

In the REGION

Seven Southern Georgia Communities Awarded over \$12.8 Million In Grant Funds to Improve Neighborhood Assets

On May 18, Governor Brian P. Kemp announced preliminary grant awards totaling more than \$225 million for 142 qualified projects that improve neighborhood assets like parks, recreation facilities, sidewalks, and healthy food access in communities across the state disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In accordance with grant requirements, funding will be utilized by eligible nonprofits and local governments for improving or maintaining recreational facilities in Qualified Census Tracts. Funds can also be used for repair or maintenance needs due to significantly greater use of public facilities during the pandemic.

Just over \$12.8 million of grant funds were awarded to local governments in the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's region. Grant funds were awarded to the Counties of Ben Hill, Clinch, and Coffee; and the Cities of Douglas, Nashville, Valdosta, and Waycross. The follow-

ing is a description of the awards in Southern Georgia:

1. City of Douglas - \$693,640 – Improvements to Roundtree Park
2. City of Douglas - \$1,684,207 – Construction of recreational facilities at Huckaby Sports Complex



Site for additional soccer fields in Coffee County

continued on 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

Seven Southern Georgia Communities Awarded over \$12.8 Million In Grant Funds to Improve Neighborhood Assets (continued)

3. City of Nashville - \$637,386 – Creation of walking trail loop extension of GDOT TEA Trailhead
4. City of Valdosta - \$243,897 – Upgrades to playground equipment at Olympic Park
5. City of Valdosta - \$1,152,800 – Upgrades to Scott Park facilities
6. City of Valdosta - \$1,665,400 – Upgrades to Vallotton Park
7. City of Waycross - \$2,200,000 – Improvements to Bailey Street Park, Garlington Park, & Elizabeth Park
8. Ben Hill County - \$740,309 – Construction of new recreation complex
9. Clinch County - \$1,633,495 – Improvements to Homerville-Clinch County Recreation Park
10. Coffee County - \$2,200,000 – Development of additional soccer fields

The Southern Georgia RC's Community & Economic Development Division prepared six of the ten approved grant applications in this region.



Site of Walking Trail Loop Extension in Nashville



Roundtree Park in Douglas

continued on next page

Community and Economic Development

Seven Southern Georgia Communities Awarded over \$12.8 Million In Grant Funds to Improve Neighborhood Assets (continued)



Huckaby Sports Complex in Douglas



Demolition of existing building and construction of new recreation complex in Ben Hill County



Homerville-Clinch County Recreation Park

Workforce Development



Pictured left to right; Committee members Jason Van Nus, Lowndes High School; Charmaine Glenn, WGTC; Christie Moore, Valdosta Lowndes Chamber; Seth Brown, Family Connections-Lowndes; and Amy Jones, SGRC. Blocked: Brian Gerber, VSU Steam Center

WorkSource Southern Georgia Staff Presents at Lowndes Workforce Development and Education Committee Meeting

On Thursday, May 18, Amy Jones, Business Services Program Manager, presented to the Lowndes Workforce Development and Education Committee. This group's focus is to be a catalyst, connector, cultivator, and champion for regional prosperity. The Valdosta Lowndes Chamber does this by bringing together expert voices and leaders of proven experience as part of the effort to strengthen support for their local schools, businesses, and organizations. The purpose of the committee is to provide the Chamber with a well-informed, collaborative, and unified approach to community engagement on education and workforce issues. The group is comprised of the leadership with the Development Authority, CTAE/Work-Based Learning from both districts, Family Connections Partnership, Moody AFB SkillBridge, Valdosta State Univers -

ity, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College, and the Valdosta Lowndes Chamber of Commerce.

Amy gave an overview of the various services offered by the SGRC and how the leadership can share with the community the mission to, "Develop, promote, and provide services that make the Southern Georgia region a better place to live and work." She also went into detail about the newest QUEST grant awarded to the Workforce Development division and how WorkSource Southern Georgia can assist employers who are willing to train new hires who lack the skills necessary for the job.

To learn more about WorkSource Southern Georgia, including information on presenting to an organization, contact Amy Jones at ajones@sgrc.us or visit www.sgrc.us/workforce.html.

Workforce Development



Tasha Bell



Nancy James

Workforce Development Welcomes New Employees

The SGRC welcomes Tasha Bell to the Workforce Development Division as a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program Coordinator.

Tasha previously worked for Lewis & Raulerson, Inc./Friendly Express for twenty-four years and has experience as an administrative professional, Accounts Payable Manager, and Lead Payroll Specialist.

Tasha was born and raised in Waycross and loves living in a small town. She enjoys being outdoors, doing yard work, hunting and fishing with her husband, and spending time with her family and friends.

Welcome, Tasha!

