, Elderly and Disabled Waiver Programs, Homemaker, Personal Care, Caregiver In-Home Respite services, and many more.

The SGRC-AAA recently participated, along with the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission's AAA and the Division of Aging Services staff, in the 2020 Resources for Rural Caregiver's Virtual Conference: *Finding the Hidden Treasures* that was led by Second Wind Dreams and sponsored by AARP Georgia. The focus of the conference was providing person-centered care and resource connections to individuals living with dementia and their families and/or caregivers, identifying the gaps that exist in services, and sharing the strategies in the aging network that are available to support those in need. They also recently partnered with an internal SGRC division, Geographic Information Services (GIS), to add an interactive Senior Center map for the region to the very helpful SGRC COVID-19 Information Hub, which is a one-stop-shop for information and resources.



Scott Cousion, SGRC Aging Services Director, is pictured above welcoming participants to the 2020 Rural Caregiver's Virtual Conference.

For more information and to access the COVID-19 Hub on the SGRC website, please visit: [COVID-19 Hub](#) and for more information on SGRC-AAA, visit their website [HERE](#).

Engage with CO-AGE

www.gcoa.org

Information Technology (IT)

The SGRC-IT Division Offers Advice Regarding the Purchase of Computers by Local Government Entities

The SGRC-IT Division staff are often asked by small local government customers why some computers are so much more inexpensive than others. According to SGRC-IT Director Larry Adams, to better understand the price differences in computers, local governments should compare the grade, components, and operating systems of computers before simply choosing the lowest priced option.

The first step in comparing computers is to determine whether the computer being reviewed is a consumer grade computer or a business grade computer. Many computer manufacturers offer what appears to be the same computer make and model in both the home and business divisions however, the computers are not actually the same. Following are some differences between consumer grade and business grade computers that should be considered before a purchase is made.

Consumer grade computer components are usually purchased from the lowest priced supplier with little emphasis on quality or reliability over the extended time period that most small governments keep them. Since these components are actually the inner-workings of the computer, they are very important. Poorly made components will cause instability, poor performance, or overall failure of the computer and this could happen long before it is time to replace the computer.



In contrast, business grade computers are built with higher quality components that are tested more rigorously. These components are designed for business use, and more often include higher grade materials and name-brand parts. This emphasis on durability means that a business class laptop or desktop should last for several years. Obviously, a local government would most likely want to purchase business grade computers, as they are more reliable and last longer.

Finally, software and operating systems should be considered. A business grade computer may come with operating system and software releases more suitable to the work of a business or government where as consumer grade computers may not have adequate operating systems and software. Choosing the perfect machine isn't always easy but it's very easy to go wrong if the cost of the computer is the only concern.

For assistance deciding on the purchase of a computer and/or more information on deciding what actual computer needs are, please feel free to contact Larry Adams by email at ladams@sgrc.us or the SGRC IT department by phone at (229)-242-1988.

Workforce Development

SGRC-Workforce Development Division On-the-Job Training Program Success Story

Meet Patrick Arrington. He completed the SGRC Workforce Development Program's On-The-Job training program at Beach Timber Company, Inc. in Alma, Georgia in just 12 short weeks. He is now employed there as an Inventory Manager.

Beach Timber Company, Inc. is a family owned and operated Wood Products Manufacturing Company & Wood Dealership. Founded by Gary S. Strickland in 1984, according to their website, "Beach Timber Company, Inc. in Alma, GA is a white (untreated) pole mill, currently producing Southern yellow pine utility poles and piling. We also produce a variety of landscaping mulch products including cypress mulch, colored mulch and pine mulch." For more information on this business, please find them on the web at <http://beachtimber.com/> or call Beach Timber at (912)-632-2800 to learn more about their products and services.

This successful on-the-job training placement was possible with help of the federally funded Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Interested employers who want to learn more about how this program could benefit their company, as well as potential and current employees, may contact Amy Jones by email at abaldwin@sgrc.us, or by phone at (912)-285-6097 to learn more.



Pictured above (L to R) Patrick Arrington and Steve Strickland of Beach Timber



Welcome New Employees



Geographic Information Services Division Welcomes New Staff

Rachel Strom, Director of SGRC Geographic Information Services (GIS) is pleased to announce that Ashley Spradley has been hired as a GIS Analyst with the SGRC-GIS Division. Ashley graduated from Valdosta State University in May of 2019 with a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Geosciences, with a concentration in Geology.

