



# **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Regional Plan 2022 - 2026**



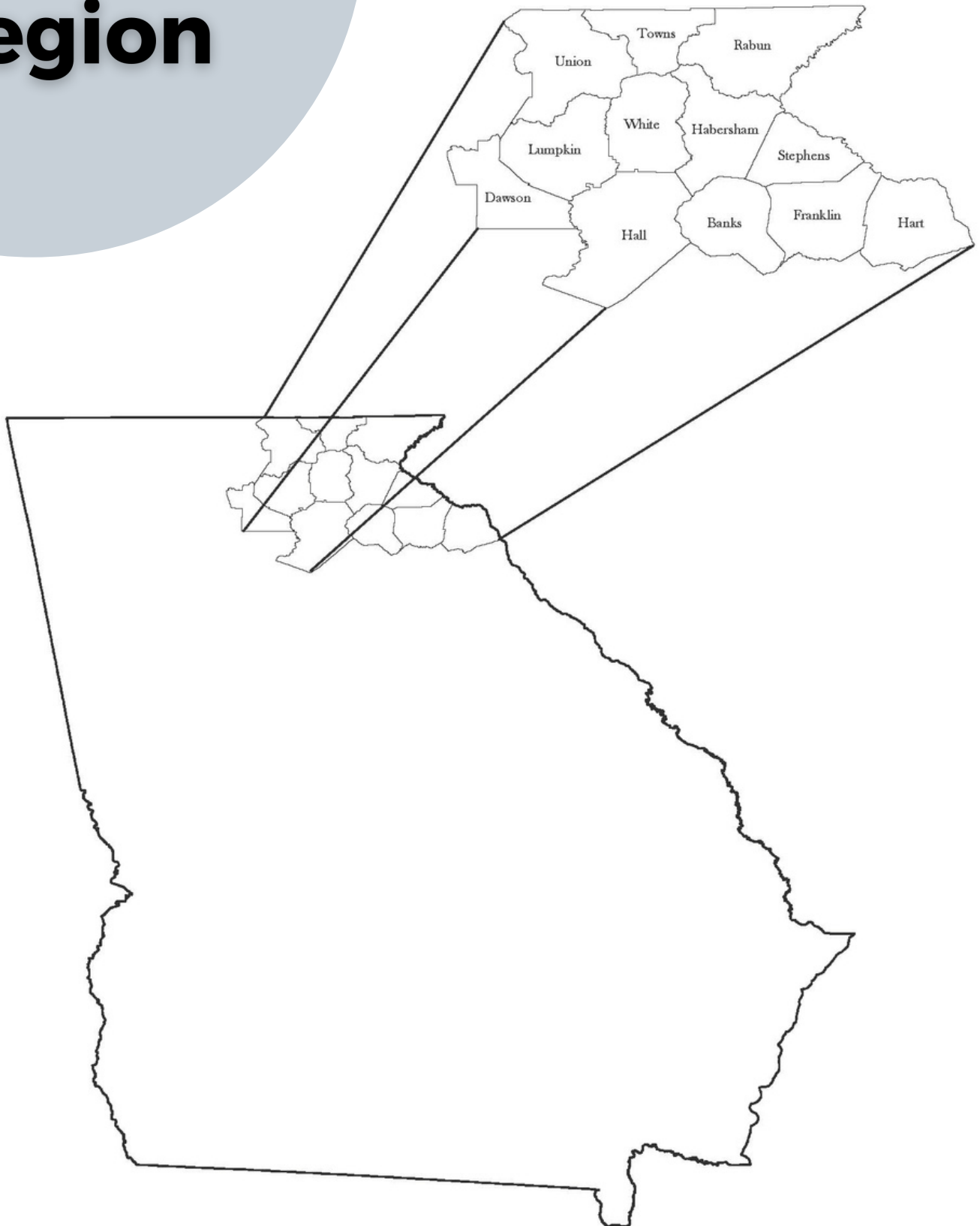
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## **Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Mission Statement:**

*To serve the local governments of  
the Georgia Mountains Region by  
improving the quality  
of life through economic  
development, community planning,  
information technology, and  
workforce development to support  
and enhance the region's prosperity.*

# The Region





# Executive Summary

## WHAT IS CEDS?

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) contributes to effective economic development in America's communities and regions through a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning process. The CEDS provides the capacity-building foundation by which the public sector, working in conjunction with other leaders, creates the environment for regional economic prosperity. This document serves as the five-year plan for the combined CEDS and Regional Plan for the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC).

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

Serving a dual purpose, this document acts as the regional planning instrument required for both federal and state directives. As the region's Economic Development District (EDD) designated by the United States Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration (EDA), the GMRC must develop and maintain an approved CEDS. The CEDS document serves as the region's vision and plan for economic growth and development in advancing the area's economic prosperity and collectively sets forth a coordinated economic strategy for all 12 counties in the Georgia Mountains Region. Likewise, as the area's state designated regional planning agency, the GMRC is responsible for maintaining a Regional Plan in accordance with the rules established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

## WHAT DOES THE DOCUMENT ACCOMPLISH?

This document supports other local and regional efforts and identifies key areas to focus economic development efforts. This is a living, breathing document used by all communities in the region.



# The Process

Both the federal and State planning requirements mandate the GMRC develop and maintain its guidance document through a continuous, comprehensive planning process in conjunction with our member communities and shaped by Advisory Committees. These committees ensure the planning process and the ultimate product are inclusive of public and local government input, focuses on true regional priorities, and addresses the required elements of the respective planning standards.

The CEDS Committee meets regularly each year and plays an integral role in prioritizing economic development projects in the region and endorsing the CEDS Implementation Plan. The Committee also provides a forum for representatives of the private sector, local government elected officials, community colleges, and other economic development stakeholders to offer their views and input on business and workforce development and corresponding elements such as housing and infrastructure. The Regional Plan Advisory Committee (RPAC) met several times throughout the recent planning process. In working with the CEDS Committee, the RPAC meetings emphasized the elements other than economic development and the various local government performance metrics that shape both the region's Excellence Standards and guide the GMRC's Work Program. Due to COVID-19, the CEDS Committee held several meeting both in person and virtually in 2022 to discuss goals, issues and mitigation measures.

## CEDS Committee

John Sell, Chair  
Phyllis Ayers, Vice - Chair  
Mitch Griggs  
Tom O'Bryant  
Dwayne Dye  
Cliff Bradshaw  
Erik Brinke  
Charlie Fiveash  
Charles Cawthon  
Bill Chafin  
Tim Evans

Denise McKay  
Rebecca Mincey  
Brittany Ivey  
Kathy Papa  
Stephanie Ponce  
Annaka Woodruff  
Rick Story  
Leslie McFarlin  
Tonya Powers  
Margaret Ayers \* Honorary Lifetime Member\*

## GMRC Staff

Daniel Martin  
Patrick Larson  
Laurin Yoder  
Adam Hazell  
Whitney Williams





# About the Region

Situated in the northeast corner of Georgia, the Georgia Mountains Region is comprised of 12 counties covering almost 3,200 square miles. At a total estimated population of 495,278, the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission serves the following 12 counties: Banks, Dawson, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, and White and 37 municipalities within these counties.

This region is known for its diverse landscape and business climate. Approximately 463,013 acres of the Chattahoochee National Forest lies within nine of the twelve Georgia Mountain counties. The twelve counties that comprise the Georgia Mountains region are a haven for business and outdoor life. Bordered by two states and the Chattooga River in the east, the Region has a total employment estimated at 276,461, with concentrations in manufacturing, construction, retail and wholesale trade, educational services and tourism.

Kubota, Haring, Diana Food, Mars Wrigley and Fieldale Farms are all located within the Region. The addition of a new inland port, with an anticipated capacity of 200,000 lifts per year, will be connected to the Port of Savannah through a 324-mile intermodal freight rail service. In addition to reducing shipping truck traffic and commuter delays by choosing intermodal rail transportation to and from the ports, the federal investment will also support and promote job growth in Georgia by providing Northeast Georgia companies a quicker and more efficient way to access national and global markets.

Although much of the landscape in the region is rural in nature, busy corridors such as Georgia 400 and Interstates 85 and 985 have been a catalyst for residential and commercial growth. Most residential land use is concentrated around the small towns located throughout the region, with some retirement communities located in the mountain areas of the region.

Tourism equates to over a billion dollar a year industry in the Georgia Mountains Region. Stunning scenery amid Northeast Georgia's gentle peaks and rushing waters makes this region a natural paradise for visitors. Numerous festivals throughout the year, such as Oktoberfest in Helen or the Georgia Mountain Fair in Hiawassee, draw hundreds of thousands of visitors.

The GMRC provides technical assistance to its member governments in the areas of Economic Development, GIS, Human Resources, Planning, Revolving Loan Fund administration, and Workforce Development. For more information on GMRC, visit [www.gmrc.ga.gov](http://www.gmrc.ga.gov).



# CEDS Goals, Challenges, and Strategies

The goals outlined for the Georgia Mountains Region were developed with consideration for the State's planning goals and the aspirations of various State Departments. The overarching aim of these goals is to establish the direction and ambitions that will ensure a prosperous and healthy region.

## **PRIORITY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

In programming to address critical needs and to achieve the region's goals, the following items have been identified as regional priorities for the coming years. Other items remain important and will be addressed as time and resources allow but these particular needs are considered crucial and must be addressed in order to achieve the Regional Plan's goals.

- ✓ Seek ways to support communities dealing with workforce housing issues
- ✓ Work with the State and other partners to aid the expansion and improvement of broadband technology throughout the region
- ✓ Support efforts to expand and improve the provision of transit programs where needed
- ✓ Continue promoting land use and development patterns that preserve the region's environmental integrity and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism
- ✓ Work with local communities pursuing the Camera Ready designation to become eligible and attractive for future film and TV production opportunities
- ✓ Assist all local governments pursuing special tax designations to take full advantage of tools for attracting economic development

## **KEY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS**

The GMRC will pursue several programs, actions, and policies in support of efforts to achieve the region's goals and to support our member communities. The following presents a summary of select strategies and actions that are critical to these efforts. Additional strategies will be discussed throughout the document for each specific plan element.

- Aid in coordinating economic development strategies along the I-85 corridor
- Develop a regional strategy for helping communities attract more affordable workforce housing
- Continue to support the region's tourism sectors and assist every community in promoting their tourism assets
- Develop more/ stronger programs for providing educational resources and forums to our member governments
- Develop a strategy for elevating every member government to the "Excellence" level in terms of Regional Performance Standards.
- Continue to provide capital improvement plans for local government
- Continue to support local governments in ensuring compliance with State standards and requirements, particularly with regard to QLC status and the State Water Plans.
- Assist schools and post-secondary education institutions with refined workforce development to better match employer needs and skillsets of the labor force

## **REGIONAL POLICIES**

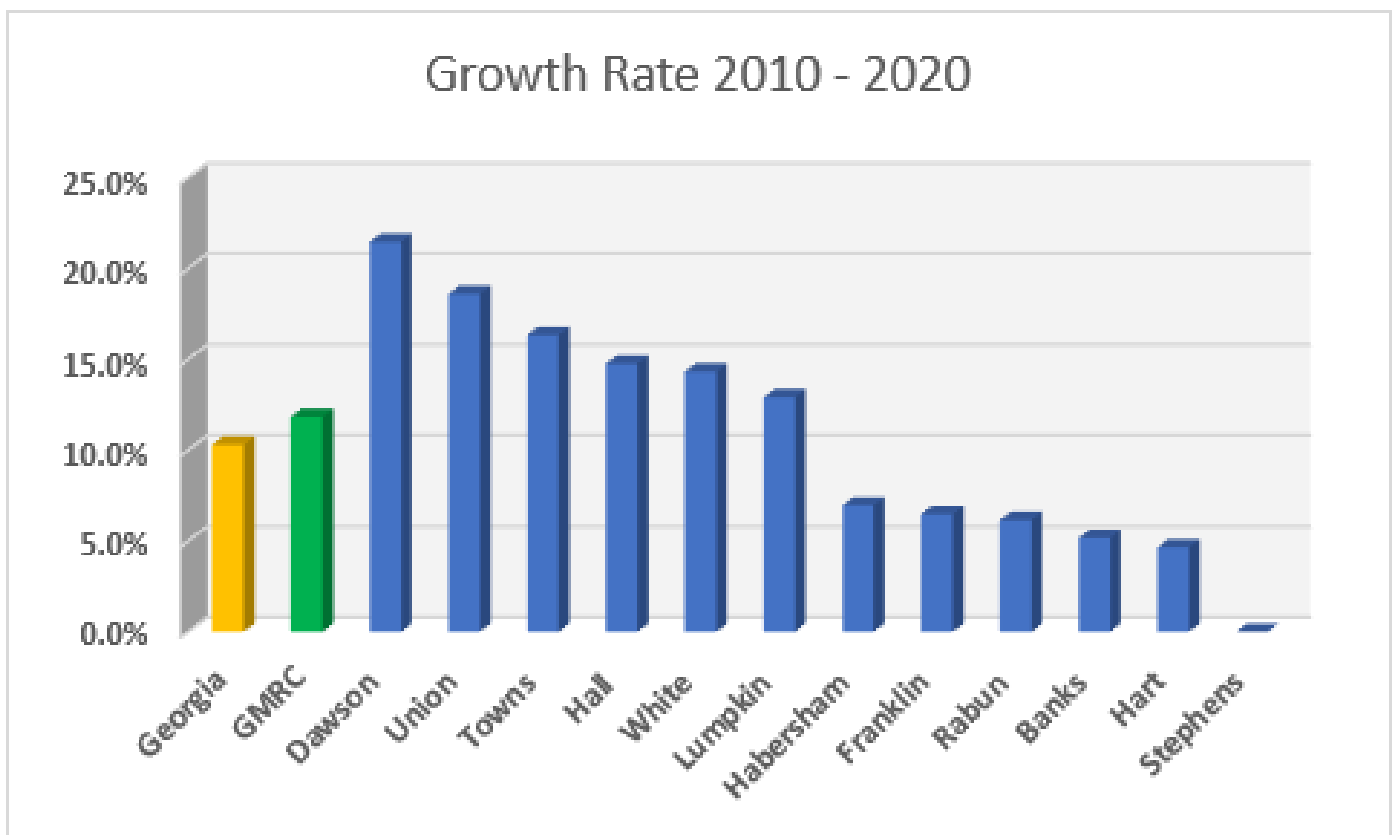
Select policies and values necessary to provide ongoing guidance and direction to regional leaders for making decisions consistent with achieving the Regional Vision or addressing Regional Issues and Opportunities. These policies may include locational factors as well as design and impact considerations and may range from very general statements to specific directives. These principles should be considered anytime a local, state, or federal governmental agency is making decisions regarding investments or development policies within the region.

