



2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) & Regional Plan

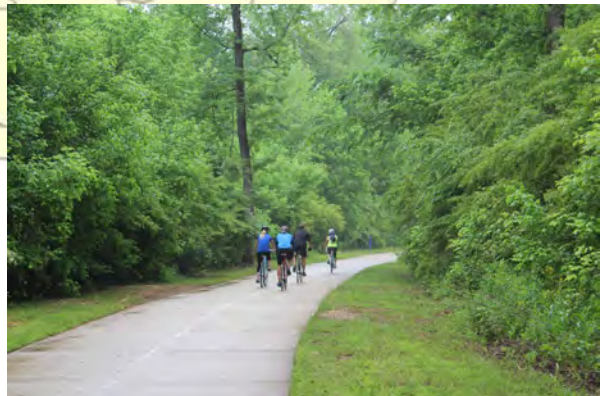


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Regional Plan* is part of a local planning and implementation process designed to create jobs, foster more stable, resilient and diversified economies, improve living conditions, and provide a mechanism for guiding and coordinating the efforts of persons and organizations concerned with economic development. This document serves as the five-year plan for the combined CEDS and Regional Plan for the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC). 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). The *Regional Plan* identifies and coordinates remediation measures for issues and opportunities that impact multiple communities within the region in areas such as environmental management, community facilities, and land use. The resulting document then provides a forward-thinking work program for the GMRC that will better coordinate support services for local governments and direct state activities for the region.

Taken all together the *CEDS/Regional Plan* is the comprehensive guide for how the GMRC will support its member communities in achieving their individual goals in a fashion that yields the best outcomes for everyone combined. It will ensure the GMRS staff are targeting those tasks and needs which will better benefit the region in a manner that that will respect the area's character, ambitions, and resources.

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.



REGIONAL GOAL SUMMARY

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.

Natural and Cultural Resources: *To conserve, protect and promote the environmental, natural and cultural resources of the region*

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

Community Facilities and Services: *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.*

Economic Development, Business and Industry: *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.*

Workforce Development: *To attract and retain business and industry by promoting education and implementing a world-class workforce development strategy.*

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

Pre-Disaster Mitigation: *Encourage disaster resiliency, extending beyond emergency responsiveness to advance planning and organizing to address vulnerabilities, and to enable rebuilding and recovery afterwards in ways that offer healthier, sustainable communities, and more robust regional economies.*

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 QLG 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.



INTRODUCTION

REGION PROFILE

The Georgia Mountains region is comprised of 12 counties within the extreme northeast corner of Georgia, bordered by North Carolina to the north and South Carolina to the east. Taken all together, the Georgia Mountains region covers approximately _____ square miles. At a total estimated population of 488,683, 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 IS OUR STORY... AND OUR FUTURE

As often echoed in public comments and surveys the natural scenic beauty of the Georgia Mountains area is one of its most important resources. Approximately 463,013 acres of the Chattahoochee National Forest lies within nine of the twelve Georgia Mountain counties. Nine state parks in the area provide for visitors who wish to hike, camp, canoe or enjoy wildlife, while the region also harbors access to the Appalachian Trail and the Bartram Trail within the Blue Ridge Mountains. Visitors may also glimpse life of the early settlers and their relationship with the Georgia mountains through attractions like the Northeast Georgia History center, Travelers' Rest in Toccoa or the Gold Museum in Dahlonega.



Topographically over half of the region is totally or partially located in the Blue Ridge Mountains province, which includes the highest mountain in the State (Brasstown Bald, elevation 4,784 feet) and several other prominent peaks rising above 4,000 feet. This part of the region is defined by steep slopes and mostly narrow valleys with many streams. The region's southern half is mostly within the upper Georgia Piedmont, where there are many broad, fertile, level bottom valleys that have sustained communities since the days of the Cherokee and Creek nations.