The SGRC welcomes Nancy James to the Workforce Development Division as a WIOA Program Assistant.

Nancy previously worked at South Georgia State College in the Registrar's office and as a Behavioral Therapist for children with autism. She is working towards a Bachelor's Degree of Science in Psychology at Valdosta State University and is a member of the National Society of Leadership and Success (Valdosta Chapter).

Nancy lives in Waycross with her husband James, their cat Karma, and her sister, Rebecca. She enjoys reading, being around animals, and spending time with friends and family.

Welcome, Nancy!

Area Agency on Aging

sgrc

SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

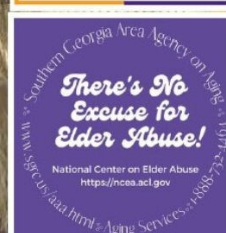
1-888-73AGING or

1-888-732-4464

www.sgrc.us/aaa.html

2023 World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

*Thank you for taking a stand
with us against elder abuse!*



Area Agency on Aging



Planning & Transportation

Brooks County Kicks Off Community Heart & Soul Program

Last year, during the Brooks County Comprehensive Plan update process, Brooks County officials requested an additional (fourth) workshop regarding economic development issues. Further interest resulted in a county-wide economic development campaign by the Brooks County Development Authority. After several quarterly meetings under the leadership of Development Authority Executive Director Stephanie Williams, Director of Small Business Development, Jayme Coody, and Advisor Jerome Tucker, the group decided to embrace the Community Heart and Soul program. Jim Manning of Heart & Soul came to Brooks County from South Carolina and introduced the program to the group in February 2023.



Brooks Economic Summit at Brooks County Board of Education

Community Heart and Soul is a resident-driven process that engages the entire population of a town or county in identifying what they love about their community, what future they want for it, and how to achieve it. The program is a national, four-phase, step-by-step process that brings residents together to identify and honor the unique character of their town and the emotional connection of the people who live there. It is a formal, ongoing program that is led by a Community Heart & Soul Mentor and is based on three major principles: 1. Involve everyone; 2. Focus on what matters; 3. Play the long game.

Community Heart and Soul originated in Vermont with the Vermont Country Store owner Lyman Orton who was on the local planning commission witnessing large, future-shaping, decisions being made without local community input. He put together a process for community input and participation over ten years ago which has grown into the Community Heart & Soul program utilized and proven successful in over 100 cities and towns.

Heart & Soul will encompass Brooks County as a whole involving not only the County, but the cities of Barwick, Morven, Pavo, and Quitman as well. Citizens and local officials will work together to devise a plan focusing on growth and improvement potential while preserving the great attributes enjoyed by the local citizens.

Geographic Information Services (GIS)

GARC GIS Provides Annexation Assistance per HB 1385

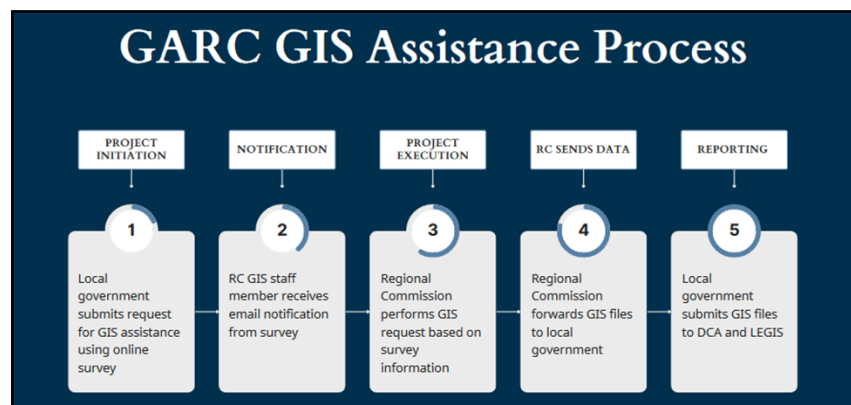
Georgia House Bill 1385 requires all local governments that annex or de-annex property after July 1, 2022 to submit a digital GIS file of the changes to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Office of Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment. Communities may request assistance from SGRC GIS, or their respective Regional Commission. Please be aware that, as a result of this new legislation, statute now provides that no annexed area shall be added to the state map until such report has been properly submitted. The state map of boundaries is used in all state & federal funding formulas. An inaccurate map at the state level may result in dismissal of grant applications, and a reduction in other funding requests. These same boundaries are reflected in Census data, and are used in electoral delineations as well.