For the purposes of this document, the principles recommended for the Georgia Mountains Region are represented in the series of Mitigation Strategies for each plan element and in the Coordinated Performance Standards used to identify best practices for local governments. Together these comprise the set of values, ambitions and guidelines reflected throughout the GMRC Regional Plan, and form the basis of proposed decisions and actions needed to achieve the overall Vision. As various local governments, State agencies and other stakeholders are considering actions within the region, they should weigh those actions against the principles and objectives represented by these statements.



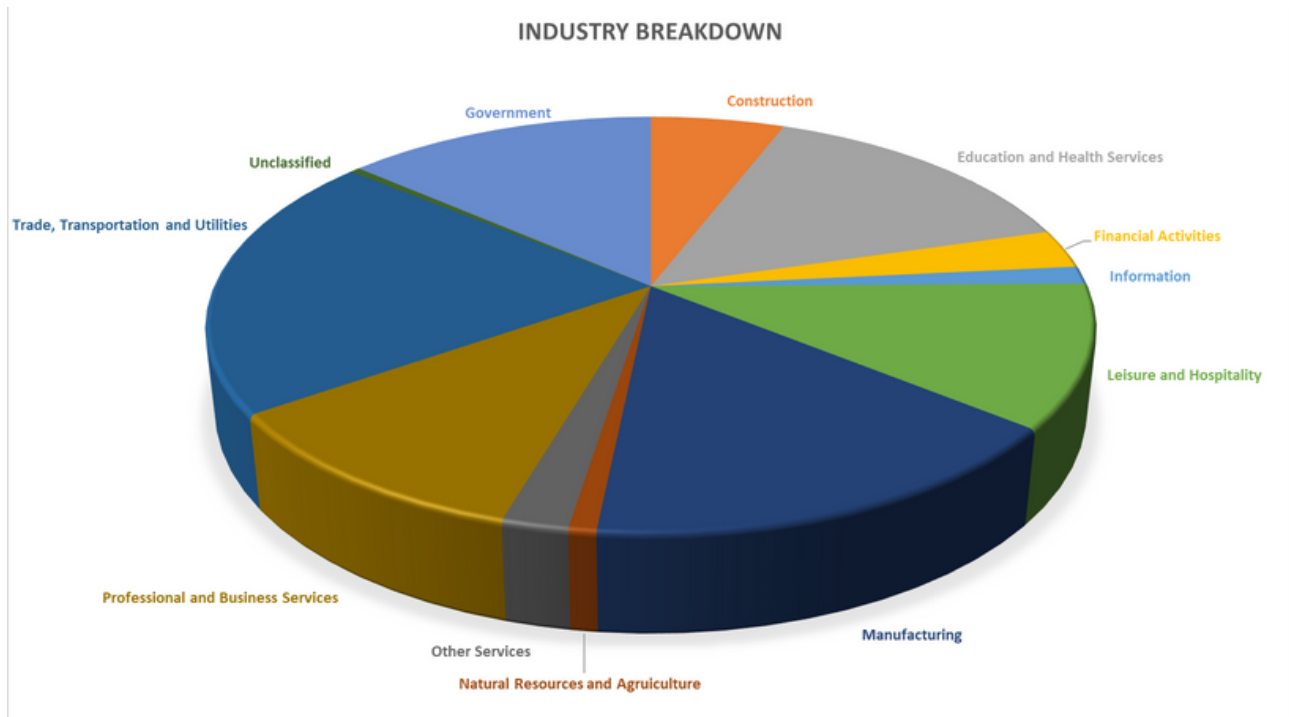
# Regional Assessment

The Georgia Mountains Region continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in the State. The 12-county population grew from **442,973** in 2010 to **495,278** in 2020. In fact, as noted in the table below, all but one county saw significant, positive growth numbers. Key factors that have contributed to this growth include migration patterns from Metro Atlanta, additional industrial growth along I-85 and I-985 and citizens finding new homes in the mountain areas who have the ability to work remotely. Additionally, the Georgia 400 corridor continues to thrive. The addition of Northeast Georgia Medical Center - Lumpkin, renovations to Georgia Premium Outlets and new residential developments are driving new growth in this area.

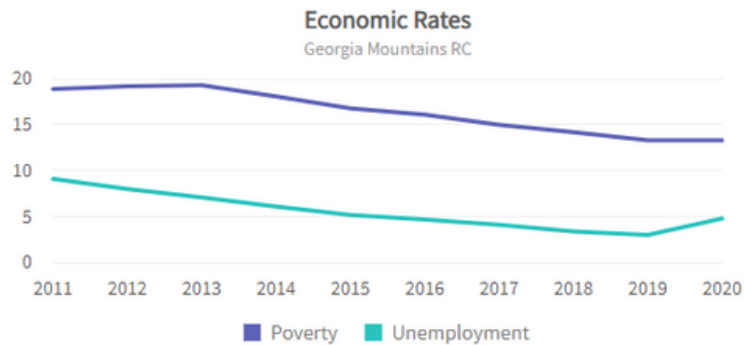




# Employment



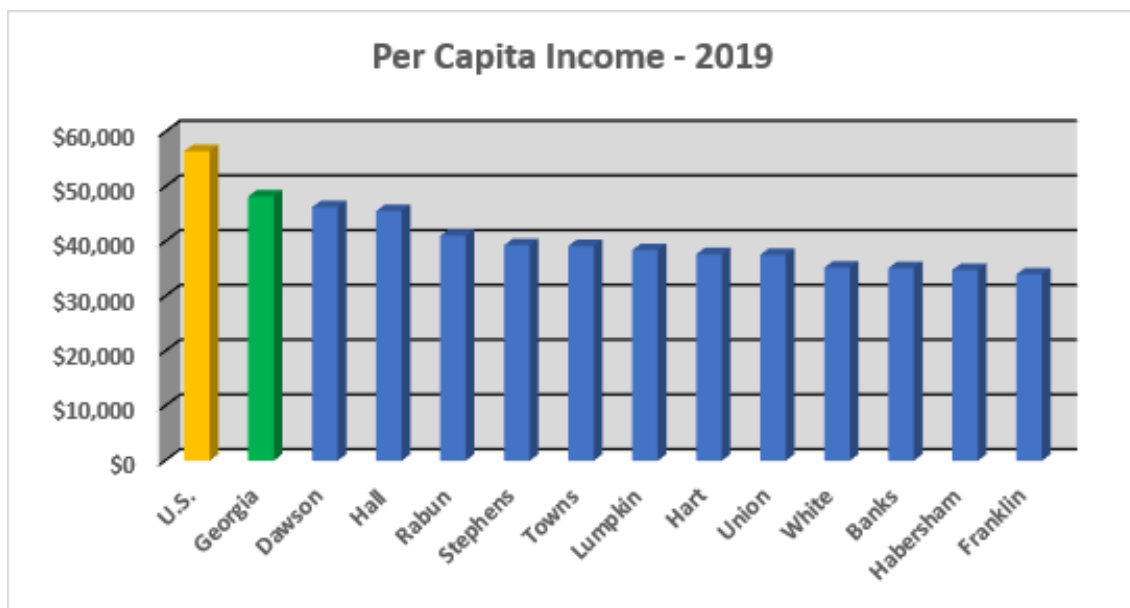
Unemployment in the region continues to be at an all time low. The region had an unemployment rate of 2.8% (June 2022) which is lower than the state rate of 2.9%, and the U.S. rate of 3.8%. It is also the lowest rate for regions across the state. However, there is a noticeable trend of young adults leaving the area. Economic developers in the region have expressed some concerns with the migration of the youth, as well as State educational standards not matching up with industry needs, and these trends causing a shortage of skilled labor. Current efforts are now being implemented to educate, train and encourage the region's youth to remain in the area and contribute to the much-needed workforce.





# Per Capita Income

Though the region has the lowest unemployment rates in the State, per capita income throughout the region is frequently lower than state and national averages. Much of this is rooted in the region's reliance on service industry employment and the volume of businesses that are commercial, and tourist driven, meaning a prevalence of hourly-wage employees and lower demand for high-skilled labor. As a result, for most counties the trend in per capita income has been relatively stable, with only marginal increases.



	2010	2019		2019 PCI as a Percent of Georgia	Change in PCI: 2010-2019
U.S.	\$40,547	\$56,490	U.S.	117.1%	39.3%
Georgia	\$34,521	\$48,236	Georgia	100.0%	39.7%
	2010	2019			
Dawson	\$31,097	\$46,278	Dawson	95.9%	48.8%
Hall	\$30,562	\$45,576	Hall	94.5%	49.1%
Rabun	\$30,004	\$41,058	Rabun	85.1%	36.8%
Stephens	\$28,510	\$39,335	Stephens	81.5%	38.0%
Towns	\$28,055	\$39,181	Towns	81.2%	39.7%
Lumpkin	\$27,180	\$38,450	Lumpkin	79.7%	41.5%
Hart	\$27,635	\$37,701	Hart	78.2%	36.4%
Union	\$28,459	\$37,588	Union	77.9%	32.1%
White	\$26,049	\$35,238	White	73.1%	35.3%
Banks	\$25,336	\$35,151	Banks	72.9%	38.7%
Habersham	\$26,449	\$34,831	Habersham	72.2%	31.7%
Franklin	\$26,967	\$34,017	Franklin	70.5%	26.1%



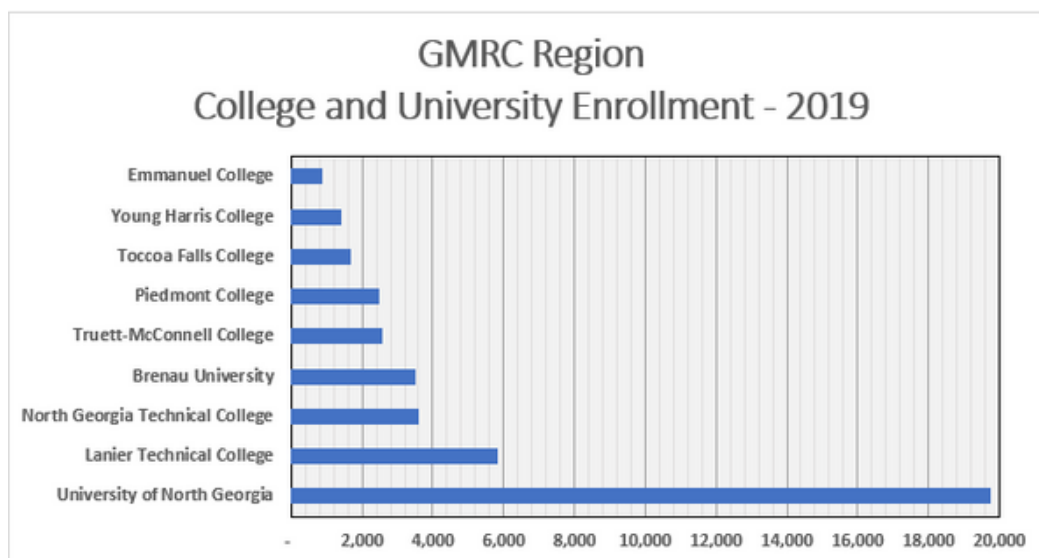
# Education

The Georgia Mountains Region is fortunate to have quality educational institutions offering a wide spectrum of programs. In fact, several colleges and technical colleges provide customized training and other services for business and industry to help existing companies remain in the area and succeed.

UNG had an economic impact of nearly \$720 million on northeast Georgia during fiscal year 2020, according to the annual study of the University System of Georgia. The impact includes \$692 million in spending and jobs and an additional \$27 million impact attributed to capital construction projects.

Lanier Technical College continues to focus on workforce development with an apprenticeship program partnership combining class time and on the job training (OJT) in the fields of Mechatronics, Industrial Maintenance, Machining, Welding and Quality Assurance. The workforce development program has expanded to 20 small businesses through the Appalachian Regional Commission grant and is a pilot program for the Technical College System of Georgia.

For the fourth consecutive year, North Georgia Technical College has earned the number one ranking as Best Medical Assistant Program in Georgia by the online resource Medical Assistant Advice.



## Education of the Labor Force

### Georgia Mountains RC

	PERCENT OF TOTAL	PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGE				
		18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
Elementary	7.5%	4.9%	9.2%	6.4%	5.3%	13.6%
Some High School	11.8%	19.5%	11.9%	9.2%	9.4%	14.8%
High School Grad/GED	30.8%	34.9%	29.7%	27.3%	31.7%	31.2%
Some College	20.8%	33.7%	20.4%	18.4%	20.2%	16.6%
College Grad 2 Yr	5.9%	3.0%	6.3%	7.2%	7.1%	3.6%
College Grad 4 Yr	15.6%	3.7%	16.0%	22.3%	17.0%	12.2%
Post Graduate Studies	7.6%	0.4%	6.5%	9.2%	9.3%	8.0%
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Totals are based on the portion of the labor force between ages 18 - 65+. Some College category represents workers with some college with no degree less than two years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2010 Decennial Census



# What Drives The Region?

## Tourism

Lake Lanier is a highly sought after recreation destination. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recorded an astounding **13 million** visitors to Lake Lanier parks during the summer of 2020.

