

In the REGION

SGRC Community & Economic Development Division Reminds Local Governments to Begin CDBG Preparations for 2022

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) will be accepting applications for its Annual Competition for 2022 Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) on June 3, 2022, and the time to begin planning those applications is NOW! Threshold requirements implemented by DCA have necessitated getting an early start on CDBG applications in order to be eligible to submit an application.



CDBG funds are federal dollars allocated to the State of Georgia by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and are earmarked to benefit primarily low to moderate income people. In fact, the beneficiaries of a CDBG project must be at least 70% low to moderate income.

Examples of eligible public facilities and improvements activities include, but are not limited to: water and sewer facilities, flood and drainage improvements, streets, and neighbor-

Neighborhood Revitalization

hood revitalization. Other activities may include the development of shelters/facilities for homeless, elderly, mentally ill, abused, and impaired persons. Public facility activities may also include the development of medical, community, senior, and handicapped centers, or centers for literacy training.

For the 2022 CDBG application round, the max-

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

Community and Economic Development

SGRC Community & Economic Development Division Reminds Local Governments to Begin CDBG Preparations for 2022 (cont.)

imum grant amounts and required cash match amounts have been changed. The maximum funding amount for a single-activity public facilities grant is \$1,000,000. Local governments are required to provide a 5% cash match of amounts from \$300,001 to \$750,000 in CDBG funds, and 10% cash match of amounts from \$750,001 to \$1,000,000 (not required for single-activity neighborhood revitalization grants). Multi-Activity projects are eligible for up to \$1,250,000 in CDBG funds; a 15% cash match is required for amounts of \$1,000,001 or more.

Development of a quality, competitive, and eligible CDBG application is time consuming, and therefore the process should begin immediately. If your community is interested in applying for CDBG funds and you would like to discuss a potential project, please contact Kimberly Hobbs at 229-333-5277, or by email at kkhobbs@sgrc.us.



Street, Flood, and Drainage Improvements



Public Facility Improvements

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)



Linda Gail, Shawn Taylor, Simone Popham, and Scott Courson

SGRC-AAA Employees Receive Certificate of Excellence For Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging (SGRC-AAA) and the SGRC-AAA Aging Advisory Council (AAC) recognized three employees on November 17th during its quarterly council meeting. Lead Program Manager Shawn Taylor and Program Managers Linda Gail and Simone Popham each received a Certificate of Excellence Award for outstanding performance, dedication, and commitment to expand the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP).

During the 2020 market season, when many community services were being canceled or postponed, the SGRC-AAA program managers restructured the SFMNP events and successfully provided fresh fruit and produce to the homes of senior citizens who were sheltering-in-place. In large part, their flexibility and perseverance resulted in an expansion of the SFMNP, which grew from serving less than 1,000 seniors in the 2019 market season to serving over 2,700 seniors in the 2021 market season.

Aging Director Scott Courson said, "We are extremely pleased with the growth of the SFMNP in the SGRC Region because it resulted in more fresh fruits and vegetables for senior citizens in our area. The AAA has administered a vibrant SFMNP for several years; since the 2019 market season, the program has nearly tripled the vouchers received and expanded services beyond the senior center sites and into the community." Finally, Courson thanked the three employees for their hard work and dedication and encouraged them to keep the program moving forward.

Local Government Services

SGRC Local Government Services Division Announces Broadband Element Amendment to Comprehensive Plans

The SGRC adopted a Digital Economy Plan in 2014 that addressed better broadband services. The purpose of the Digital Economy Plan for the SGRC area was to document the resources and unmet needs of the region's digital assets, broadband infrastructure, services, and related technology utilization and to develop ongoing strategies to fill identified gaps and needs. The assessment phase of the plan included an inventory of the digital infrastructure, resources, and assets in the region to determine any physical/hardware or boosters to the growth of digital development, the digital economy, digital education, and awareness.

Broadband has become essential to businesses, education, healthcare, agriculture, and the overall quality of life. High-speed internet remains out of reach for many of our rural communities in the region. Georgia recognized the importance of broadband to all Georgians, and in 2018 the General Assembly passed SB402, also known as Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE). This legislation created the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative, and called for promoting and deploying broadband services throughout the state to unserved areas with a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speed. Many areas within the Southern Georgia Region still have inadequate broadband services. The

map on the following page depicts areas within the region with insufficient access to broadband.

