

In the REGION

Lowndes County Awarded \$18 Million in CDGB-CV Funding for New Second Harvest Food Bank

Lowndes County has been awarded \$18 million in Community Development Block Grant – Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funding for the construction of a 123,780 sq. ft. facility to serve as the new regional headquarters for Second Harvest of South Georgia. The grant award was made by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) utilizing funding available to the state through the federal CARES Act. This once-in-a-lifetime investment in rural Georgia will enable Second Harvest to increase its reach and better serve its nearly 124,000 clients in Lowndes County and surrounding areas. The successful CDBG-CV grant application was written and submitted by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission. SGRC Community and Economic Development staff will administer the project.

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the capacity of food banks statewide was



stretched due to increased demand for food assistance. Second Harvest of South Georgia



was no exception. The regional food bank which serves 26 counties is in desperate need of a new headquarters to replace its outdated facility. The current location, built in 1996, is not sized for or equipped to handle the scope of the hunger and disaster relief work that the organization is now being called upon to provide.

Continued on the next page

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

Lowndes County Awarded \$18 Million in CDGB-CV Funding for New Second Harvest Food Bank (continued)

Understanding the extraordinary challenges being faced by Georgia's food banks, DCA saw an opportunity to address these needs by providing vital funding for capital projects in distressed areas. Lowndes County is one of eleven communities that received CDBG-CV funding for food banks and pantries. "Transformational change can occur to lift the food insecure when food banks are able to ramp up both facility and operational capacities," said DCA Deputy Commissioner Rusty Haygood.

Lowndes County has long recognized that Second Harvest of South Georgia is critical infrastructure in the community. When approached about this potential grant, the County saw an opportunity to help the food bank expand their capacity and programming to meet the needs of the region for a lifetime. A \$500,000 grant toward site infrastructure for the project is being provided by Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority.

"Lowndes County is pleased to have the resources available to partner with Second Harvest of South Georgia on their new state of the art food bank facility through DCA's CDBG-CV grant," said Chairman Bill Slaughter, Lowndes County Board of Commissioners. "It has been a true honor to watch the team at Second Harvest serve our community in the capacity they have throughout the years and especially in the last two years. With this grant, Second Harvest will truly transform their organization and allow them to reach even more families when in need."

"The impact of an investment like this is a game changer, and we are blessed to have leadership in Lowndes County that embraces our future vision," said Second Harvest CEO Frank Richards. "We will be able to grow programs that have been constricted by our current capacity and establish new programs to reach those who are slipping through the cracks of the safety net."

The project is in the design phase, and construction is expected to begin this fall. Second Harvest of South Georgia will be announcing a capital campaign soon to raise the remainder of the funding needed to complete this \$24 million project.

Continued on the next page

Community and Economic Development

Lowndes County Awarded \$18 Million in CDGB-CV Funding for New Second Harvest Food Bank (continued)



Architect's rendering of the new Second Harvest of South Georgia facility

Local Government Services

Community Planning Institute Training Announced

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) will be hosting a training for planning commissioners, local government staff, and elected officials on May 12-13, 2022 on Jekyll Island. This is a two-day training course which will provide information on land use planning, growth, and development.



Jekyll Island Inn and Clubhouse (Photo credit ExploreGeorgia.org)

Topics which will be discussed during the course include: review of Georgia's planning requirements, how to engage constituents, plan implementation tools, and PlanFirst Success Stories. Some benefits of attending the course include: in-depth discussions of local comprehensive plan implementation best practices, access to updates in rules and regulations, as well as subject matter expertise and tools/resources, and networking time with planning and management leadership from across the state. Early bird registration will open on March 28th at the DCA website below:

<https://dca.ga.gov/local-government-assistance/planning/local-planning/community-planning-institute>

	Early Bird	After April 22, 2022
Standard Registration	\$140	\$170
Regional Commission	\$100	\$130
PlanFirst Community (for first two registrants)	FREE	FREE

Scholarships for attendance are available through the GA Planning Association's Denise Abboud Fund. SGRC Planning staff are available at 229.333.5277 to answer any questions.

Geographic Information Services (GIS)

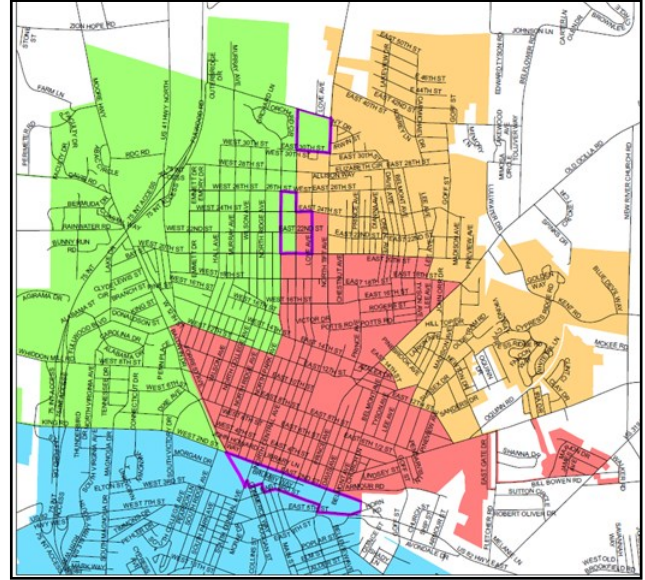
SGRC GIS Assists Local Governments with Redistricting Efforts

In late 2021, the GIS team began assistance across the region with redistricting efforts. That assistance included providing hard copy maps, conducting analysis, and the creation of our Census\Redistricting HUB site. GIS staff also attended meetings to help communities review potential changes prior to submission to legislators for inclusion in the 2022 session.