## Film Production

There have been **29** TV/Film productions in the Region since 2007.

## Manufacturing/ Distribution

In FY22, **1,357** jobs were created resulting in over **\$893 Million** in capital investment.





Regional Farm Gate Value:  
**\$1.2 Billion**

Total Economic Impact:  
**\$7.8 Billion**


\*2020 UGA Extension Service  
Reports

# Agribusiness



## Small Business

The **GMRC Revolving Loan Fund** has been a catalyst for growing small businesses in the Region. Pictured here, Debra Taylor who owns Twelve South Art Gallery in Hartwell has successfully utilized this program to expand her business.



Worksource Georgia Mountains served **447** individuals in FY21. Of those, **90.7%** were employed one year after exiting the program.

## Dedicated Workforce



# SWOT Analysis

In early 2022, the GMRC conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis survey with CEDS committee members and GMRC councilmembers. It helps answer the question, “Where are we now?” by identifying critical internal and external factors that speak to the region’s unique assets that we can leverage to maximize the economic potential of the Georgia Mountains Region.

Further, the committee also examined Economic Resiliency to ensure that every community has a strategy and resources in place that specifically directs how to respond in economic recessions and/or when major employment centers are lost. It is essential that all communities have access to, and are aware of, resources providing economic forecasts for their region, county and, where possible, municipality. As outlined in Pre-Disaster mitigation below, proper chain of communication regarding economic concerns and being able to identify resources, providers and services for implementing economic crisis response actions are important.

## Strengths

1. Continued Growth
2. Education
3. Workforce
4. Quality of Life
5. Natural Resources

## Weaknesses

1. Housing
2. Workforce Availability
3. Infrastructure
4. Inventory of available buildings and land
5. Economic Diversification

## Opportunities

1. Industrial and retail development
2. Infrastructure Development (Water & Sewer)
3. Tourism
4. Workforce Training Opportunities
5. Transportation Infrastructure

## Threats

1. Leadership - local, political, opportunities
2. Resistance to change
3. Inflation/Costs of goods
4. Workforce challenges
5. Infrastructure Capacity

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Over the course of FY 22, the Georgia Mountains CEDS committee discussed the need to evaluate diversity, equity and inclusion strategies for the Region. Many studies have shown that successfully incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace leads to a greater talent pool, increased profitability, superior innovation, higher retention and lower turnover.

As a newer EDA investment priority, the CEDS committee discussed what inclusive economic development meant for their respective communities. Additionally, the group examined the obstacles to equity in their communities. Equity means something different to everyone and the committee is committed toward weaving this principle into the goals listed in the pages below.



## **What does inclusive economic development mean for your community? Opportunities?**

- Alliances with other minority groups and chambers
- Developing relationships and trust
- Leadership Capacity Building
- Opportunities for Home-Based businesses to allow all income levels to start and grow businesses
- Internet allowing access in rural communities
- Affordable housing, allowing workers to live where they work
- Pre-plan and come up with consistent zoning

## **What are your obstacles to embedding equity into your community or area of work?**

- Awareness and education of the demographic and socioeconomic groups targeted as well as generational societal factors
- Silos and turf protection
- Trying something new, levels of distrust, unwillingness to expand levels of influence
- Affordable Childcare
- Affordable Housing
- Transportation Access





## GOAL 1

# Natural and Cultural Resources

***GOAL: To conserve, protect and promote the environmental, natural and cultural resources of the region.***

The Georgia Mountains Region is one rich with natural resources, scenic beauty, and cultural assets that define the characters of each community. Growth and change have come to the region over the years, but those changes have been shaped by the land and incorporated into the fabric of historic communities cherished by residents and visitors alike. The result is a blending of features old and new, natural and cosmopolitan, giving rise to a region that harnesses these assets for posterity and future prosperity.

As the namesake implies, the Georgia Mountains Region is shaped by the Appalachian topography. The mountains and rivers, especially, are strong assets for tourism, outdoor recreation, and sources for public water. Several reservoirs populate the region, as well as the most park space and national forest of any region in Georgia. Because of the importance of these resources to every community the need to preserve the quality and quantity of area water resources is considered vital.

Amidst these settings, local cultural resources, and historic sites in particular, help provide the character of many GMRC communities. From town squares and main streets to rural farmsteads and fabled churches, these resources establish the small-town charm and rustic feel that gives each town and city their appeal, driving local economies and shaping how the residents connect with their past. Preserving key structures and properties, as well as building upon the established character of these districts and communities, will ensure the future of the region is one in harmony with everything that defines the area.

As one of Georgia's 12 regional government agencies, the GMRC is in a position to assist with local resource planning, protection, and promotion. The GMRC provides these services and technical assistance directly to its counties and municipalities as well as developing regional initiatives and supporting the programs of various State Departments, including the Department of Natural Resources which oversees the State's water resource planning, and the State Historic Preservation Office. The following represents a list of new key natural and cultural resource issues raised during the 2022 planning process:

- Continued support for small town centers, via economic development, compatible infill policies, adaptive reuse, and stronger pedestrian networks.
- Broader communication and education about the State's water planning efforts and initiatives, especially as pertaining to permit compliance.
- Status updates on Lake Lanier contamination issues and efforts to mitigate nutrient infiltration.
- Increased interest in greenspace planning and how local communities can effectively develop green infrastructure.

## **Mitigation Strategies**

### **Continue improving awareness about conservation design, environmentally sensitive areas, and best management practices**

- Conduct/Facilitate a workshop on conservation design
- Maintain a catalog of best environmental policies for local governments
- Promote environmental BMPs within Excellence Standards

### **Need to foster more local greenspace plans**

- Develop template for greenspace planning to be incorporated into local comprehensive plans
- Help local communities develop inventories of available greenspace
- Promote environmental BMPs within Excellence Standards

### **Need to address habitat degradation caused by growth and development**

- Foster more local greenspace plans
- Encourage redevelopment in underused areas and brownfields instead of new development in greenfields
- Develop regional development build-out scenario
- Develop report on status of dams in the region
- Inventory/ Assessment of septic system management programs

### **Support implementation of applicable Water Planning District management plans**

- Develop Regional Source Water Assessment Plan
- Annually report to GMRC Council status of programs with each Water Planning Council

### **Promote the knowledge and preservation of existing historic resources**

- Update GNAHRGIS, survey of regional historic resources, and promote the CLG Historic Preservation Fund Grant (SHPO) and Findit (UGA) programs to accomplish this.
- Promote historic preservation BMPs within Excellence Standards
- Convene annual GMRC Historic Resource Forum and offer individual and group training sessions to stakeholders.
- Promote available economic development incentives (tax credits, grants, etc.) and programs to stakeholders.





## GOAL 2

# Land Use

***GOAL: To promote and coordinate land use planning and management that supports the other goals and ambitions for the region.***

Land use management is best understood as the overlap of how local governments make the most of their investment in capital improvements while also preserving area resources. Given the structure of Georgia's land use laws this craft will always prove imperfect, but the ambition is to ensure the wise use of funds while influencing development enough that communities can lure more of what they want where they want it, while minimizing the impacts of unintended development. This effort ensures communities can mitigate the consequences of change and growth, growing in a fashion more harmonious with existing character.

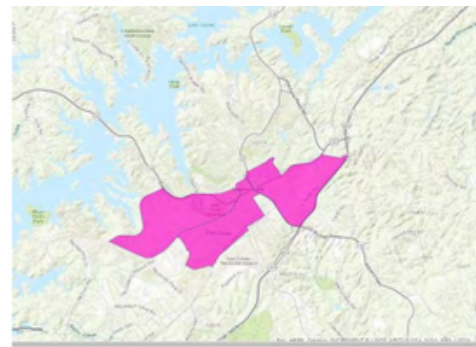
The GMRC's role in land use planning is to support wise land use management with local governments by confirming they have quality data, an understanding of prevalent trends, issues, and laws that can impact development in their communities, and to facilitate their coordination with State Departments in matters concerning resource protection and infrastructure development. In this way the GMRC helps ensure each community is making decisions with the best information possible and is better positioned to achieve its goals for future development.

This is critical given the rapid pace of growth occurring in the Georgia Mountains Region. Counties and municipalities alike are seeking to balance their desire to preserve rural character and pastoral charm while simultaneously working to enable economic prosperity. Though many communities remain small, the influx of new residents has been enough to change some local business patterns, particularly in creating new opportunities for tourism (wineries, outdoor adventures) and in the ability of more residents to work from home. As businesses and home builders seek to accommodate new residents, this leads to infrastructure development to meet the changing demands for things like roads, schools, and emergency services. The presence of preeminent institutions such as the Northeast Georgia Medical Center and the various universities and colleges means the region has the elements in place to attract more residents and businesses seeking urban-scale amenities within a more scenic and rural setting.

As part of local efforts to help improve economic expansion and development potential in depressed areas, Cities and Counties are now taking advantage of the federal and State designations for Opportunity Zones, Enterprise Zones, and Rural Zones. Each of these provides a different option in tax breaks for either property redevelopment or the provision of new jobs within impoverished areas. These tools will aid communities looking to jump start private investment in weaker areas that need assistance in luring jobs and commercial development. Communities that put these measures in place can use the designated districts to spur economic expansion in accordance with their overall visions for revitalizing poorer neighborhoods.

The Federal Qualified Opportunity Zone distinction was created by The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to spur economic growth in low-income communities by allowing investors to defer federal taxes by taking capital gains from other investments and investing in these designated areas. A Federal Opportunity Zone is an economically-distressed community where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. The City of Gainesville is currently the only designated Federal Opportunity Zone in the region.

The programs for various State designations are managed through the Dept. of Community Affairs and are all designed to incentivize job creation within distressed neighborhoods. Opportunity Zones and Enterprise Zones rely on statistical evidence of poverty as well as documentation of blight to warrant consideration, while Rural Zones focus on smaller downtowns with a history of unemployment and older buildings in need of rehabilitation. Each program focuses on job creation and encourages the adaptive reuse of property in distressed areas.



*The Federal Opportunity Zone district in Gainesville includes much of the older industrial areas and surrounding neighborhoods plus parts of the established commercial corridors in need of revitalization.*

Among the various forces and issues driving land use discussions in the region during 2022:

- The region has shown good recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic, though several sectors still have issues in restoring full employment. The result is that many industries continue to expand in the region, particularly along the principal arterial corridors. (I-85, I-985/ GA 365, GA 400) All three of these corridors are now being monitored for traffic loading and increasing demand for improvements.
- Key developments planned or underway are being seen as likely magnets that will lure additional development in the future. Northeast Georgia Medical Center is relocating their Lumpkin facility from south Dahlonega to GA 400, advancing the potential for the intersection of GA 400 and SR 52 to evolve into a regional commercial node. North of Gainesville, the latest of Georgia's Inland Ports is in the early development phase. Once complete this will attract freight traffic and new industries seeking an efficient tap into the rail service.
- Residential development is particularly strong in those communities close to metropolitan Atlanta and along the arterial corridors. Several Developments of Regional Review (DRIs) have been performed on subdivisions ranging from 150-500+ units. However, realty offices have sounded the alarm regarding the need for much more new residential developments to accommodate projected workforce demand, especially in price ranges attainable for lower income households.



## **Mitigation Strategies**

### **Need to help communities sustain rural character**

- Develop regional development build-out scenario
- Update inventory of primary agricultural areas
- Foster economic profiles of agricultural economies; Include in comp plans
- Inventory and map agri-tourism assets of the region, promote Georgia Centennial Farm program
- Develop regional growth and tourism strategy specifically for historic downtowns
- Maintain a regional downtown association

### **Need to better match land use plans with infrastructure plans**

- Develop comp plan templates for utilities and infrastructure
- Develop regional development build-out scenario
- Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses for new development
- Work with GDOT and GHMPO to update inventory of planned improvements
- Deliver rural transit assessments for each county

### **Need to improve corridor planning for arterial highways**

- Work with GDOT and GHMPO to update inventory of planned improvements
- Develop corridor management plans for GA 400, I-85, and I-985/ GA 365

### **Need to address critical demand for attainable workforce housing**

- Develop model for tracking prevalent wage rates (by county)
- Develop model assessment for local housing costs



## GOAL 3

# Community Facilities and Services

***GOAL: To provide adequate facilities, utilities, and infrastructure in all areas to support existing business and industry, enable expansion, and recruit new business, and to support efficient growth and development patterns that will protect and enhance the region's quality of life.***

Core facilities and services are vital to ensuring the local economies remain on track to thrive and protect the welfare of area residents and visitors. Improvements to the area highways and road systems will be critical in meeting the demands of a growing region. These arterials provide a connection to the rest of the United States, linking cities and counties, providing a transportation route for exporting goods, bringing in tourist dollars and assisting commuters on their routes to and from work.

Water and Sewer Infrastructure and capacity Infrastructure is much more than just transportation - it also includes schools and universities, water and wastewater systems, parks and protected lands, and developed and undeveloped sites for industry. Planning and preparing for all infrastructure needs will be critical to community and economic development over the next five years. Investing in basic infrastructure is essential for maintaining regional economic resiliency and competitiveness.