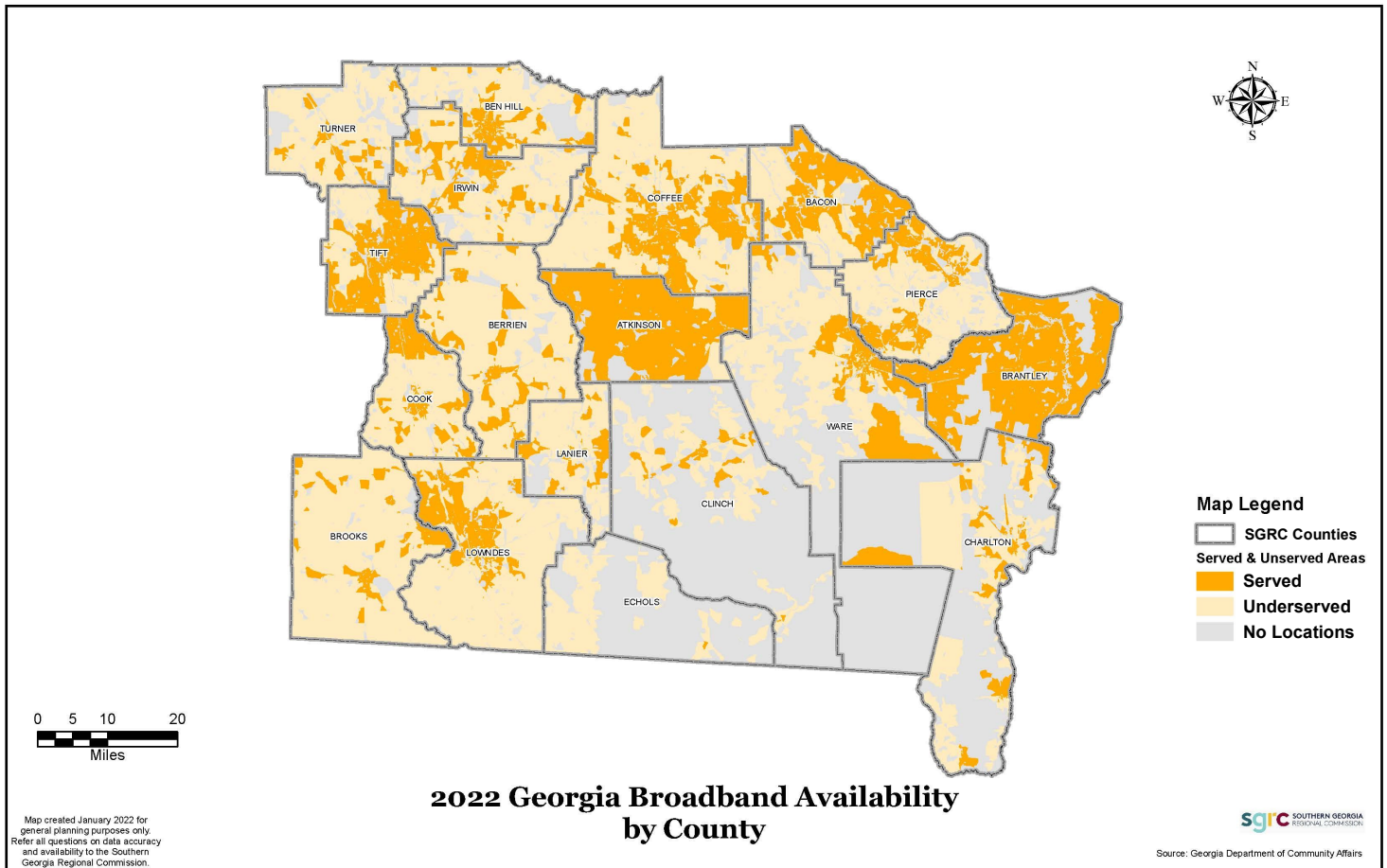
The Department of Community Affairs has now added the Broadband Element to required elements within each county's Comprehensive Plan Update. Adding this element by an amendment to a community's current Comprehensive Plan will allow a community to adopt a Broadband Ready Ordinance and become a Certified Broadband Ready Community. Plans must include the update before applying for the Broadband Ready Community Designation.

The SGRC can perform a study at no cost to area communities to determine the need for broadband services in each area. Staff will conduct a community survey and amend the current Comprehensive Plan to include this element. Once the preparation has been completed, each jurisdiction will adopt a resolution, and SGRC will submit the amendment to the Department of Community Affairs for approval. The process is not a lengthy one to undertake, and if any communities in the SGRC region area are interested, they may contact Loretta Hylton in the SGRC Planning Division at the SGRC Valdosta office at 229-333-5277.