To help with communication, GARC GIS has developed a survey for requesting assistance. This survey allows for any community across the state to request assistance, regardless of location. Assistance request is found at <https://georgia-annexation-reporting-garc.hub.arcgis.com/>

Or, Scan the QR code, with cell phone:



Once notified, the SGRC will create the needed GIS files and return them to the local government for submission. The GARC GIS Assistance Process is as follows:



For more information on the annex process go to: www.sgrcmaps.com/GARCAnnexBrochure.pdf

For questions about projects or how the SGRC GIS Division can help, contact Director Rachel Strom at rstrom@sgrc.us.

Small Business Lending

SGRC Small Business Lending Program Assists South Georgia Furniture, Mattress, & Appliance with SBA 504 Loan

South Georgia Furniture, Mattress, & Appliance has operated successfully in Albany since 2014. The business is located at 910 W. Broad Avenue and has quickly outgrown the space. They specialize in budget friendly new and used furniture and appliances in the Albany area.

Nate Borer bought an existing mattress store at this location in 2014 with plans to obtain furniture suppliers to expand. Early on, he obtained Ashley Furniture as a supplier and has since added several more.



South Georgia Furniture, Mattress, & Appliance, located at 1461 US Highway 19 South in Leesburg, GA

Borer brought a team oriented approach to the business and staff and implemented several programs and initiatives to better serve customers. When the opportunity came this year to purchase a building in Leesburg to expand and better utilize space, Borer was anxious to pursue it.

Borer sought funding to purchase the building, and reached out to the SGRC for assistance. He was interested in the low fixed rate offered by the SBA 504 loan program and sought out Renasant bank to be the participating bank and facilitate the loan. The SBA approved the financing and provided 40% of the funds at a low, fixed rate for 20 years, while Renasant Bank provided 50% of the funds in participation. Borer added 10% as a down payment. With this project, South Georgia Furniture, Mattress, & Appliance created 2 more jobs. The new store's location is 1461 US Highway 19, South in Leesburg, GA.

For more information on the SBA 504 Loan Program, contact Lance Wilcher, SGRC Lending Program Director at (229) 333-5277.

SGRC Regional News

Georgia Department of Community Affairs Launches Rural Workforce Housing Initiative

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has announced the newly established Rural Workforce Housing Initiative would soon begin taking applications. The initiative, announced in Gov. Brian Kemp's State of the State address in January 2023, is meant to spur the development of critically needed workforce housing across the state. The Georgia General Assembly approved \$35.7 million to start the initiative in the Amended Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations bill that was signed into law in March 2023.

"Georgia has been blessed to experience incredible growth in recent years, with record jobs and investment coming to communities across our state," said Governor Brian Kemp. "This has led to increased need for workforce housing to meet the needs of employees in rural communities. This program is an important step towards meeting that need and ensuring workers are able to live in the communities where they work. I look forward to remaining engaged with our local partners on this issue in the coming months and years."

"This innovative, new initiative helps to address an important aspect of building strong, vibrant communities – housing that is affordable," said DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn.

The Rural Workforce Housing Initiative is a component of the OneGeorgia Authority. Successful grantees will be expected to demonstrate transformational change in workforce housing and must meet OneGeorgia Authority eligibility requirements. Successful applications will demonstrate collaboration between local governments and real estate developers.

The deadline for the first round of applications will be July 14, 2023, for awards to be made in September 2023.

Full details about the Rural Workforce Housing Initiative, including eligibility requirements and deadlines, can be found here <https://www.dca.ga.gov/community-economic-development/funding-programs/onegeorgia-authority/equity-fund-rural-workforce>.



Contact the SGRC

SGRC Council 2023 Meeting Schedule

~ July- No Meeting ~

August 24, 2023 – 11:00 am
SGRC Waycross Office

September 28, 2023 – 11:00 am
The Venue in Pearson

~ October- No Meeting ~

*Area Officials Appreciation Dinner
October 26, 2023 (subject to change)

~ November- No meeting ~
(combined with December meeting)

December 7, 2023 – 11:00 am
SGRC Valdosta Office
(subject to change)



**SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION**

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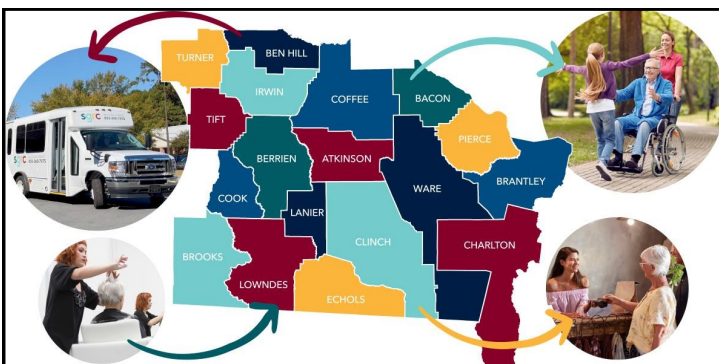
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sgrc | REGIONAL TRANSIT

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