Businesses and households in the future must be able to connect via the internet or risk falling behind in education resources, access to medical and civic services, remote working, and more. For the region to retain economic vitality, it must demonstrate a wide capacity for high-speed broadband and WiFi access. The global marketplace has changed due to COVID-19. More employers are offering remote working capabilities and furthermore, in the event of future lockdowns, broadband capacity needs to be increased.

Located on 104 acres, the Northeast Georgia Inland Port in Hall County will have a top capacity of 150,000 containers a year traveling by rail that will offset 600 roundtrip truck miles for each container. For many years, Georgia poultry producers have reached customers all over the world through the Port of Savannah, which currently ranks as the number one export facility for poultry products in the nation. Because regional poultry producers are relatively close to the port, the Georgia poultry industry enjoys a competitive advantage to delivering product to overseas customers efficiently and in a cost-effective manner. The Georgia Ports Authority has done an outstanding job over the years of investing in infrastructure which has improved the level of service for poultry shipments through Savannah. This new inland rail yard is a continuation of that type of investment in the future connectivity between the Georgia poultry industry and our customers worldwide.



## **Mitigation Strategies**

### **Growing demand for water supply sources, from both within and outside the region**

- Develop regional development build-out scenario
- Update Regional Source Water Assessment Plan
- Develop in-house service for calculating cost- benefit analyses for new development & utility improvements
- Develop a metro-area growth strategy to support urbanizing communities
- Develop regional water infrastructure map
- Inventory and assessment of local water service rates
- Promote water conservation programs

### **Growing demand and environmental need for public sewer services**

- Develop regional development build-out scenario
- Develop in-house service for calculating cost- benefit analyses for new development & utility improvements
- Develop regional water infrastructure map
- Assessment of septic system inventory

### **Strong need for, and great potential with, health care services and facilities**

- Develop and implement a public awareness campaign about health information technology
- Conduct a medical accessibility study

### **Impact of growth and changing demographics on transportation needs**

- Update Regional Bike/Pedestrian Strategy and related work program
- Develop comprehensive road improvement plan combining local and State goals
- Develop Commuter Traffic Study
- Develop a freight/truck route transportation plan
- Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors in conjunction with GDOT and local stakeholders
- Develop an I-85 corridor access and multi-modal study
- Develop 365 Corridor study to assess impact of future development and inland port
- Assess impact of large transportation and development projects on transportation network
- Develop a Regional Transportation Master Plan

### **Several State arterials struggle to sustain efficiency in serving both local and through traffic**

- Develop comprehensive road improvement plan combining local and State goals
- Develop Commuter Traffic Study
- Develop a freight/truck route transportation plan
- Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors in conjunction with GDOT and local stakeholders
- Develop Highway 441 Tourism Study
- Develop 365 Corridor study to assess impact of future development and inland port
- Assess impact of large capital projects such as Inland Port on transportation network

### **Growing need for bike trails and on-road bike lanes**

- GMRC to update regional bicycle and pedestrian plan
- Promote existing and proposed routes

**Potential support for revenues through the Transportation Investment Act of 2010**

- Develop Commuter Traffic Study

**Demand for improvements to I-85 and intersection arterials**

- Develop an I-85 corridor access and multi-modal study
- Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors in conjunction with GDOT and local stakeholders
- Develop a metro-area growth strategy to support urbanizing communities
- Assess impact of large transportation and development projects such as Inland Port on transportation network

**Impact of changing demographics on transit demands, specifically the growing volume of retirement age residents and growing numbers of households with Hispanic/Latino ethnicity**

- Develop Regional Rural Transit Plan
- Explore potential for increased rural transit services and autonomous vehicles/ride sharing within the region
- Inventory local housing programs, leaders and policies in each community
- Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders
- Develop a regional strategic housing plan

**Increasing Need for Improved Broadband capacity and access**

- Promote Broadband Ready Designation and other state and federal programs
- Work with partners to fund mobile wifi hotspots
- Pursue funding for expansion of broadband in communities
- Pursue public private partnerships to develop broadband in the region

**Demand for expanded natural gas services**

- Encourage the expansion of natural gas networks across North Georgia

**Security issues related to infrastructure**

- Encourage/promote initiatives to combat cyber security threats



## GOAL 4

# Economic Development, Business and Industry



***GOAL: To stimulate and strengthen the regional economy through a collaborative effort embracing global trends resulting in job creation and retention, capital investments, and thereby enhancing the tax base and quality of life in the Georgia Mountains Region.***

For eight consecutive years, Georgia has been named the "#1 State to do business" according to Area Development magazine. Although, the Georgia Mountains Region has many economic drivers, continued focus on diversification will be a priority. Manufacturing, Agribusiness, Tourism and Film Production continue to be important sectors. Well known companies such as Kings Hawaiian, Nestle-Purina and Fox Factory call this region home.

Agriculture and Agribusiness is a key economic driver for the region. This area of Georgia is known as the Poultry Capital of the World. In fact, In Georgia, this industry yields 82,202 jobs and has a \$21.5 Billion dollar contribution to the State economy.

Downtowns and small businesses are a cornerstone of the Region. Resources such as the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Revolving Loan Fund (GMRC-RLF) has been a vital tool for small businesses over the past 5 years. The program works in partnership with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and allows GMRC to assist Region 2 in creating and retaining jobs. Since inception, the program has loaned out almost \$6 million to 66 businesses throughout the Georgia Mountains Region.

As mentioned in earlier pages, Tourism is an important economic engine for the Region. Whether you're visiting stunning wineries, enjoying Oktoberfest in Helen, or looking at the beauty of scenic waterfalls, the mountain region has something for everyone. Overall, tourism equates to a \$54 Billion dollar impact statewide.

With the rapidly growing population, comes the need for expanded Healthcare. Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) has now surpassed the \$3 billion mark in local and state economic impact. More than 1,200 providers are a part of the medical staff at NGMC, and Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) currently employs more than 9,000 people throughout the region, making it one of Georgia's largest employers.

## **Mitigation Strategies**

### **Additional support needed for agribusiness, especially agritourism**

- Promotion of Georgia Grown through local and regional partners
- Develop promotional material for area farmer's markets and canneries
- Establish a local food guide based on local assessments
- Connect local growers and food producers to the region's network of agricultural research centers and professionals

### **Need for further tourism development**

- Develop Highway 441 Tourism Study
- Initiate GMRC Downtown Association, promote partnerships (The Georgia Cities Foundation)
- Assist local governments and business in the development of multi-county tourism task force focusing on Lake Hartwell
- Improve coordination with North Georgia Tourism Association
- Pursue technology which supports tourism marketing in the region

### **Lack of diversity within economic base; too much reliance on a few large industries**

- Develop and maintain a region wide downtown economic database that includes historic resources
- Develop a hi-tech strategy for the region
- Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop in conjunction with the SBDC and Universities
- Develop and implement plans addressing economic diversification
- GMRC to serve as a central repository for the collection of draft ordinances to support film production

### **Demand for expansion of goods-production industries**

- Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop in conjunction with the SBDC/colleges
- Address supply chain issues by cultivating partnerships in the Region

### **Potential within existing cities to nurture small business and entrepreneurship**

- GMRC will promote its Revolving Loan Fund for startups and small business expansions
- Initiate GMRC Downtown Association, promote partnerships (The Georgia Cities Foundation)
- Assist local governments and business in the development of multi-county tourism task force focusing on Lake Hartwell
- Promote startup competitions, business students assistance to small business owners through entrepreneurship education programs
- Develop an entrepreneurship training program for teachers
- Identify and create a database of entrepreneur support resources in the region
- Educate funding partners on the need for downtown revitalization grants
- Support funding opportunities for incubation/entrepreneurship hubs/rural co-working spaces

### **Strong potential in health service industries, particularly around existing/ proposed hospitals**

- Develop and implement a public awareness campaign about health information technology  
Competition from South Carolina and North Carolina – border region
- Develop 1-page fact sheet with state tax incentive information and distribute to local chambers, economic development professionals, and city and counties
- Actively market existing industrial parks
- Work to enhance Georgia Statutory incentives in order to be competitive
- Develop a website/ social media to market the region for new business development and expansion
- Utilization of Joint Development Authorities (JDA's) as an additional resource for cooperation across City/County lines



**Need for coordinated informational and directional signage along entrance corridors**

- GMRC to develop new Urban Revitalization Plans for area town centers and historic urban centers
- Assist local governments develop strategies and materials for wayfinding signage in the region

**Lack of funding for developing new and existing building inventory**

- Identify and educate the public about funding resources at both the state and federal level and related state agencies that administer such programs

**Need for awareness in the event of cyber attacks**

- Identify initiatives or best practices related to cyber security



## GOAL 5

# Workforce Development

***GOAL: Facilitate the development of highly trained, educated workforce to meet business & industry's evolving needs and provide our region with a sustainable competitive advantage for recruiting new and expanding/existing industry.***

**Identify, Recruit, Engage and Sustain.** The landscape has changed dramatically for existing and new employers coming into the region. New thought processes on alternative work schedules, working remotely, the need to engage virtually, employees wanting increased flexibility with childcare/senior care obligations and the overall focus on the individuals well-being are coming into play. The Georgia Mountains Region offers dynamic and accelerated programs providing many opportunities for students, underemployed, and current employees who want to better themselves. This includes boot camps, apprenticeships, on the job training, and mentoring programs. With the work of the many regional partnerships between education, local workforce committees, employers, economic development, and local chambers, the key has been to offer cohesive programs with short term/long-term development goals with students and workers at the center. Looking ahead, the region is very nimble in addressing the needs by studying the demand, types of jobs, abilities, and skills to meet the requirements of our employers and workforce.

Critical resources such as WorkSource Georgia Mountains provides day-to-day management of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds that are allocated to the Georgia Mountains Region through the Georgia Department of Economic Development Workforce Division. The department continues to provide oversight of training providers who provide job training and job placement to eligible persons. This department provides assistance to adults, youth, and dislocated workers who meet program criteria.

One area of significant focus is childcare. Many families with young children must make a choice between spending a significant portion of their income on child care, finding a cheaper, but potentially lower-quality care option, or leaving the workforce altogether to become a full-time caregiver. Child care challenges have become a barrier to work, especially for mothers, who disproportionately take on unpaid caregiving responsibilities when their family cannot find or afford child care.



## **Mitigation Strategies**

### **Lack of labor skills to support a diverse group of industries**

- Work directly with employers, career academies, and technical colleges to identify skill gaps and needs for their business and educational institutions
- Work with high schools and technical colleges to develop needed career pathways relevant to the region and prepare individuals in the required skill sets
- Support marketing efforts to citizens outlining the importance of an educated workforce

### **Lack of soft skills and state standards that do not match with industry needs**

- Through regional awareness, inform State officials about the essential skill challenges
- Support GeorgiaBEST and other programs
- Work with area school systems to provide support for employability skills training

### **Perception of low educational attainment by local residents**

- Publicize with area newspapers the positive academic and skills attainment achieved in the region
- Educate employers on the many ongoing post-secondary training efforts around the region

### **Increasing demand for high quality education facilities and programs**

- Promote Career Days in primary and secondary schools
- Start a school mentor / Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in the region
- Continue strengthening relationship between high schools, career academies and area Technical Colleges
- Develop a program linking local schools with area Technical Colleges
- Develop an entrepreneurship training program for teachers
- Identify and create a database of entrepreneur support resources in the region
- Creation of an entrepreneurial network
- Develop a hi-tech strategy for the region
- Further develop Apprenticeship, internship, work-based learning, and mentoring programs
- Implement Sector Strategies report
- Educate parents, teachers, and other influencers on the importance/stigma of technical education along with the employment and financial opportunities available in the region

### **Historically Low Unemployment**

- Re-Engagement of prospective workers who have dropped out of the labor force and underrepresented or economically vulnerable populations
- Continue developing alternative workforce pipelines through short-term training for those involved in re-entry programs, accountability courts, graduating seniors, students with barriers, etc.

## GOAL 6

# Housing



***GOAL: Facilitate coordination of housing development with planning for infrastructure and overall community development for long-term sustainability, in every community in the region.***

Many working families are struggling to find housing they can afford. Federal, state and local governments must reduce barriers to developing more rental housing and leverage the strength of the private sector to both produce new housing and preserve existing apartments.

As the Georgia Mountains Region continues to grow, local governments will need to become more involved in creating developer friendly environments which support new housing opportunities.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) facilitates numerous programs to help communities in their pursuit of housing development. One program, the Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) is designed to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing in Georgia by granting funds to city and county governments, public housing authorities, and nonprofits to 1.) rehabilitate owner-occupied homes, and 2.) build and renovate affordable single-family homes for sale to eligible homebuyers. Another program, The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) offers communities a three-year program of collaboration and technical assistance related to housing and community development. The objective of the Initiative is to help communities create and launch a locally based plan to meet their housing needs.

COVID-19 had an interesting effect on the Georgia Mountains Region. Citizens from Metro Atlanta, Florida, New York, California and other areas sought after the Northeast Georgia Mountains to escape COVID. Many found this to be a safe haven from the pandemic, social unrest, and crowded cities. Many of them found acreage to spread out and farms to raise animals and crops. Many of these residents bring cultural changes and buying traits that are changing the dynamics of the region. With people purchasing new and existing homes, the result was low inventory and skyrocketing pricing.

Where to Retire magazine selected Gainesville-Hall County as a top retirement destination in the sixth edition of "America's 100 Best Places to Retire," a comprehensive guidebook of the country's most appealing retirement towns. In addition, Gainesville-Hall County was listed as one of ten "Best Lake Towns." In short, to meet the housing demands of our Region, new initiatives will have to be pursued.