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Local Government Services

SGRC Local Government Services Division Announces Broadband Element Amendment to Comprehensive Plans (continued)



Areas within the SGRC Region with insufficient access to broadband

Geographic Information Services (GIS)

GIS Staff Reminds Communities to Respond to 2022 Boundary and Annexation Survey

Southern Georgia Regional Commission's (SGRC) GIS Division Director Rachel Strom would like to remind communities in the SGRC Region that a response to the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) is necessary to ensure that the Census Bureau has current and accurate boundary information for each community.

Participation in the 2022 BAS is strongly encouraged for the following reasons:

- Boundary updates are vital to the success of the 2030 Census population count
- The federal government allocates over \$675 billion in federal funds across the nation, state, and region based on these boundaries

Strom asked that local governments contact the SGRC-GIS Division to let them know if the government either "No" has no changes or "Yes" has changes. If a government is unsure whether it had changes or not, the GIS Division can help governments decide and will assist with the process as needed. If a community has had boundary changes in the past year, the SGRC can submit the changes to the Census Bureau.

Local Governments will need to respond using the following BAS website where they will find step-by-step instructions on how to start the boundary updating process and respond to the 2022 BAS. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/bas.html>.

KEY DATES

January 1, 2022: Boundary updates must be legally in effect on or before this date to be reported in the 2022 BAS.

March 1, 2022: Boundary updates submitted by this date will be reflected in the ACS and PEP data estimates and in next year's BAS materials.

May 31, 2022: Boundary updates submitted by this date will be reflected in next year's BAS materials.

Local governments should be aware that the SGRC Valdosta office has relocated to 1937 Carlton Adams Dr, Valdosta. Materials addressed to the former Savannah Avenue location, including BAS notices, may be delayed. Governments may reach out to the SGRC-GIS Division as soon materials are received.

Additional information on the BAS program can be found at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/bas/about.html>.



Transportation and Environmental

Keeping School Students in the Southern Georgia Region Safe

In November 2021, James Horton, SGRC Transportation Planner, met with Chelsea Carter, Senior School Outreach Coordinator with the Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center to discuss school safety in Lakeland. Lanier County aligned all county school facilities in Lakeland within close proximity of each other, and as a result, students can walk from one school to another. While this is a convenience for students and parents, it also results in many students, vehicular traffic, and busses being in the same general vicinity and on the same streets during morning intake and afternoon dismissal of schools.

To ensure that students are not at risk for vehicular crashes, Horton and Carter are conducting a school safety study on site. The first observation was on November 16, 2021 at 7:00 am with Horton observing the Lanier Primary School and Carter observing the Lanier Elementary School. The observation included looking at the placement



Lanier County Buses

of sidewalks, crosswalks, and safety equipment such as signage and flashing beacons and also includes an assessment of safety equipment. The observation also included assessing the number of busses, parent drop-offs and pick-ups, and the number of students using the crosswalks on Valdosta Road (SR 122) which runs in front of both schools.

The next observation occurred on January 19, 2022 during student dismissal. Horton and Carter observed the patterns of vehicles, busses and student pedestrians as they left the campus for the day. The purpose of the study was to determine if dangerous situations existed for student pedestrians and if there is a need for any changes in traffic patterns or additional safety equipment. The program is known as Safe Routes to School and is supported by the Georgia Department of Transportation and the SGRC. The results of the Lanier study are being compiled and other schools in the Region will receive similar studies in the future. For more information, contact James Horton at 229-333-5277.

