

In the REGION

USDA Funding Available for Essential Community Facilities

Essential community facilities are key in ensuring that rural areas enjoy the same basic quality of life and services enjoyed by those in urban areas.

USDA's Community Facilities Program offers direct loans and grants to develop



or improve essential public services and facilities in rural communities with no more than 20,000 residents. These amenities help increase the competitiveness of rural communities in attracting and retaining businesses that provide employment and services for their residents.

Public bodies, non-profit organizations, and federally recognized American Indian Tribes can use the funds to purchase, construct, and/or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment, and pay related project. Examples of essential community facilities include:

- Health care facilities such as hospitals, medical clinics, dental clinics, nursing homes or assisted living facilities;
- Public facilities such as town halls, courthouses, airport hangars or street improvements;
- Community support services such as child care centers, community centers, fairgrounds or transitional housing;
- Public safety services such as fire departments, police stations, prisons, police vehicles, fire trucks, public works vehicles or equipment;
- Educational services such as museums, libraries or private schools;
- Utility services such as telemedicine or distance learning equipment, and;

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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

USDA Funding Available for Essential Community Facilities (continued)

- Local food systems such as community gardens, food pantries, community kitchens, food banks, food hubs or greenhouses.

Community Facilities funds are awarded as grants, low interest loans, or a combination of the two. Loan funds can be used for construction, land acquisition, legal fees, engineering fees, capitalized interest, equipment, initial operation and maintenance costs, project contingencies, and other cost that is determined by Rural Development to be necessary for the completion of the project. Grant funds can be used for equipment and equipment-type projects.

For more information about how your city or county can apply for USDA Community Facilities funding, contact Kimberly Hobbs at 229-333-5277 or kkhobbs@sgrc.us.



Transportation and Environmental

VLMPO Policy Committee to Consider Electric Vehicle Strategy and Low-Impact Development Policy

The Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (VLMPO) solicited input from the public in the spring regarding an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy and Transportation Low-Impact Development Policy for federally funded projects in the metropolitan planning area.

The recently enacted federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act includes several billion dollars in funding to install electric vehicle charging stations at various locations throughout the nation. The VLMPO developed this strategy to ready communities in southern Georgia to install this infrastructure when funding is available or when the private sector begins installing more chargers. This strategy guides local governments to implement policies to make them ready for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and reduce the cost of future retrofits to new residential and commercial developments.

The strategy includes goals for writing a model ordinance for local governments, and ensuring that electric vehicle charging infrastructure is discussed as a part of local comprehensive planning efforts. The Electric Vehicle Strategy also includes a brief analysis to determine which communities in southern Georgia are most suitable for investments in electric vehicle fast chargers, which are stations that typically charge a vehicle to 80% capacity in about 30 minutes. Investments in fast charging infrastructure outside of metropolitan areas allows commuters and travelers to charge at intervals that reduce 'range anxiety'. The VLMPO and SGRC will be able to assist local governments in developing local strategies to be ready for the installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

A second document that the VLMPO sought public input on is a transportation Low Impact Development Policy. This policy provides guidance on best practices to support the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system to reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation within the metropolitan planning area. Similar to the VLMPO's Complete Streets Policy, this Low Impact Development Policy will only apply to roadway improvements that are funded with federal funds however, local governments are encouraged to use it with all funding sources.