The prevailing topography means the region is also known for streams and rivers and, through human intervention, many reservoirs. The largest body of water in Georgia is Lake Lanier located on the southwestern corner of the region along the Hall-Forsyth County line. The 38,500-acre lake was created during 1954-57 by damming the Chattahoochee River at Buford and currently boasts over 20 million visitors each year, making it among the most visited lakes in the United States. Another sizable reservoir is 56,000-acre Lake Hartwell, created on the Savannah River near the city of the same name. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operates both lakes to provide flood control, electrical power, recreation and water supply in the GMRC area. The region holds several additional reservoirs including some operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority or Georgia Power Company. Taken all together these lakes bring tourism, provide recreation and have bolstered housing for the region.



The appeal of this scenic beauty has contributed to the tremendous growth experienced by the Georgia Mountains region over the past three decades. Some of these counties are among the fastest growing in the United States and all have experienced continued positive growth, with most at rates higher than the state average. Much of the growth can be attributed to migration resulting from economic factors, retirement populations and the spillover from metropolitan Atlanta. As a result, the region was predominantly agrarian through the 20th century but is now a land in transition with more suburban and urban development, pockets of industry and hubs of civic and economic activity oriented around major schools and medical centers.

These same factors have also made the area popular for tourism, nearly a billion dollar a year industry in the Georgia Mountains Region. Visitors are attracted to the history, outdoor activities, museums, mountain arts and crafts, antiques, natural scenic beauty, and unique cuisine. Numerous festivals throughout the year, such as Oktoberfest in Helen or the Georgia Mountain Fair in Hiawassee, draw hundreds of thousands of visitors. Additionally, outlet trade centers located in Banks County and Dawson County now attract thousands of shoppers/visitors year-round.



Land use in the Georgia Mountains region is primarily rural in nature, the exception being Hall County. The majority of land is undeveloped or used for agriculture or forestry. 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. Commercial and industrial development tends to be located where necessary infrastructure is in place (i.e., along major transportation corridors and where water and sewer amenities are available). Because of its rural character, there are very few local land use regulations in the Georgia Mountains counties. Those regulations that do exist tend to be weak not because of the regulations themselves, but due to lack of enforcement. However, the recognition of the need for land use regulations or guides is being expressed by local governments and citizens as they observe the fast-paced growth taking place within their communities.

ABOUT THE GMRC

The GMRC is one of 12 regional government offices within Georgia working to foster economic development and to provide community planning and information services. The GMRC provides services and technical assistance directly to its 49 local governments as well as developing regional initiatives and supporting the programs of various State Departments. Originally founded as the Georgia Mountains Area and Planning Development Center in 1962, the GMRC has evolved in the common services provided but continually works to assist its member governments in efforts that preserve local character, encourage sustainable resource management and progressive economies, and contribute to improving the overall well-being of the region and its communities. The governing Council for the GMRC consists of three representatives from each county (one County representative, one municipal representative, and one



private sector appointee) plus five appointees from the State officers (3 from the Governor, 1 each from the Lt. Governor and the Speaker of the House).

The affiliated workforce development department, WorkSource Georgia Mountains, provides day-to-day management of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds that are allocated to the region through the Technical College System of Georgia. The Department continues to provide oversight of training providers, job training, and job placement to eligible persons. Examples of programs offered to the 13-county service area through the department include On-the-Job Training (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training to improve job and career options for Georgia's workers and Career Coaches that offer training and resume-building services for job seekers.

WorkSource Georgia Mountains Adult and Dislocated Services department served **447 individuals in FY 2021**. Training for individuals 18 years or older was provided by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding. Additionally, WorkSource assisted **448 youth** through the Youth Program Division.

THE PLANNING 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.

Public involvement was also encouraged through various public meetings, and online survey process, and through general announcements at local council and commission meetings. GMRC staff held 6 general public forums throughout the region during the winter/spring of 2019, and made presentations at a local Rotary Club event and a county planning commission workshop. The online survey was promoted through email outreach to the local governments and various stakeholder groups, and was announced to local media in the winter of 2019. The survey collected over 260 responses and provided general insight into area issues and concerns, information which contributed to the two committees' assessment of regional priorities. Additionally, GMRC staff conducted individual interviews with community leaders and stakeholders for feedback. This included local planning staff, local Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority officials, and officials from various prominent local institutions such as Northeast Georgia Health System and the University of North Georgia.