## **Mitigation Strategies**

### **Lack of and need to ensure sustainable quality of affordable workforce housing**

- Inventory local housing programs, leaders and policies in each community
- Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders
- Develop a regional strategic housing plan
- Provide educational seminars and workshops on housing programs, aging and services
- Develop a metro-area growth strategy to support urbanizing communities
- Attract multi-family housing developers
- Examine unique methods to assist with the perception issue (model homes, housing summit)
- Examine incentive opportunities for qualified developers

### **Shortage of specialty housing to accommodate retirement age population; Need to monitor long-term impacts and sustainability of the second-home market**

- Inventory of local housing programs, leaders and policies in each community
- Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders
- Provide educational seminars and workshops on housing programs, aging and services
- Develop summary report on housing survey findings
- Develop new inventory for senior housing, independent and assisted living
- Market/Promote single and multifamily developments for seniors

### **Need for more community engagement and capacity building for leaders**

- Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders
- Provide educational seminars and workshops on housing programs and services
- Develop summary report on housing survey findings
- Encourage participation in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) and Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP)

### **Need to understand affordable housing vs. low-income or subsidized housing**

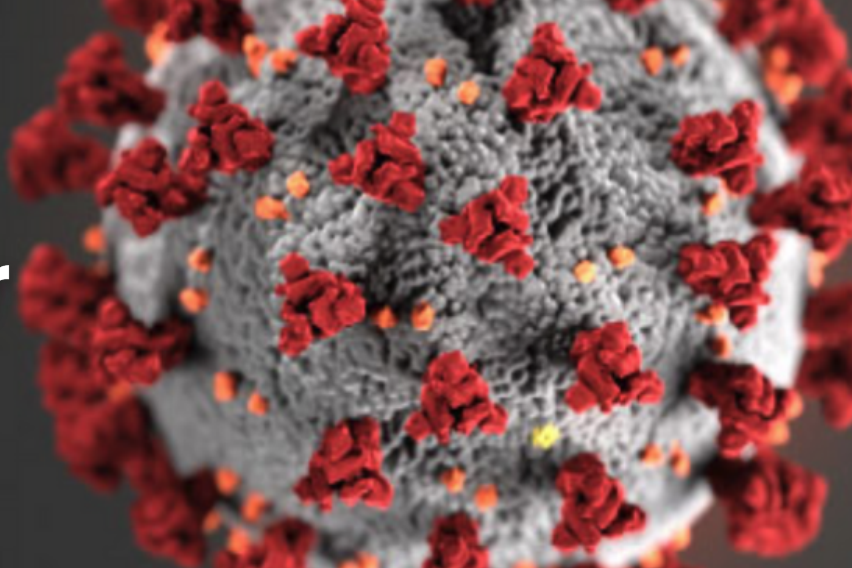
- Work with media and other outlets to educate citizens and communities about the difference

### **Need to ensure local development codes are not unintentionally prohibiting new workforce housing development**

- Assisting communities to develop building codes and ordinance measures that promote housing development
- To allow for higher density, lower square footage and smaller lots sizes in areas of the community targeted for more housing development

## GOAL 7

# Pre-Disaster Mitigation



***GOAL: Encourage disaster resiliency, extending beyond emergency responsiveness for advance planning and organizational capacity to address vulnerabilities, and to enable rebuilding and recovery afterwards in a manner that offer healthier, sustainable communities, and more robust regional economies.***

Hazardous events do not discriminate. These can be natural or man-made and can occur anywhere. The Georgia Mountains Region is committed to becoming more resilient with respect to hazard mitigation and preparedness for such disasters, not only to protect lives and area resources, but to provide more security for economic development. The more resilient the community, the faster the community can recover from the effects of hazardous events.

Some of the types of natural disaster that impact the Georgia Mountains Region include flooding, tornadoes, pandemics, wildfires, ice storms, and snowstorms. Other hazards that the region is at risk for is man-made disasters, they include but not limited to cyberattacks, terrorism, pandemics, civil unrest and (intentional) wildfires.

Disaster resiliency can best be defined as the ability to anticipate threats, reduce the impact of these threats by taking preemptive action, respond appropriately and efficiently when these threats materialize, and have a plan in place for recovery. Every local government in the region has participated in a county-level Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) which outlines how a community and local stakeholders will prepare for, respond to, and recover from critical and large-scale disaster situations. An HMP assesses a community's hazards, risks, vulnerabilities, capabilities and then produces recommended mitigation strategies to reduce overall risk to the population and property. HMPs are also critical for coordination of Federal and State programs such as FEMA's Public Assistance Program, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Building Resilience Infrastructure in Community (BRIC) and HUD's Community Development Block Grant -DR and MIT which are oriented around the information, trends, and priorities reviewed in the local plans. Such mitigation planning is key to raising public awareness about reducing future losses before a disaster strikes, and to breaking the cycle of repetitive loss.



COVID-19 was the first pandemic the United States had seen in over a century. This virus caused unforeseen issues within the region and was the impetus for local officials and departments to react and adapt to the ever-changing guidance. As the region works to recover from the after-effects of the pandemic, and moves forward, the region is taking lessons learned and applying them for the next pandemic to ensure the region is more resilient.

The COVID-19 Pandemic strongly impacted the businesses within the GMRC. There were some businesses that were more impacted than others. Figure 1 outlines the various businesses and their level of impacts due to COVID-19. These businesses saw a variety of impacts including:

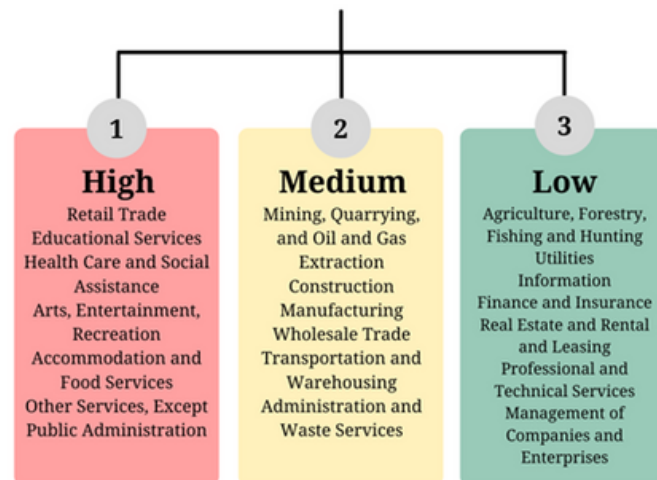
- Decrease in demand for products or services,
- Pausing or Termination of Employment,
- Shortage of Supplies or Inputs,
- Government-Mandated Closure

The level to which these businesses were impacted by these concerns varied due to the type of business. The businesses with more in-person contact were much more concerned about the impacts because of the way the virus was spread. Businesses had to adapt their operations to stay open and are still dealing with the impacts of the virus.

For the region to be ready for the next pandemic or natural disaster, a resiliency framework will be important. This framework needs to be adopted across the region and all key players need to be on board. One of the biggest things that can be done is to connect local businesses and industries to a partner governmental agency to support them in the aftermath of a disaster or pandemic. These partnerships will allow the businesses to have a direct connection to the government to ask for assistance. These profit-governmental partnerships will allow:

- Businesses to recover and rebuild faster after a disaster
- Give businesses more knowledge on funding opportunities in their area
- Allow businesses to give feedback on governmental programming and opportunities
- Create a flow of ideas between businesses and the government to promote positive change to the area

## COVID-19 Impacted Industries



# Resilience Framework



The first step is for each county to conduct their own SWOT Analysis and determine what their overall resilience goals include. Once this is done then the region needs to conduct their own SWOT analysis to determine what can be done on a region wide scale. Once the various components have been determined, it will be important to use these to determine the regional resilience goals. What are the big things that the region wants to make more resilient to disasters and pandemics? Based on these goals, the region will need to come up with projects that will assist with those goal. These capital projects should benefit the region and make it more resilient.

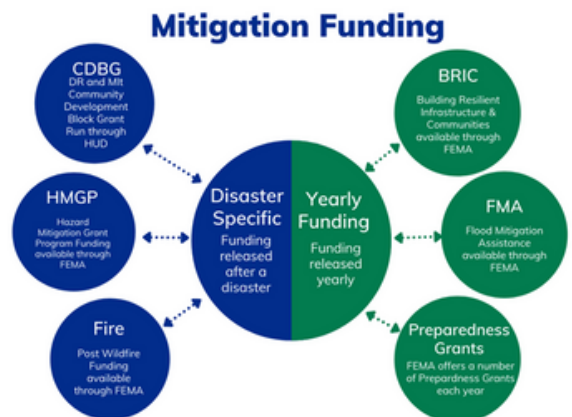
These projects will come with a large cost, so the next step is to analyze funding streams that are available. These funding streams should be both county funds as well as federal and state funding opportunities. Several funding streams become available after a disaster, so it is important to look out for those when trying to fund these projects. There are also yearly disaster funding opportunities that are available for these kinds of projects as well.

FEMA has several mitigation specific funding sources that can assist with the capital projects including:

- the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP),
- Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)
- Flood Mitigation Assistance Grants (FMA).

HMGP has funds that are released after a major disaster declaration. These funds can be used for specific mitigation projects including generators for necessary buildings or elevating flood prone structures.

BRIC is a relatively new funding opportunity through FEMA. This opportunity is funded by a 6% set-aside from federal post-disaster grant funding. Various projects can be funding through this program including flood control measures and strengthening projects for snow and ice storms. This funding source can be used by individual counties or counties can come together to create projects that may be beneficial for the region.





Across the region, counties have a goal to increase awareness of natural hazards to the public. With BRIC funding, the region can work together to help reach that goal. BRIC funding can be used to enhance projects. Together, the county can use BRIC funding to do several public awareness-based campaigns including, but not limited to:

- A region wide disaster preparedness fair
- Conducting a gap analysis on public communications during a disaster
- An updated communication systems or phone application for disaster preparedness in the area
- Creating a public awareness campaign for a disaster response

Other opportunities to use BRIC funding include:

- The creation of a region wide hazard mitigation plan or other regional plans
- Conducting a gap analysis of needs within the region (i.e. emergency systems, training opportunities, etc.)
- Conducting an analysis of possible duplication of efforts within the region (i.e., technology, emergency systems, etc.)
- Region wide trainings and exercises

The FMA Grant is used for projects that reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings that are insured by the National Flood Insurance Program. This multi-million-dollar funding opportunity funds various projects such as floodwater storage and diversion and floodplain and stream restoration. This funding source is good for areas that have repetitive flooding loss.

The region should work together to do an analysis of repetitive flood loss properties within the area and determine if there is an area of the region that may benefit from FMA grant funding. The analysis may be done using other mitigation funding sources like BRIC.

### Disaster Recovery Tools:

- Disaster Recovery Business Toolkit [LINK](#)
- County Resiliency Plans [LINK](#)
- Pandemic Transmission Assessment [LINK](#)



The GMRC needs to ensure that counties are completing projects in the area that will mitigate against future disasters. It would be beneficial for the region to take inventory of various resources that may be beneficial and potentially need to be hardened for the various natural disaster that impact the area. By working together throughout the region and taking note of what is available and what projects are currently being done, the chances of duplicating efforts decrease dramatically.

### **Needs and Resilience Strategies**

#### **Conduct SWOT Analyses on resilience strategies in the post-COVID-19 world**

- Each county should conduct their own resilience SWOT analysis
- Counties should work together to create a region wide SWOT Analysis for resilience post-pandemic

#### **Create Region Wide Resilience Goals**

- Work across the region to determine what the region's over all resilience goals are
- Using these goals determine projects that can be done in the area
- Work to determine local and federal funding sources for these projects

#### **Need to ensure every community has AND USES their Hazard Mitigation Plan**

- Survey local Emergency Management Departments regarding HMP implementation
- Work with GEMA and FEMA to develop a best practice guide for HMP implementation
- Facilitate an educational forum on HMP updates and implementation

#### **Opportunity to provide regional support and coordination with local hazard mitigation planning**

- Create and sustain a Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan
- Create a regional forum for local Emergency Management Directors
- Produce and distribute a specialty grants and loans resource guide for local emergency management departments.
- Work with counties to educate entities about various pre-disaster & post-disaster mitigation funding opportunities and create multi-county applications for various funding opportunities
- Use Hazard Mitigation Grant Program or BRIC funding to create a regional hazard mitigation plan

#### **Determine possible regional mitigation projects that can benefit all counties**

- Create list of region wide mitigation projects
- Apply for BRIC and other mitigation funding sources to assist with competition of these projects
- Apply for partnership and planning based projects for BRIC funding



# REGIONAL PLAN

## REGIONAL PLAN – PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

As part of the maintenance requirements for the Regional Plan portion of this document, the GMRC maintains a Regional Work Program (RWP) based on the needs and opportunities identified throughout the planning process. The RWP represents the optimal level activities pursued by the GMRC to achieve the objectives for each identified need.

Progress with the accomplishing RWP objectives is reviewed as part of the annual update process with the GMRC Council. However, monitoring and evaluation of progress with the Regional Work Program is performed regularly throughout the year via several layers of status reports and meetings, and involved input from various committees, local government officials and other stakeholder groups.

- Monthly Staff Project Reports shared with GMRC Council
- End-of-year review by staff
- Annual reporting to State for correlating GMRC programs
- Direct local government interaction/ communication
- Public hearing opportunities

### 2022 Status Report

- Some communities continue to have limited in-person forums as part of their public involvement procedures during the lingering pandemic. In lieu of such gatherings both the GMRC and local governments pursued online forums for both general public meetings and stakeholder committee events. While most communities note they will pursue in-person events once again as conditions allow, the use of online formats as an additional option, especially for committee meetings, was considered successful and will likely be utilized much more going forward.
- The pandemic did affect local plan-monitoring meetings in that many of these were conducted online or over the phone as local governments and the GMRC adapted to the conditions. Most local government staff did not object to the temporary arrangement, but it did minimize the ability to have larger meetings. Where local elected officials could not participate the local staff assured that news from the meetings would be shared as needed.
- Subsequent plan updates have revealed a trend in the growing importance of local governments to pursue formal communication policies or the update of the same. Local constituents have expressed a desire to see changes in the ways events and special discussions are promoted via online platforms, as conventional newspaper advertising is considered less effective and reaching a smaller audience. The GMRC will be working with several communities in exploring policy updates during FY23.