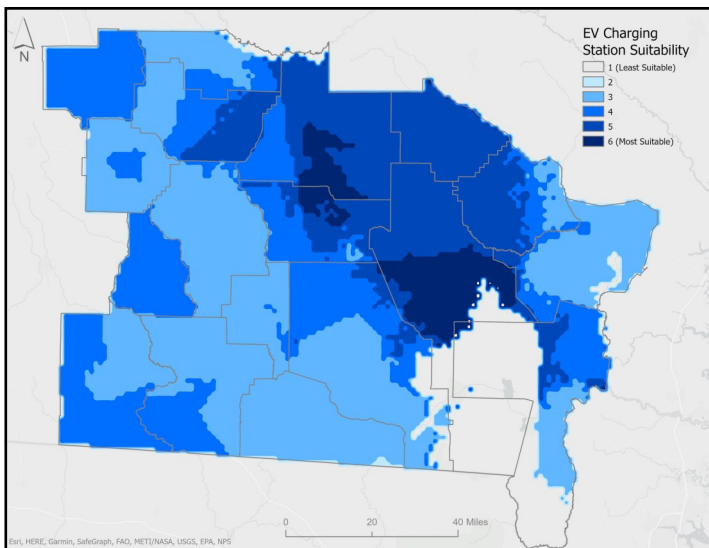
The VLMPO's Vision2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the 2017 Suwanee-Satilla Regional Water Plan encourage implementing cost-effective water management strategies that improve the overall quality of surface water in local water bodies. Low Impact Development best practices include the installation of pervious pavement, stormwater storage and reuse, bio filtration in detention areas,

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VLMPO Policy Committee to Consider Electric Vehicle...(cont.)

and green roofs on buildings, among other practices. This policy will be a best practice that other southern Georgia communities can use as a guide for implementing stormwater management best practices associated with transportation infrastructure.

The VLMPO Policy Committee will consider both the Electric Vehicle Strategy and Low-Impact Development Policy at its June 1 meeting. Both documents will be available on the SGRC website. Contact Corey Hull at chull@sgrc.us 229-333-5277 with questions.



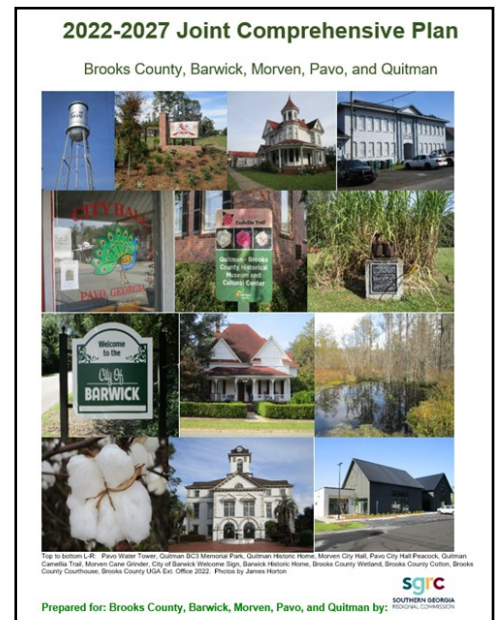
EV Charging Station Suitability Map

Brooks County Comprehensive Plan Nears Completion

The Comprehensive Plan for Brooks County and the cities of Barwick, Morven, Pavo and Quitman is nearing completion. A draft of the plan was sent out for the Steering Committee/ Stakeholders

and the general public to review in mid-April. Since then, several comments were received and incorporated into the plan. A total of four workshops

were held with the Steering Committee and the plan was reviewed and updated along with the Character Area Maps. All five governments participated in the workshops, much was accomplished, and the plan update was a huge success. The Public Hearing for the Transmittal of the plan to Department of Community Affairs for review was held May 2 and the county and cities will adopt the 2022-2027 Joint Comprehensive Plan for Brooks County at their respective commission meetings prior to June 30. For more information, call Local Government Services at 229-333-5277.



Area Agency on Aging

Brantley County High School HOSA Club Hosts Successful Food Drive

The Brantley County High School (BCHS) Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Club and Stephanie Collins, BSN, Healthcare Science Instructor and HOSA Advisor held a food drive in the month of April (Senior Hunger Awareness Month) in order to collect non-perishable food items for senior citizens in Brantley County. The food drive was held at the school and in the community, and it was a great success. The students delivered the boxes of food to the Brantley County Senior Center and some senior citizens in the community on May 9. With the assistance of Senior Center Director Jeanette Mercer, the food was distributed in Brantley County the same week. Scott Courson, Director of Aging Services said, “We are very grateful to Mrs. Collins, the students, and the community for their efforts and generosity on behalf of seniors in Brantley County.” Following are some photos of the food collected and the delivery to the Brantley County Senior Center.