Ashley previously worked for the City of Valdosta Utilities Department as a GIS Technician where she gained experience mapping water and sewer features, as well as creating surveys that Utility staff could use with their smart phones, in the field. Ashley said that she enjoys both field work and analytical work. She also shared that she loves being outdoors and loves the arts.



Transportation & Environmental Division Welcomes New Staff

Corey Hull, Director of SGRC Transportation and Environmental Division is pleased to announce that Megan Fowler has joined the SGRC staff as a Transit/Mobility Coordinator. A Valdosta native, Meagan earned a Bachelor's Degree in Legal Assistant Studies and a Master of Public Administration Degree from Valdosta State University.

Megan worked in the banking industry as a loan processor and compliance officer. She also served as County Planner and Zoning Administrator in Lee County and focused on rural and residential land use planning, zoning, permitting, and coordination of TSPLOST projects. Megan is a graduate of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development and a member of Leadership Lee class of 2020. In her spare time, Megan enjoys spending time with family and friends and traveling.

Complete Streets: Design and Policy in Southern Georgia Communities

The SGRC, in partnership with Georgia Bikes, and the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization

(MPO), hosted two virtual training events in August with guest speaker Elliott Caldwell, executive director of Georgia Bikes. The training events were for individuals



who wanted to learn more about how to design streets and influence policies to better accommodate all road users of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets

are designed to safely accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, motor vehicles, delivery drivers,



persons with disabilities, and more. Both events were free and accessible by webinar. For AICP-certified planners, each event has received preliminary approval for 1 CM credit.

Miller-Cody Elected President of GMA District 11

The SGRC would like to congratulate Valdosta City Councilmember Vivian Miller-Cody on being elected president of the Georgia Municipal Association's (GMA) District 11 during the association's virtual annual meeting on July 2.



**Councilmember
Vivian Miller-Cody**

In this role Miller-Cody will serve as a liaison between GMA and municipal officials in GMA's District 11. She will also attend GMA-sponsored events, including the association's annual convention; promote engagement in GMA activities and programs with other cities in the district; advocate for GMA's legislative priorities; and share with GMA staff any needs and concerns of member cities in their district. As the District President, Miller-Cody will also serve on GMA Board of Directors.

Created in 1933, GMA is the only state organization that represents municipal governments in Georgia. Based in Atlanta, GMA is a voluntary, non-profit organization that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit and technical consulting services to its members. GMA currently represents 537 cities in Georgia.

SGRC NEWS

SGRC Valdosta Office Building Slated for Completion by Fall of 2020



SGRC NEWS

SGRC Valdosta Office Building Slated for Completion by Fall of 2020 (continued)



Contact the SGRC

SGRC 2020 Council Meetings Schedule

September 24, 2020 – 11:00 am – Location TBD

Area Officials Appreciation Dinner –
October 22, 2020 (date subject to change)

December 10, 2020 – 11:00 am – Location TBD



Valdosta Office

327 W. Savannah Ave.
Valdosta, GA 31601

You can reach us by phone:
(229)-333-5277

You can reach us by fax:
(229)-333-5312



Waycross Office

1725 South Georgia Parkway West
Waycross, GA 31503

You can reach us by phone:
(912)-285-6097

You can reach us by fax:
(912)-285-6126

Email:
sgrc@sgrc.us

Web Address:
www.sgrc.us

Facebook:
**[https://www.facebook.com/
SouthernGeorgiaRC](https://www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaRC)**

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HAVE YOU COMPLETED THE 2020 CENSUS?

Self-Response Rates for Our Region

Atkinson County: 34.2%	Berrien County: 49.9%
Bacon County: 52.1%	Brantley County: 42.5%
Ben Hill County: 45.5%	Brooks County: 43.7%

Charlton County: 44.7%	Cook County: 50.4%
Clinch County: 42.5%	Echols County: 40%
Coffee County: 45.7%	Irwin County: 48.3%

Lanier County: 42.4%	Tift County: 54.3%
Lowndes County: 52.6%	Turner County: 48.5%
Pierce County: 57.8%	Ware County: 54.2%

**SOUTHERN
GEORGIA
COUNTS**



The Census is quick, easy, safe, and secure. Learn more at 2020census.gov