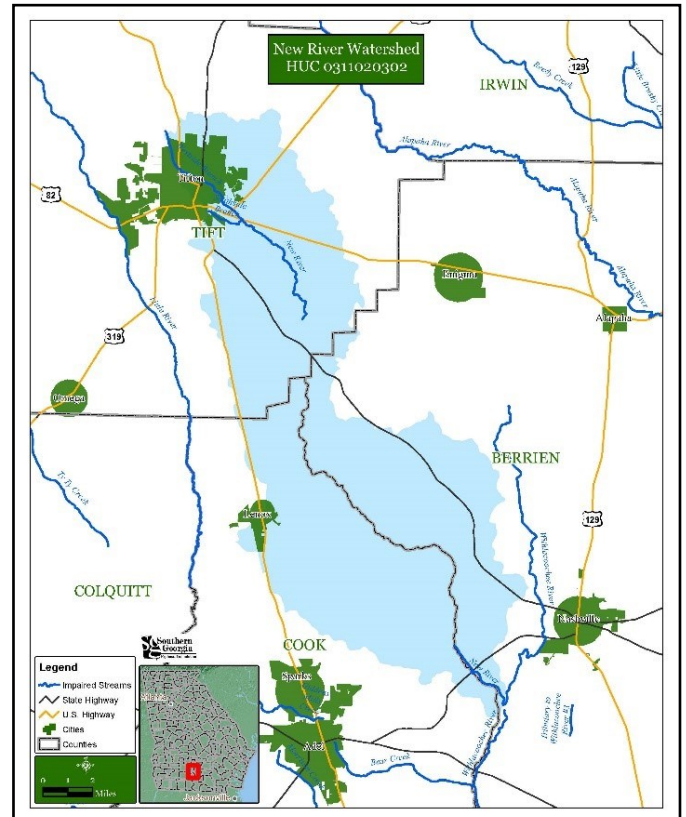
Transportation and Environmental

SGRC Environmental Program Wraps Up 2021 with New River Project Closeout

The New River is in the 10 – digit hydrologic unit code (HUC) 0311020302. It was listed on the 305(b)/303(d) List of Impaired Streams through the completion of a Watershed Improvement Plan by the SGRC in 2009.

In 2017, the SGRC was awarded a grant in this watershed through the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) through a section 319(h) Grant with funding made available through the Clean Water Act to implement Best Management Practices in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards to reduce bacterial loadings within the watershed. Since then, the SGRC has:

- Implemented Best Management Practices (BMP's) for 2 Urban, 7 Residential Septic, and 10 Agricultural Land Uses to reduce Fecal Coliform Loadings within the New River Watershed
- Worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to complete Conservation Nutrient Management Plans for all implemented BMP's
- Advertised via social media, targeted letters, press releases, flyers, community meetings, etc. to the communities within the New River Watershed
- Completed 6 Adopt-A-Stream Training Sessions
- Developed a monitoring plan, performed targeted post-BMP monitoring, and compiled a report of the results of the post-BMP monitoring for EPD review
- Conducted one virtual Nonpoint Source Pollution Mitigation webinar for residents within the New River Watershed (workshop was made available for those outside the watershed as well)



New River Watershed HUC 0311020302 Map

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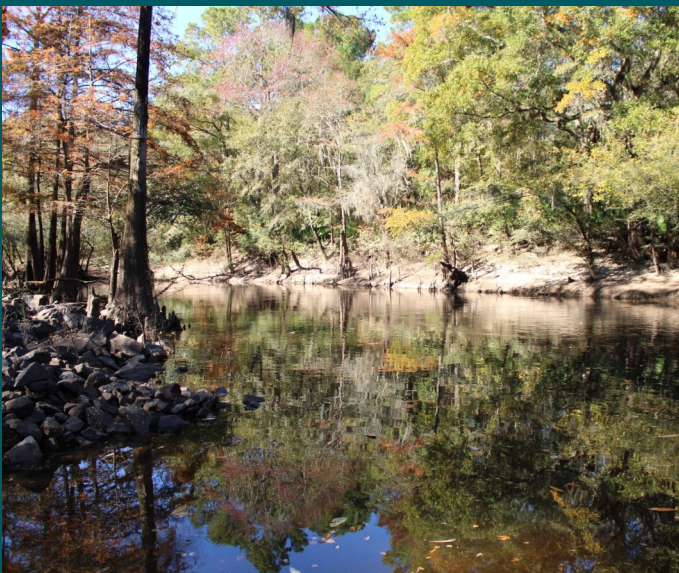
Transportation and Environmental

SGRC Environmental Program Wraps Up 2021 with New River Project Closeout (continued)

- Completed a Feral Swine Eradication Education Workshop and Demonstration in coordination with the Alapaha Soil and Water Conservation District, the University of Georgia (UGA), the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts
- Facilitated an event at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to discuss current project progress, nonpoint source pollution mitigation, and water quality monitoring protocols and standards
- Facilitated an event at Valdosta State University to discuss nonpoint source pollution, sustainable agriculture, and agricultural and environmental policy
- Completed the Region 5 Load Reduction Models for all BMPs installed
- Made the recommendation for EPD to conduct the regulatory testing needed to begin the process of de-listing the New River watershed from the 305(b)/ 303(d) List of Impaired Streams

SGRC Transportation and Environmental Services Director Corey Hull said, “We extend our thanks to everyone involved in this initiative: the SGRC Council, SGRC staff, watershed volunteers, regional partners, and private property owners for making this project a success!” For more information, contact Corey Hull at chull@sgrc.us.