Upper right photos: students organizing the food collected. Lower photo: Brantley Senior Center Director Jeanette Mercer (left) receives donated food for seniors from BCHS Healthcare students and Instructor Stephanie Collins (right).

Geographic Information Services (GIS)

SGRC GIS Announces New Drone Pilot

The SGRC-GIS Division now has three licensed Drone Pilots. In April 2022, Greg Nazworth became the third licensed UAV pilot on staff. GIS Director Rachel Strom said, “With a background in photography, Greg brings an artistic eye to the program, allowing us to offer more to our communities. Where the UAV program was once GIS (and mapping) centric, Greg will help us fill in the gaps for media and marketing photography!” For more information on GIS services, contact GIS Director Rachel Strom at rstrom@sgrc.us.



SGRC-GIS Baselineing Pilot Project Areas

Small Business Lending

SGRC Small Business Lending Program Says Farewell to Loan Board Director Debra Weil

The SGRC Lending Department would like to thank Ms. Debra Weil for twelve years of service as a member of the Loan Board of Directors. Ms. Weil is retiring from the Community Banking Company of Fitzgerald where she was Executive Vice President. Ms. Weil has been in commercial lending for over forty years. She is the 2021-2022 Chairman of the Community Bankers Association of Georgia. She is an active member of her community having served on the Board of the Ben Hill-Irwin Area Joint Development Authority, the Board of the Rotary Club and past President and Director of Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Chamber of Commerce, among many other activities.



Debra Weil

Workforce Development

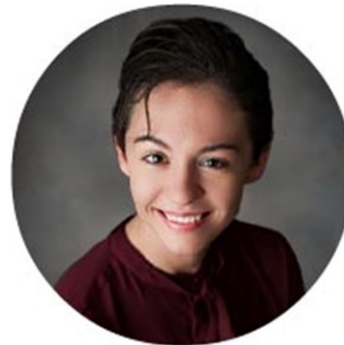
Pierce Pathway Portal (P3)

Amy Jones, Business Services/Sector Partnership Coordinator, recently interviewed Sarah Gove, Executive Director of the Pierce County Chamber of Commerce, regarding the Pierce Pathway Portal (P3) program that began in February 2022. This program is a collaborative effort between the Chamber, Economic Development entities, and Pierce County High School (PCHS). The team includes Sarah, Matt Carter, Economic Development Executive Director, and Malayna Wetherington, Pierce County High School Work-Based Learning (WBL) Coordinator. The team met in January 2022 to start discussions after economic development board member, Bobby Tippins, mentioned the graduation numbers each year from PCHS could be the answer to their future workforce issues. The P3 team hit the ground running, and the first pathway community tour was held in April 2022, with visits to local employers and Coastal Pines Technical College (CPTC). Welding pathway students had the opportunity to explore some local jobsites and jobs that are available. To see the collaboration behind this program, visit <https://youtu.be/oxoAUmV3RZI> to watch the full interview on YouTube.

Pierce Pathway Portal

"It's a Great Time to Go To Work"

P3 Interview with Sarah Gove, Pierce County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director



Contact the SGRC

SGRC Council 2022 Meeting Schedule Meeting Locations TBD

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 De-
cember meeting)

December 8, 2022 – 11:00 am

(subject to change)



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Steven Paul on SGRC Council



Steven Paul was sworn in April 28, 2022, at the SGRC Council meeting, as a private sector representative for Pierce County on the SGRC Council. He is Vice President of Commercial Sales for ATC Broadband. Paul is pictured above (left) with SGRC Council Chair Joyce Evans (right).