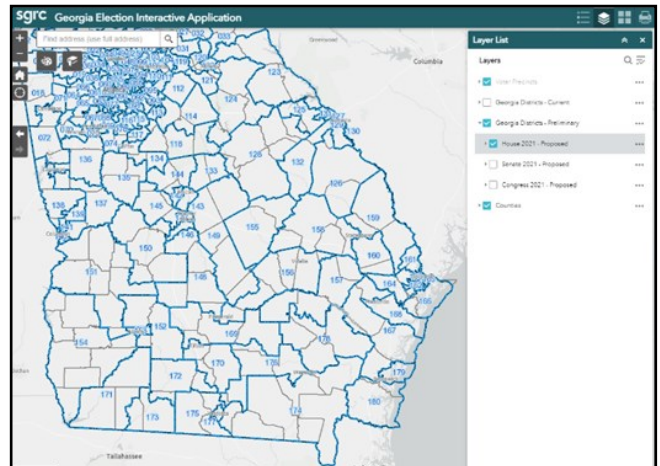
In early 2022, elections offices across the region began validation of addresses in the new districts for respective communities. Each address must be reviewed in the state database, and GIS provided a useful visual tool to conduct this inventory. To accomplish this, many offices requested the creation of interactive web maps for their communities.

- The Census and Redistricting Information Hub can be found at: <https://www.sgrcmaps.com/RedistrictingInfoHub>
- “How To” video (7 min): <https://youtube/XMGFwebaaiE>

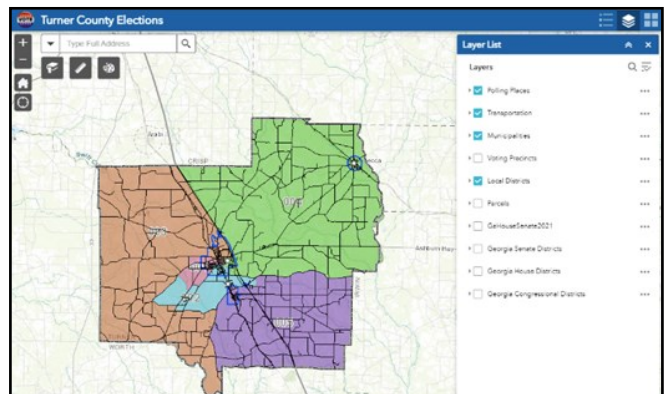
For more information on GIS services, contact GIS Director Rachel Strom at rstrom@sgrc.us.



Tifton City Council Districts—Plan 1



Georgia Election Interactive Application



Turner County Elections

Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

Senior Centers Celebrate St. Patrick's Day 2022!



Berrien Senior Center

Happy  **St. Patrick's Day** 



Lanier Senior Center



Bacon County Senior Center



Bacon County Senior Center



Area Agency on Aging (AAA)



Shawn Taylor, Lead Program Manager, with Simone Popham and Linda Gail, Program Managers

SGRC-AAA Division Named First in the State for Administration of SFMNP Benefits

SGRC-AAA Division Director Scott Courson is extremely pleased to announce that the AAA's Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2021 was awarded a First Place Platinum Certificate of Achievement acknowledging the AAA for serving the highest number of SFMNP participants in Georgia.

The SGRC-AAA issued and redeemed a total of 2,703 vouchers during the 2021 market season and as a result, the program served triple the number of participants as the previous year. The AAA staff who administered the SFMNP include: Shawn Taylor, Lead Program Manager, and Linda Gail and Simone Popham, Program Managers. The upcoming SFMNP program will begin in May 2022 and continue through September. Each person age 60 and older who qualifies for the program will receive \$30 worth of fresh fruits and vegetables from a SFMNP approved farmer. Lead Program Manager Shawn Taylor said that she hopes to serve even more seniors in the region in the coming market season.

For more information on the SFMNP, please contact Shawn Taylor at 912-285-6097. For further information about the SFMNP, please visit their website at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/senior-farmersmarket-nutrition-program-sfmnp>.