- The GMRC is working with the Department of Transportation in the development of a Regional Transit Plan. Due to be completed in 2022, the results of this plan will yield information that will contribute to the development County-level assessments for each county in the region. The GMRC will in turn use this information to ensure each local comprehensive plan will eventually incorporate summaries from their respective county-level transit assessment.
- As of May 2022, Tiger remains the only community compliance with the GMRC's minimum performance standards.

Government	Minimum Performance Standards Not Met	Actions Needed
Town of Tiger	QLG Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Comp Plan</li> <li>• Meet <u>eVerify</u> requirements</li> </ul>

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Report of Accomplishments marks the items from the previous work program. It showcases the items that were addressed in the previous year and gives an update as to their status. Projects are listed as being either Complete, In Progress, Cancelled, or Postponed. Items that are In Progress or Postponed are carried forward in the new Regional Work Program, and for items marked Cancelled or Postponed a brief description of the reason is provided.

## REGIONAL WORK PROGRAM

The Regional Work Program is the overall strategy for achieving the regional goals and for addressing each of the identified Needs and Opportunities. This identifies specific implementation actions the GMRC and/or other entities intend to take during the next 5-10 years of the planning period. This can include specific measures identified during this update process, or more generalized objectives tied to advancing the employment of best practices and Excellence Standard measures at the local level.

## **POLICIES**

- Encourage, and demonstrate, the practice of small-area studies
- Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy
- Promote BMPs throughout the region as land use alternatives
- Promote neighborhood scale planning
- Advocate for funding/private investment for downtown redevelopment
- Identify funding mechanisms for required infrastructure
- Promote environmental BMPs within Excellence Standards
- Support funding measures for management of DNR lands
- Promote cooperative partnerships between State, local governments and private sector
- Encourage redevelopment in underused areas and brownfields instead of new development in greenfields
- Annually report to GMRC Council status of Water Planning Council programs
- Attend Water Council meetings
- Promote historic preservation BMPs within Excellence Standards
- Continue to work with/for the 3 Water Planning Councils
- Support implementation of regional water plans
- Use CEDS to emphasize Health Info. Technology benefits and needs
- Promote water conservation programs
- Assess impact of large transportation and development projects on transportation network
- Promote existing and proposed bicycle and pedestrian routes
- Explore potential for increased rural transit services and autonomous vehicles/ride sharing within the region
- Develop departmental assessments for emergency services, parks and recreation, and public works
- Actively market existing industrial parks
- Work to enhance Georgia Statutory incentives in order to be competitive
- Identify and educate the public about funding resources at both the state and federal level and related state agencies that administer such programs
- Work with high schools and technical colleges to prepare individuals in the needed skill sets
- Start a school mentor / Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in the region
- Partner with colleges/universities in the region for training opportunities Work with high schools and technical colleges to prepare individuals in the needed skill sets
- Market/Promote single and multifamily developments for seniors
- Attract multi-family housing developers



## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Note:** Some items will be shown with an \*, indicating that they were an action item prescribed for more than one issue or objective.

### LAND USE

Action	Status	Comment
Encourage local plans to feature nodal development that prioritizes utility capacity	In Progress	<b>Revised to</b> "Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses..."
Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors in conjunction with GDOT and local stakeholders	In Progress	<b>Revised to</b> "Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses..."
Encourage, and demonstrate, the practice of small-area studies	Complete	Program policy
Encourage adoption of conservation design standards and conservation easements*	In Progress	<b>Moved to</b> NR priority "Need to improve awareness about..."
Inventory metropolitan communities for development trends and needs; Develop a metro-area growth strategy to support urbanizing communities	Cancelled	Addressed in other actions
Survey local agribusinesses for needs and priorities	Cancelled	Addressed in other actions
Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy*	Complete	Program Policy
Promote BMPs throughout the region as land use alternatives	Complete	Program Policy
Promote neighborhood scale planning	Complete	Program Policy
Advocate for funding/private investment for downtown redevelopment	Complete	Program Policy
Identify funding mechanisms for required infrastructure	Complete	Program Policy

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Action	Status	Comments
Encourage adoption of conservation design standards and conservation easements	In Progress	<b>Modified to</b> "Need to improve awareness about..."
Develop a region wide downtown economic database that includes historic resources; Place on the web	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
Continue to work with/for the 3 Water Planning Councils	Complete	Program policy
Develop tool for tracking impact of new development on local water supplies	Cancelled	<b>Addressed in</b> "Develop an environmental performance tool for local plans..."
Promote environmental BMPs within <i>Excellence Standards</i> *	Complete	Program Policy
Support funding measures for management of DNR lands	Complete	Program Policy
Promote cooperative partnerships between State, local governments and private sector	Complete	Program Policy
Encourage redevelopment in underused areas and brownfields instead of in greenfields	Complete	Program Policy
Annually report to GMRC Council status of Water Planning Council programs	Complete	Program Policy
Attend Water Council meetings	Complete	Program Policy
Promote historic preservation BMPs within <i>Excellence Standards</i>	Complete	Program Policy

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Action	Status	Comment
Assist water planning councils with routine survey of local best practices	In Progress	<b>Addressed under</b> NR policy "Support implementation..."
Develop template material for assessing broadband capacity in local plans	Complete	
Develop inventory of all potential new water sources in the region	Cancelled	Defer this objective to Reg. Water Plans
CFS8: Promote and support the use of health information technology (HIT). (listed in mitigation strategies)-	In Progress	<b>Addressed under</b> item "Develop and implement..."
CFS10: Support development of low-cost energy and maintain energy reliability.	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
CFS11: Promote environmental standards in the development of businesses and industries.	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
Promote water conservation programs	Complete	Program policy
Assess impact of large transportation and development projects such as Inland Port on transportation network*	Complete	Program policy
Promote existing and proposed routes	Complete	Program policy
Explore potential for increased rural transit services and autonomous vehicles/ride sharing within the region	Complete	Program policy
Develop departmental assessments for emergency services, parks and recreation, and public works	Complete	Program policy

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Action	Status	Comment
Review/ Update existing datasets with GA DED	Complete	Complete
Include promotional section in new GMRC web site	In Progress	<b>Added to</b> "Develop an inventory..."
Explore downtown tourism networking with NC and SC	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
Develop an I-85 corridor access and multi-modal study.	In Progress	Moved/Addressed in CFS element
Identify and assess conditions of roadways based on tourism impact	Cancelled	Addressed in other actions
Inventory funding for local tourism programs	Complete	Complete
Create a GMRC entrepreneurship network; Promote with lenders and local Chambers	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
Provide models of, and contact info for, existing cooperatives	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
Expand opportunities for production based on the byproducts of value-added processing.	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
Identify and assess conditions of roadways based on agribusiness impact	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
Inventory and map agri-tourism assets.	In Progress	<b>Added to</b> "Develop an inventory..."
Develop a regional tourism forum w/ GA DED	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
Continue to collect and promote data about local industry to local and State officials	Complete	
Develop inventory of leadership programs available to area residents/ businesses	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
Continue providing urban redevelopment plans (reworded in mitigation strategies)	Complete	Program Policy
Work with local Chambers and dev. authorities to assist efforts to grow local business	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
Work directly with the businesses to identify lack of skills levels needed for their business;	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
Create/Update inventory of regional assets and economic base industries	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
Create list of local businesses' imports	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
Continue to inventory & promote regional events	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
Develop Regional Fact Sheet/ web site targeted for econ. development	Complete	
Collect/ develop GIS dataset of available industrial sites; Place on web	In Progress	
Update catalog of resource programs; Distribute to local econ. developers	Complete	
Ensure CEDS has complete and updated issues and priorities for the regional businesses	Complete	
Develop regional industrial profile	Complete	
Actively market existing industrial parks	Complete	Program Policy
Work to enhance Georgia Statutory incentives in order to be competitive	Complete	Program Policy
Identify and educate the public about funding resources	Complete	Program Policy



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Action	Status	Comment
Start a school mentor / Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in the region	Complete	Program Policy
Implement program promoting Career Days in primary and secondary schools (reworded in mitigation strategies)	Complete	
Work directly with the businesses, career academies and technical colleges to identify lack of skills levels needed for their business and educational institutions	Complete	
Work with high schools and technical colleges to prepare individuals in the needed skill sets*	Complete	Program Policy
Partner with colleges/universities in the region for training opportunities	Complete	Program Policy
Start a school mentor / Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in the region	Complete	Program Policy

## HOUSING

Action	Status	Comment
Provide template resources for assessing development policies	Cancelled	<b>Changed to</b> "Provide educational seminars and workshops" action item
Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders.	In Progress	Retained
Develop summary report on housing survey findings	In Progress	Retained
Ensure local govts. have knowledge of programs and communication strategy	Cancelled	<b>Changed to</b> "Provide educational seminars and workshops" action item
Development of GMRC Regional Housing Plan	In Progress	Moved to action item
Market/Promote single and multifamily developments for seniors		Program Policy
Attract multi-family housing developers		Program Policy

## DISASTER MITIGATION

Action	Status	Comment
Development of GMRC Hazard Mitigation Plan	In Progress	
Ensure every community has an HMP promulgation strategy	In Progress	
Ensure every community has co-op agreements in place	In Progress	
Develop Regional Post-Disaster Response Framework.	Cancelled	Addressed via other local plans and agreements

## GMRC 2022 WORK PROGRAM

### LAND USE

STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING
<i>Priority: To promote and coordinate land use planning and management that supports the other goals and ambitions for the region.</i>					
<b>Support preservation and expansion of historic town centers.</b>	Continue providing urban redevelopment plans (reworded in N&O's)	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs. \$50,000	6-10 yrs. \$50,000	
	Develop regional growth and tourism strategy for historic downtowns	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs. \$10,000		
<b>Promote coordinated land use along critical arterials for both local needs and through traffic for tourism and industry.</b>	Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses for new development on utilities and infrastructure	DOT, DCA, Local Govts.		6-8 yrs. \$30,000	
<b>Need to match land use plans with infrastructure plans</b>	Develop regional development build-out scenario	DOT, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$20,000		
	Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses for new development on utilities and infrastructure	DOT, DCA, Local Govts.		6-8 yrs. \$30,000	
<b>Need tools to preserve area farms</b>	Develop regional development build-out scenario	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$20,000		
	Develop updated concept for, and inventory of, primary agricultural areas	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$15,000		
	Develop template for comprehensive neighborhood plans and standards	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-2 yrs. \$5,000		
	Assess the performance of BMPs throughout the region	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$10,000		
	Develop/ maintain region-wide downtown economic database that includes historic resources	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$40,000	
	Develop redevelopment plans for historic downtowns & urban areas	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs. \$50,000	6-10 yrs. \$50,000	
	Create model design guidelines and promote incentive programs for downtown areas	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. TBD		
	Initiate GMRC Downtown Association, promote partnerships (a la GCF)	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1 yrs. TBD		

<b>Impact of population growth for impact on rural character</b>	Inventory and map agri-tourism assets of the region, promote Georgia Centennial Farm program	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs \$5,000		
	Develop regional growth and tourism strategy for historic downtowns	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs. \$10,000		
	Develop promotional material for area farmer's markets and canneries	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$10,000		
	Develop updated concept for, and inventory of, primary agricultural areas	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$10,000		
<b>Lack of identification of plans for growth areas for industrial and commercial development</b>	Identify areas where future industrial growth may and can occur	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$10,000	
	Develop growth management plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$10,000	
	Develop map/inventory of commercial and/or industrial properties in the region	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$10,000	
	Identify major growth influencers or external regional contributors	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		



# NATURAL RESOURCES

PRIORITY/ STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING
<i>Priority: To conserve, protect and promote the environmental, natural and cultural resources of the region.</i>					
<b>Improve and promote existing historic resources and preservation programs.</b>	Update NHARGIS and regional inventory; Share with communities (reworded in mitigation strategies)	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$50,000	-	
<b>Need to improve awareness about conservation design, environmentally sensitive areas, and best management practices</b>	Conduct/Facilitate a workshop on conservation design	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$3,000		
	Develop catalog of best environmental policies for local governments	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. TBD		
	Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comp. plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
<b>Need for more/ preserve local greenspace plans</b>	Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comp. plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
	Develop template for greenspace planning in local comprehensive plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$3,000		
	Inventory of available greenspace in local jurisdictions	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$15,000		
<b>Need to address habitat degradation caused by growth and development</b>	Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comp. plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
	Develop template for greenspace planning in local comprehensive plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$3,000		
	Develop regional development build-out scenario	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$10,000		
	Develop report on status of dams in the region	DNR, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$10,000		
	Inventory/ Assessment of septic system management programs	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
	Inventory/Assessment of brownfields in the region	DNR, DCA, Local Govts., EPA	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
<b>Support implementation of applicable Water Planning District management plans</b>	Develop Regional Source Water Assessment Plan	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$50,000		
<b>Promote the knowledge and preservation of existing historic resources</b>	Update GNAHRGIS, survey of regional historic resources	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$50,000		
	Convene annual GMRC Historic Resource Forum	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$3,000		

**COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING
Priority: Enhance all segments of transportation networks in the region to promote economic development and personal safety.					
Utilize existing inventories of current roadways, air, and rail needs to support economic development.	Develop comprehensive road improvement plan combining local and State goals	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$5,000	-	
	Develop a freight/ truck route transportation plan	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$20,000	-	
Improve current transit, local public transportation systems, and encourage green methods of transportation.	Ensure all cities have pedestrian accessibility plans	GDOT, Local Govts.	-	8-10 yrs. \$20,000	
	Inventory and develop plans to improve local and regional airports.		-	6-7 yrs. \$5,000	
	Update Regional Bike/Ped Strategy & related work program		1-2 yrs \$10,000	-	
	Develop Regional Rural Transit Plan		1-3 yrs \$10,000	-	
	Develop Commuter Traffic Study		1-2 yrs \$2,000	-	
Priority: To foster community-based wellness initiatives and increase the availability of affordable high-quality health care services.					
Encourage and support multi-jurisdictional approaches to provide health services for economic dev. purposes.	Develop template material for including wellness in local plans	Local Govts., Local Authorities	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	
	Regional assessment of emergency services	Local Govts., Local Authorities	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	
Support efforts to improve community-based prevention and wellness.	Develop template material for including wellness in local plans	Local Govts., Local Authorities	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	
Priority: Provide adequate waste management for domestic and industrial usage.					
Improve waste management planning to ensure availability for future growth.	Develop waste mgmt. component for next regional plan update	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs. \$5,000	-	

<i>Other Action Items</i>						
<b>Growing demand for water supply sources, from both within and outside the region</b>	Develop regional development build-out scenario	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$20,000			
	Update Regional Source Water Assessment Plan	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000		
	Develop means for calculating cost-benefit analyses for new development & utility improvements	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000		
<b>Growing demand and environmental need for public sewer services</b>	Develop a metro-area growth strategy to support urbanizing communities	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000		
	Develop regional water infrastructure map	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000			
	Inventory and assessment of local water service rates	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$3,000			
	Assessment of septic system inventory	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$15,000			
<b>Strong need for, and great potential with, health care services and facilities</b>	Develop and implement a public awareness campaign about health information technology	Local Govts., Medical orgs.	2-4 yrs. TBD			
	Develop template material for including wellness in local plans	Local Govts., Medical orgs.	1-2 yrs. \$5,000			
<b>Impact of growth and changing demographics on transportation needs</b>	Update Regional Bike/Pedestrian Strategy and related work program	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000			
	Develop comprehensive road improvement plan combining local and State goals	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$5,000			
	Develop Commuter Traffic Study	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$20,000			
<b>Several State arterials struggle to sustain efficiency in serving both local and through traffic</b>	Develop a freight/ truck route transportation plan	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000		
	Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors (with GDOT and local stakeholders)	GDOT, Local Govts.				
<b>Demand for improvements to I-85 and intersection arterials</b>	Develop an I-85 corridor access and multi-modal study	GDOT, EDA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$50,000			
	Develop a freight/ truck route transportation plan	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$20,000			



	Develop Highway 441 Tourism Study	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$10,000	
<b>Growing need for bike trails and on-road bike lanes</b>	Update regional bicycle and pedestrian plan	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-2 yrs \$10,000		
<b>Assess potential for 2nd commercial passenger service airport for Metro Atlanta</b>	Inventory and develop plans to improve local and regional airports	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
<b>Impact of changing demographics on transit demands, specifically the growing volume of retirement age residents and growing numbers of households with Hispanic/Latino ethnicity</b>	Develop Regional Rural Transit Plan	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$20,000		
	Inventory local housing programs, leaders and policies	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$5,000		
	Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$1,000		
	Develop a regional strategic housing plan	DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$15,000		
<b>Improve waste mgmt. planning to ensure availability for economic growth.</b>	Develop waste mgmt. component for next regional plan update	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$10,000	
	Regional assessment of emergency services	GEMA, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$5,000		

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

(Note: For this table, LCs refers to Local Chambers and EDs refers to local Economic Development Authorities)

PRIORITY/ STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING
<b>Priority: Promote awareness of the Georgia Mountains Region as a tourism destination by fostering viable and sustainable initiatives.</b>					
<b>Foster regional partnerships to create and grow tourism product(s).</b>	Develop a regional tourism forum w/ GA DED	ARC, Local Govts., LCs& EDs	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	
	Develop an I-85 corridor access and multi-modal study.	ARC, Local Govts., LCs& EDs	1-3 yrs \$20,000	-	
	Develop Highway 441 Tourism Study	ARC, Local Govts., LCs& EDs	-	6-7 yrs \$10,000	
<b>Priority: Attract film industry to the region.</b>					
<b>Work to ensure that all counties in the region are Camera Ready certified.</b>	Survey Counties for knowledge of program; Identify gaps	ARC, Local Govts., LCs& EDs	1-3 yrs. \$10,000	-	
<b>Create a business-friendly environment which is conducive to the film industry.</b>	Establish local contact list for use by film industry	ARC, Local Govts., LCs& EDs	1-2 yrs. \$2,000	-	
<b>Priority: To focus on creating new small, high-growth companies in the Georgia Mountains Region.</b>					
<b>Provide the Georgia Mountains region's residents with innovative educational resources to help them learn about entrepreneurship and start a new business.</b>	Develop an entrepreneurship training program for teachers	ARC, Local Govts., LCs& EDs	-	4-7 yrs. \$50,000	
	Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop in conjunction with the SBDC and Universities.	ARC, Local Govts., LCs& EDs	1-2 yrs \$1,000	-	
<b>Priority: Increase expansion and retention of the region's existing businesses and industries.</b>					
<b>Invest in the beautification and revitalization of downtowns.</b>	Continue providing urban redevelopment plans (reworded in mitigation strategies)	ARC, Local Govts., LCs & EDs	1-5 yrs. \$50,000	6-10 yrs. \$50,000	
<b>Priority: Devote local resources to the recruitment of new industry and businesses in the Georgia Mountains region.</b>					
<b>Develop an inventory of available sites in the region (reworded from original)</b>	Collect/ develop GIS dataset of available industrial sites; Place on web	ARC, Local Govts., LCs & EDs	-	3-6 yrs. \$15,000	

	STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING
	<b>Other Action Items</b>					
	<b>Comparably limited support for agribusiness, especially agri-tourism</b>	Creation of a regional food hub and promote through print and social media marketing	DNR, CCRC&D, LCs, DED		4-7 yrs. TBD	
		Establish a local food guide based on local assessments	DNR, CCRC&D, LCs, DED	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
		Develop an inventory of tourism industry resources	DNR, CCRC&D, LCs, DED	1-3 yrs \$5,000		
	<b>Potential for continued growth within tourism sub-markets</b>	Develop an inventory of tourism resources and promote through print and social media marketing	DCA, LCs, DED	1-3 yrs \$5,000		
		Develop Highway 441 Tourism Study	GDOT, Local Govts., LCs		6-7 yrs \$10,000	
		Initiate GMRC Downtown Association, promote partnerships (a la the GCF)	DCA, GCF, LCs, DED	1-3 yrs. NA		
		Assist in creation of a multi-county tourism task force for Lake Hartwell	DCA, LCs, DED		4-6 yrs. NA	
		Develop a regional tourism forum w/ GA DED	ARC, Local Govts., LCs & EDs	1-2 yrs. \$5,000		
	<b>Lack of diversity within economic base; too much reliance on a few large industries</b>	Develop and maintain a region wide downtown economic database	DCA, LCs, DED	1-3 yrs \$5,000		
		Develop a hi-tech strategy for the region	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-3 yrs. \$15,000		
		Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop in conjunction with the SBDC and Universities	ARC, LCs & Eds, Local Govts.	1-2 yrs \$1,000		
	<b>Demand for expansion of goods-production industries</b>	Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop in conjunction with the SBDC/colleges	ARC, LCs & Eds, Local Govts.	1-2 yrs \$1,000		
	<b>Potential within existing cities to nurture small business and entrepreneurship</b>	Develop and distribute educational materials for entrepreneur programs	ARC, LCs & Eds, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. TBD		
		Initiate GMRC Downtown Association, promote partnerships (The Georgia Cities Foundation)	DCA, GCF, LCs, DED	1-3 yrs. NA		



		Assist local governments and business in the development of multi-county tourism task force focusing on Lake Hartwell	DCA, LCs, DED		4-6 yrs. NA	
		Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop	ARC, LCs & Eds, Local Govts.	1-2 yrs \$1,000		
		Develop an entrepreneurship training program for teachers	ARC, LCs & Eds, Local Govts.	-	4-7 yrs. \$50,000	
		Identify and create a database of entrepreneur support resources in the region	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-3 yrs. \$1,000		
	<b>Strong potential in health service industries, particularly around hospitals</b>	Develop and implement a public awareness campaign about health information technology	Local Govts., Medical orgs.	2-4 yrs. TBD		
	<b>Competition from South Carolina and North Carolina – border region</b>	Develop 1-page fact sheet with state tax incentive information; distribute to economic development stakeholders	DOL, DED, DCA, LCs & EDs	1-3 yrs. NA		
		Develop a website/ social media to market the region for new business development and expansion	DOL, DED, DCA, LCs & EDs	1-3 yrs. TBD		
	<b>Need for coordinated informational and directional signage along entrance corridors</b>	Continue providing redevelopment plans for historic downtowns & urban areas	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs. \$50,000	6-10 yrs. \$50,000	
		Assist local governments with strategies and materials for wayfinding signage	DOT, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
	<b>Create a business-friendly environment which is conducive to the film industry.</b>	Establish local contact list for use by film industry	ARC, LCs & Eds, Local Govts.	1-2 yrs. \$2,000		
		Survey Counties for knowledge of Camera Ready program; Identify gaps	ARC, LCs & Eds, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
	<b>Develop an inventory of available Industrial sites in the region</b>	Collect/ develop GIS dataset of available industrial sites; Place on web	ARC, LCs & Eds, Local Govts.	-	3-6 yrs. \$15,000	

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

PRIORITY/ STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING
<i>Priority: To attract and retain business and industry by promoting education and workforce development.</i>					
<b>Retain graduates and the educated workforce within the region.</b>	Implement program promoting Career Days in primary and secondary schools (reworded in mitigation strategies)	DOL, ARC, TCSG	3-5 yrs. \$20,000	-	
<b>Partner with local schools, businesses/ industries, and civic organizations to promote the importance of an educated workforce through collaboration efforts with media and promotional outlets.</b>	Work directly with the businesses, career academies and technical colleges to identify lack of skills levels needed for their business and educational institutions	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-3 yrs. \$20,000	-	
<b>Help alleviate unemployment and underemployment in the Georgia Mountains Region.</b>	Develop program linking local schools with area Technical Colleges	DOL, ARC, TCSG	3-5 yrs. \$10,000	-	
<b>Address challenges facing the unemployable citizens.</b>	Further develop Apprenticeship, internship, work-based learning and mentoring programs	DOL, ARC, TCSG	-	2-6 yrs. \$40,000	
<b>Lack of labor skills to support a diverse group of industries</b>	Work directly with the businesses, career academies, technical colleges to identify lack of skills levels needed for their business and educational institutions	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-3 yrs. \$20,000		
<b>Lack of basic soft skills and state standards that do not match with industry needs</b>	Through regional awareness, inform State officials about the basic skill challenges	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-2 yrs. \$3,000		
<b>Perception of low educational attainment by local residents</b>	Publicize with area newspapers the positive educational and skills attainment achieved in the region	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-2 yrs. \$3,000		

STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING
<b>Other Action Items</b>					
	Program promoting Career Days in primary and secondary schools	DOL, ARC, TCSG	3-5 yrs. \$20,000	-	-
	Develop program linking local schools with area Technical Colleges	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-2 yrs. \$3,000		
	Develop an entrepreneurship training program for teachers	ARC, Local Govts., LCs & EDs	-	4-7 yrs. \$50,000	
	Identify and create a database of entrepreneur support resources in the region	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-3 yrs. \$1,000		
	Creation of an entrepreneurial network	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-3 yrs. NA		
	Develop a hi-tech strategy for the region	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-3 yrs. \$15,000		
	Further develop Apprenticeship, internship, work-based learning and mentoring programs	DOL, ARC, TCSG	-	2-6 yrs. \$40,000	-
	Implement Sector Strategies report	DOL, ARC, TCSG		2-4 yrs. TBD	
	Educate parents on the importance/stigma of technical education	DOL, ARC, TCSG		2-4 yrs. TBD	



# HOUSING

STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING
<b>Priority: Facilitate the availability and accessibility of affordable housing and facilitate coordination of housing development with planning for infrastructure and overall community development for long-term sustainability, in every community in the region.</b>					
<b>Encourage local governments to examine inclusionary zoning measures to effectively plan for the present and future housing needs of the regional workforce.</b>	Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders.	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$5,000	-	
	Develop summary report on housing survey findings	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$1,000	-	
<b>Shortage of specialty housing to accommodate retirement age population; Need to monitor long-term impacts and sustainability of the second-home market</b>	Inventory of local housing programs, leaders and policies in each community	DCA, Local Govts.,	1-3 yrs. \$5,000		
	Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$5,000		
	Develop summary report on housing survey findings	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$1,000		
	Develop a regional strategic housing plan	DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$15,000		
	Provide educational seminars and workshops on housing programs, aging and services	DCA, Local Govts., HUD, APA		3-5 yrs. \$5,000	
	Develop new inventory for senior housing, independent & assisted living	DCA, Local Govts.,	1-3 yrs. \$5,000		
	Help communities adopt codes to ensure sustainable and quality housing	DCA, Local Govts., HUD, APA		3-5 yrs. TBD	
<b>Lack of and need to ensure sustainable quality of affordable workforce housing</b>	Inventory local housing programs, leaders and policies in each community	DCA, Local Govts.,	1-3 yrs. \$3,000		
	Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$5,000		
	Develop summary report on housing survey findings	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$1,000		
	Develop a regional strategic housing plan	DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$5,000		
	Provide educational seminars and workshops on housing programs, aging and services	DCA, Local Govts., HUD, APA		3-5 yrs. \$5,000	