SGRC Completes Second Round of Water Quality Data Collection in the Region



Through the Environmental Planning Program, SGRC completed its second round of water quality data collection for the Regional Water Quality Assessment Project in Atkinson, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Cook, Irwin, Lowndes, Thomas, and Wayne Counties. SGRC staff and citizen scientists gathered initial bacterial and chemical readings for analysis, and with the exception of a few sites—the water quality in the region is well below the regulatory standard of 1,000 colony forming units per 100 milliliters (CFU/ 100 mL). Sites with bacterial counts above the threshold will be re-evaluated after all data for the region has been collected. For more information contact Environmental Project Manager Megan Parker at 229-333-5277 or via email at mparker@sgrc.us.

Small Business Lending

SGRC Small Business Lending Program Assists Bree's Creative Learning Childcare Center in Valdosta with SBA 504 Loan

Bree's Creative Learning Childcare Center (BCLCC) is a locally owned state licensed childcare and pre-school operated by Bree and Travis Carter. Bree's Creative Learning Child Care Center started as a home-based daycare in November 2014. The service quickly gained acceptance and demand for quality childcare rapidly outpaced the home-based model. In August 2015, Bree adopted a "Childcare Center" format and moved operations to a rented building on University Drive in Valdosta. In March 2018, BCLCC expanded its offerings to include a pre-school program housed in a rented facility on Iola Street in Valdosta. Today, BCLCC serves up to 120 children per day in its childcare center and another 50 students per day in its preschool. BCLCC focuses on education for the children, as well as safe childcare.



Bree's Creative Learning Childcare Center in Valdosta

Both programs are at full capacity and have waiting lists of children ready to enroll.

BCLCC is expanding its business to provide 24 hour/7 day a week childcare and early learning activities for up to 200 children during the day and 50 at night. This expansion is designed to accommodate more working families that have non-traditional weekend and overnight working hours. The expansion will entail construction of a new 15,000 square foot childcare facility which should be completed in Fall 2022. The participating lender, Community Bank of Georgia, will have a first lien on the real estate and SBA will have a second lien, as is the case for all SBA 504 loans. There will be 11 jobs created to add to the existing 15 jobs.

For questions on the SGRC Lending Division, contact Michelle Frey at mfrey@sgrc.us or at 229-333-5277.

Workforce Development

Workforce Development Announces 2022 South Georgia Healthcare Summit

The South Georgia Healthcare Group (SGHG) is a healthcare partnership made up of employers, education entities, and other community partners that seeks to highlight allied health careers in 35 South Georgia counties. The SGHG has planned the South Georgia Healthcare Summit for education professionals on February 23 in Tifton. The goals are to develop partnerships, promote worksite engagement, build strong pathways into healthcare, share resources, and improve communication. For more information, contact Amy Jones at ajones@sgrc.us and see the link below to register for the summit.



**South Georgia
Healthcare Summit**

Wednesday, February 23, 2022
10:00am - 2:00pm
UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center

Attendees should include: Middle School and High School Counselors, Work-Based Learning (WBL) Coordinators, CTAE leaders, and Pathway Instructors

Register At:
[https://
www.eventbrite.com/e/
south-georgia-healthcare
-summit-tickets-
243138161787](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/south-georgia-healthcare-summit-tickets-243138161787)

or



scan the QR code

Registration will be limited to 200 registrants.

Southwest Georgia **WORK SOURCE GEORGIA** Connecting Talent with Opportunity A proud partner of the AmeriCorps Center network

southwest georgia healthcare sector partnership **NETWORK OF COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION**

SGHG South Georgia Healthcare Group

Southern Georgia **WORK SOURCE GEORGIA** Connecting Talent with Opportunity A proud partner of the AmeriCorps Center network

Contact the SGRC

SGRC Council 2022 Meeting Schedule

Meeting Locations TBD

January 27, 2022 – 11:00 am

February 24, 2022 – 11:00 am

March 24, 2022 – 11:00 am

April 28, 2022 – 11:00 am

May 26, 2022 – 11:00 am

June 23, 2022 – 11:00 am

No Meeting - July

August 25, 2022 – 11:00 am

September 22, 2022 – 11:00 am

No Meeting - October

Area Officials Appreciation Dinner -
October 27, 2022
(subject to change)

November – No meeting (combined
with December meeting)

December 8, 2022 – 11:00 am
(subject to change)



Valdosta Office

1937 Carlton Adams Drive
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)