Small Business Lending

SGRC Small Business Lending Program Welcomes Lance Wilcher

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission Lending Department would like to welcome Lance Wilcher as the newest member of the team. He was hired on February 16th, 2022 as a Loan Officer to eventually assume the responsibility of Director of Lending. Lance's job duties include marketing and servicing the Small Business Administration and Revolving Loan Fund Programs to private sector lenders and potential borrowers. He will also assist lenders and borrowers with the application process and information gathering, determining eligibility requirements, providing underwriting and credit analysis for loan requests, and presenting loan requests to the SGRC Loan Board for approval.



Lance Wilcher

Lance has been in the Valdosta community for 28 years moving from Soperton, a small rural town in middle Georgia. He graduated from Valdosta State University in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Sports Medicine followed by a Masters of Education degree with an emphasis in Health and Physical Education in 1999. Before coming to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, Lance spent of 21+ years in the healthcare industry in business development and marketing. Prior to healthcare, Lance spent two years with Georgia Power Company in residential sales and marketing.

Lance has been happily married to Sandra Wilcher for 26 years and has two children, Abigail and Reid.



**COVID-19
Vaccine Appointment**

1-888-457-0186

www.gagetsit.com

Transportation and Environmental

Partnership for Bikeability Study in Southern Georgia's Region 11

Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), Valdosta State University (VSU) and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) are all partnering to form a collaborative team to assess roadway bikeability conditions and develop an index of potential improvements for all city and county-owned roads within the SGRC 18-county region. SGRC and VSU will work closely together throughout the project, which is expected to last two years. Students from Valdosta State University will be in the field to collect the data and develop the potential improvements list. The Transportation Department staff of SGRC will monitor the project progress and review data and proposals.



*VSU Students visit SGRC to initiate
Bikeability Project March 2022*

The purpose of the study is to determine how safe and convenient it is for bicyclists to utilize streets and roads throughout the 18-county region and to suggest improvements to make the conditions better. Safety is the main focus of the study, but other factors such as comfort, convenience, and connectivity will be considered. The project is expected to begin in March 2022 and continue until August 2023. The study will allow SGRC to work closely with its local governments in the region to produce a list of prioritized improvements that each community can draw from when seeking funding from a renewed regional sales tax, as well as other state and federal funding sources.

In addition to the list of improvements for each government, SGRC and VSU will work to develop ways to communicate the Roadway Bikeability Index and Roadway Improvement data to the public through online maps, printed maps, and traditional and social media channels in order to make the public more aware of safe and reliable options for leisure and work-related bicycling infrastructure throughout the 18-county region.

Workforce Development

South Georgia Healthcare Summit a Great Success

On Wednesday, February 23rd, WorkSource Southern Georgia held the 2nd Annual Healthcare Summit in Tifton at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center. This event was a collaborative effort with WorkSource South-west Georgia as the two regions work to build the Healthcare sector pathway for South Georgia. With 175 registrants, the four-hour event was a tremendous success. Local employers shared their successes and challenges concerning workforce. Attendees had the opportunity to offer insights on a multitude of topics in small round table discussions. The event con-



Moments from the South Georgia Healthcare Summit

cluded with local highlights from innovative partners and the resources they have to support those entering the healthcare pathway. SGRC Workforce Development Director Roberta Lovett said, “We would like to thank everyone who attended the South Georgia Healthcare Summit and made it a success!” For anyone who could not attend the event, it may be viewed on the WorkSource Southern Georgia YouTube channel by visiting <https://youtu.be/46c4zJUvTe4>. Thank you to the Technical College System of Georgia, Office of Workforce Development for being onsite to film the event.

For questions about WorkSource Southern Georgia or the South Georgia Healthcare Group, or to learn how to be involved in this work, please contact Amy Jones at ajones@sgrc.us.

Community Resource

State of Georgia Rental Assistance Program



State of GA Rental Assistance Program
Visit GeorgiaRentalAssistance.ga.gov to Apply!

What is GRA?

The State of Georgia received **\$552 million under ERA1** and an additional **\$437 million under ERA2** from the U.S. Treasury's Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program. The funds are used to provide relief to individuals, families, and landlords whose finances have been negatively impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The funds will be used to bring past-due rent and utility payments current up to 18 months. This program is being administered through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

Eligibility

Who is eligible?

- ✓ Those who qualify for unemployment or have experienced a financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- ✓ Those who demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability
- ✓ Those who have a household income at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) with priority given to households below 50% of the AMI



Renter households that receive a monthly federal subsidy (e.g. Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, Project Based Section 8). Program eligibility is limited to the tenant's portion of the rent.

Who is not eligible?



Those who have a household income above 80% of the AMI



Those who cannot show a COVID-19 hardship or risk of homelessness or housing instability through an eviction notice or a past-due rent statement

THE GEORGIA RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IS NOW PROVIDING FUNDING STATEWIDE

How to Apply?

To submit an application, please visit GeorgiaRentalAssistance.ga.gov.

For questions regarding your application, please email rentalassistance@dca.ga.gov.

Scan here for more information:



BLOG



WEBSITE



FAQ

Contact the SGRC

SGRC Council 2022 Meeting Schedule

Meeting Locations TBD

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)



**SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION**

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)**