		Develop a metro-area growth strategy to support urbanizing communities	DCA, Local Govts.,		3-5 yrs. \$10,000	
	<b>Slow/limited responsiveness to issues of the housing and development industry</b>	Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$5,000		
		Develop summary report on housing survey findings	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$1,000		
		Develop a regional strategic housing plan	DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$5,000		
		Provide educational seminars and workshops on housing programs and services	DCA, Local Govts., HUD, APA		3-5 yrs. \$5,000	
	<b>Need to assist communities clarify affordable housing vs. low-income or subsidized housing</b>	Work with media and other outlets to educate citizens and communities about the difference	DCA, Local Govts., HUD, APA	1-3 yrs. \$1,000		
	<b>Need to ensure local development codes are not unintentionally prohibiting new workforce housing development</b>	Assisting communities to develop building codes and ordinance measures that promote housing development	DCA, Local Govts., HUD, APA		3-5 yrs. TBD	

# DISASTER MITIGATION

PRIORITY/ STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING
<i>Priority: Encourage disaster resiliency, extending beyond emergency responsiveness to planning and organizing in advance to address these vulnerabilities, and to enable rebuilding and recovery afterwards in ways that offer healthier, sustainable communities, and more robust regional economies.</i>					
<b>Need to ensure every community has AND USES their Hazard Mitigation Plan</b>	Survey local Emergency Management Departments regarding HMP implementation	GEMA, DCA Local Govts.	1-3 years \$3,000		
	Work with GEMA and FEMA to develop a best practices guide for HMP implementation	GEMA, FEMA, Local Govts.	1 year \$1,000		
	Facilitate an educational forum on HMP updates and implementation	GEMA, FEMA, Local Govts.	1 year \$1,000		
	Ensure every community has co-op agreements in place	GEMA, FEMA, Local Govts.	-	10 yrs.	
<b>Opportunity to provide regional support and coordination with local hazard mitigation planning</b>	Create and sustain a Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan	GEMA, FEMA, Local Govts.	1-3 years \$20,000		
	Create a regional forum for local Emergency Management Directors	GEMA, FEMA, Local Govts.	1 year \$1,000		
	Produce and distribute a specialty grants and loans resource guide for local emergency management departments	GEMA, FEMA, EDA	1 year \$1,000		



## **COORDINATED PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

As part of the State's regional planning standards the GMRC must establish two achievement thresholds for local governments. These standards, rated as Minimum and Excellence Standards, identify specific ordinances, programs, or requirements that may be implemented by local governments in order to realize the Regional Vision and/or address the Regional Issues and Opportunities. Going forward these performance measures will be used to help a) evaluate the effectiveness of the GMRC's Regional Plan implementation efforts, and b) to help identify the various levels of planning and community development desired by the local communities.

In establishing these standards for the GMRC, the approach was to create a framework that works with the current level of planning requirements expected of local governments, then encouraging each community to pursue their own higher standards for community development. In this regard the Minimum is something every local government can readily achieve by simply maintaining their existing level of obligations, and for which the GMRC is available to assist. To achieve the Excellence Standard communities must then employ/adopt a certain volume of policies and practices from the list included here. Communities achieving the Excellence Standard will be eligible for extra assistance from the GMRC and DCA.

### **Minimum Standard**

Items included here are considered essential activities for local governments to undertake for achieving their own planning ambitions and for consistency with the regional plan. The intent is to ensure a consistent and predictable basic level of local requirements across the region. All local governments in the region will be expected to attain the Minimum Standard within three years of adoption of the regional plan, or risk losing Qualified Local Government status.

- Maintain a local Comprehensive Plan, approved by DCA and adopted by the local government
- Maintain and be compliant with all necessary Service Delivery Strategies
- Maintain and participate in a local Hazard Mitigation Strategy
- Maintain and participate in a Local Emergency Operations/Response Plan
- Maintain compliance with State requirements for solid waste management and reporting
- Adopt the necessary minimum rules established by the DNR Part V Environmental Planning Criteria
- Compliance with E-Verify standards

### **Excellence Standard**

The Excellence Standard consists of 66 policies/activities considered desirable for local governments to undertake for achieving their own planning aspirations and for consistency with the regional plan. The intent is to lay out a menu of recommended best practices for local governments to select for implementation. Each recommended best practice implemented by a local government will count toward achieving the Excellence Standard threshold established by the Department. The Excellence Standard will be awarded to any community employing any 20

of the standards listed, with at least 1 standard in each of the 7 elements. (See the GMRC Regional Plan for a full list of all eligible items)

Note: Items marked with an \* are available in more than one category but can only be counted once toward a local inventory of practices.

### **Housing**

- Adopt the latest construction standards for manufactured housing
- Allow and promote conservation design for subdivisions
- Maintain policies enabling and promoting compatible infill development\*
- Maintain policies enabling and promoting residences in mixed use developments where appropriate
- Maintain a plan and process for eliminating or fixing dilapidated/substandard housing
- Include goals and strategies specifically for senior and special needs housing within your comprehensive plan
- Include goals and strategies specifically for neighborhood revitalization/preservation within your comprehensive plan
- Include goals and strategies specifically for affordable housing within your comprehensive plan
- Annually review and assess implementation of housing objectives within your local comprehensive plan
- Adopt the DCA model development regulations for micro housing
- Adopt policies for management of short-term rental residential properties

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

- Participate in county-wide intergovernmental forums (City-County Managers meetings, joint retreats, etc.) at least twice per year
- Annually review and assess intergovernmental contracts and Service Delivery Agreements
- Adopt policies establishing training standards for all elected and appointed officials
- Outline coordination of land use and transportation policies, either alone or in comprehensive plan
- Annually respond to Boundary Annexation Survey (BAS) and submit information as needed\*

### **Transportation**

- Adopt and implement policies that promote connected streets and sidewalks
- Maintain a transportation plan (alone, in your comprehensive plan or with an MPO) that specifically identifies, based on demand and maintenance concerns, needs and priorities for road improvement, sidewalks and pathways
- Participate in the Coordinated Transit Program administered by DHS
- Adopt land use policies that minimize curb cuts and intersections along arterial roads
- Adopt a Complete Streets policy
- Participate in the Safe Routes to School Program

Have a policy that identifies urban areas with heavy pedestrian traffic and dictates employ traffic calming measures for such areas

Annually review and assess implementation of transportation objectives within your local comprehensive plan

### **Community Facilities and Services**

Maintain a Capital Improvements Plan (alone or within your comprehensive plan) for police, fire suppression, public works or parks and recreation that specifically identifies, based on demand and maintenance concerns, the needs and priorities for new equipment, facilities, vehicles or personnel advancement for the next 5 years

Maintain a Water or Wastewater Utility Improvement Plan (alone or within your comprehensive plan) that specifically identifies, based on demand and maintenance concerns, the needs and priorities for line repair and service area expansion for 5+ years

Create and maintain a strategy for improving your community's ISO rating

Maintain a site selection policy and long-term growth strategy with the local school board

Provide a recycling program and centers

Annually review and assess the health care needs for your community

Annually review and assess implementation of public facilities and services objectives within your local comprehensive plan

### **Economic Development**

Maintain a designated economic development professional or support a local development authority

Support/Participate in Quick Start, Georgia Work Ready, Workforce Investment or other economic development programs

Maintain a targeted marketing strategy (alone or within your comprehensive plan) that specifically identifies the top three specific industries targeted for local expansion or recruitment, and outlines specific measures to foster such expansion

Maintain a strategy for support of agriculture and/or agri-tourism

Maintain a tourism strategy that features collaboration with the State Department of Economic Development and at least one other jurisdiction

Annually review and assess your community based on the GMRC CEDS performance criteria

Annually review and assess implementation of economic development objectives within your local comprehensive plan

Maintain an Urban Redevelopment Plan (or comparable formal strategy) for older, established areas such as downtowns and urban neighborhoods\*

Achieve DCA's PlanFirst designation

Achieve designation for State or Federal Opportunity Zone

Achieve designation for State Rural Zone

Achieve designation for State Enterprise Zone

Maintain an inventory of any local brownfields and have a defined strategy for eventual mitigation



## **Land Use Management**

Maintain and enforce soil erosion, sedimentation and pollution control policies complying with Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Service standards

Maintain specialized land use policies designed to preserve/foster agricultural use

Maintain residential land use policies that favor urban lot sizes (< 1 acre) and rural lot sizes (≥ 3 acres)

Enable and promote mixed use development

Enable and promote parking standards that encourage minimal space counts, pervious surfaces, incorporated pedestrian access and/or shade trees

Maintain and promote design guidelines for new development

Maintain and promote signage standards and landscape and maintenance standards

Require sidewalks of new development

Adopt policies establishing training standards for all elected and appointed officials

Maintain policies enabling and promoting compatible infill development\*

Annually share notice of development trends and statistics with the GMRC and neighboring jurisdictions

Designate, and maintain through policy, Gateway corridors, Scenic Byways and tourist corridors

Annually review and assess planning, zoning and permitting actions by your community for consistency with the comprehensive plan, past precedence and across staff and official levels

Annually review and assess implementation of land use objectives within your local comprehensive plan

Annually respond to Boundary Annexation Survey (BAS) and submit information as needed\*

Maintain an Urban Redevelopment Plan (or comparable formal strategy) for older, established areas such as downtowns and urban neighborhoods\*

## **Natural and Cultural Resources**

Include in your comprehensive plan remediation measures for all 303(b) and 305(d) listed waters within your community

Maintain an open space/greenspace strategy

Maintain support for Adopt-A-Stream, Keep America Beautiful or other environmental programs

Maintain compliance with the NFIP program

Maintain a Historic Resources Commission

Maintain historic district overlay zones/ preservation ordinances in line with HPD guidelines

Maintain Certified Local Government status through HPD

Promote and support Main Street or Better Hometown programs

Develop annual report summarizing compliance with your respective River Basin Management Plan (as designated by DNR)

Annually review and assess implementation of natural and cultural objectives within your local comprehensive plan

Achieve GEMA's WaterFirst designation

Adopt 2 of the 4 practices required of Tree City USA communities

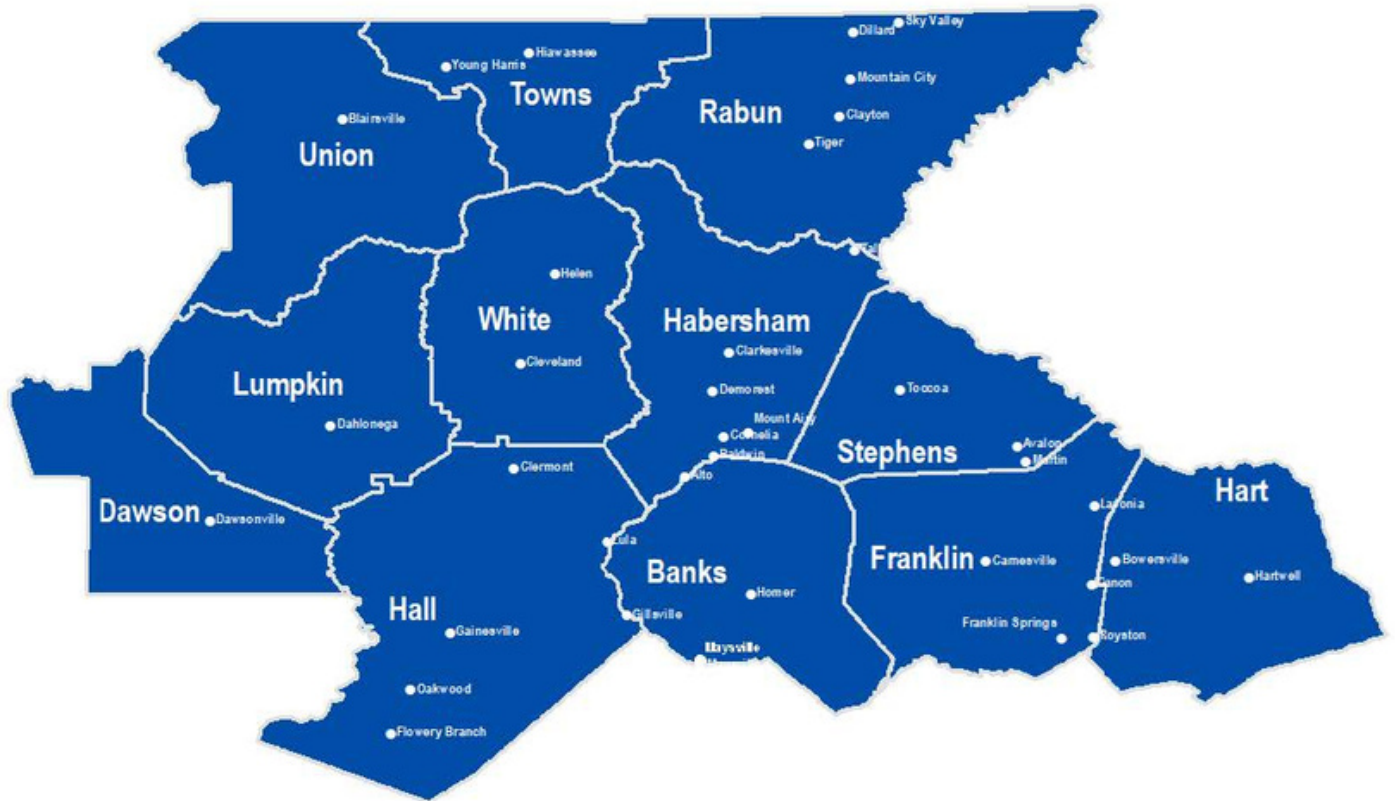




Impressions  
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