Lastly, GMRC staff also reviewed local comprehensive plans for an understanding of local priorities and objectives. Where issues and goals were common across jurisdictions those were considered for regional priorities within the GMRC CEDS/Regional Plan.





2020-2021 Committees

The CEDS Committee meets four times every year and plays an active role in prioritizing economic development projects in the region and endorsing the CEDS Implementation Plan. The CEDS 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 virtual meetings in **2021** to discuss goals, issues and mitigation measures for the update.



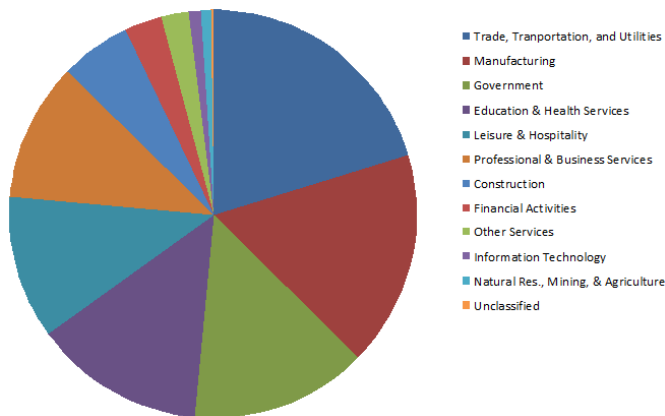
CEDS Committee		Regional Plan Committee	
Charles Cawthon	City of Lavonia	Mitch Griggs	Union Co. Development Auth.
Phyllis Ayers	Stephens County	Liz Ordiales	City of Hiawassee
Dwayne Dye	Hart County IBA	Connie Tabor	Main Street Toccoa
Margaret Ayers	Franklin County	David Webb	Forsyth County
Cliff Bradshaw	Towns County	Vicki Boling	Banks County
Erik Brinke	Blue Ridge EMC	Beth Thomas	Franklin County
Richard Brooks	Banks County	Mike Beecham	Habersham County
Bill Chafin	Hart County	Tom O'Bryant	City of Cleveland
Tim Evans	Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce	Robbie Irvin	City of Dawsonville
Barbara Fiedor	Georgia Dept. of Economic Dev.	Sarah McQuade	Hall County
Charlie Fiveash	Habersham County	Kathy Papa	Dept. of Community Affairs
Mitch Griggs	Union County Dev. Authority	GMRC Staff	
Brittany Ivey	Stephens County Dev. Authority	Daniel Martin	Economic Development Dir.
Denise McKay	Hiawassee/Young Harris/Towns Co.	Adam Hazell	Planning Dir.
Rebecca Mincey	Lumpkin County Dev. Authority	John Phillips	Workforce Development Dir.
Tom O'Bryant	City of Cleveland	Faith Bryan	Information Services Dir.
Kathy Papa	Dept. of Community Affairs	Patrick Larson	Senior Project Manager
Stephanie Ponce	Georgia Dept. of Labor	Laurin Yoder	Project Manager
John Sell	White County	Joe Rothwell	Regional/ HP Planner
Annaka Woodruff	Dept. of Community Affairs		



REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

ECONOMIC CLIMATE

Once defined as the transitional area between the agrarian piedmont and the small industrial sites found along waterways in the Appalachian foothills, the Georgia Mountains region is no longer solely reliant on agriculture. Instead, health care, tourism, distribution, retail, and a variety of industrial and high-tech companies comprise the regional economy. Problems surrounding future economic and community development for the region include, but are not limited to, shortages of skilled labor, out-migration of young adults, and lack of quality neighborhood housing for new executives and business employees. With approximately **7,970** people seeking employment in this region, the availability of key quality sites and/or buildings for new business remains a continuing challenge. Thus, continued diversification along with economic growth, are seen as the primary goals for the Georgia Mountains Region.



The entire region has a substantial goods production base and a strong desire to maintain and expand manufacturing jobs. Most local manufacturing firms have marginal ties with other firms in the region and companies have located and expanded here due to quality labor force, low cost of doing business, historic location of companies in the area, and quality of the transportation system. Most communities in the region see this as vital for expanding employment opportunities in the future.

2021 was an unprecedented year as our entire nation continued to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

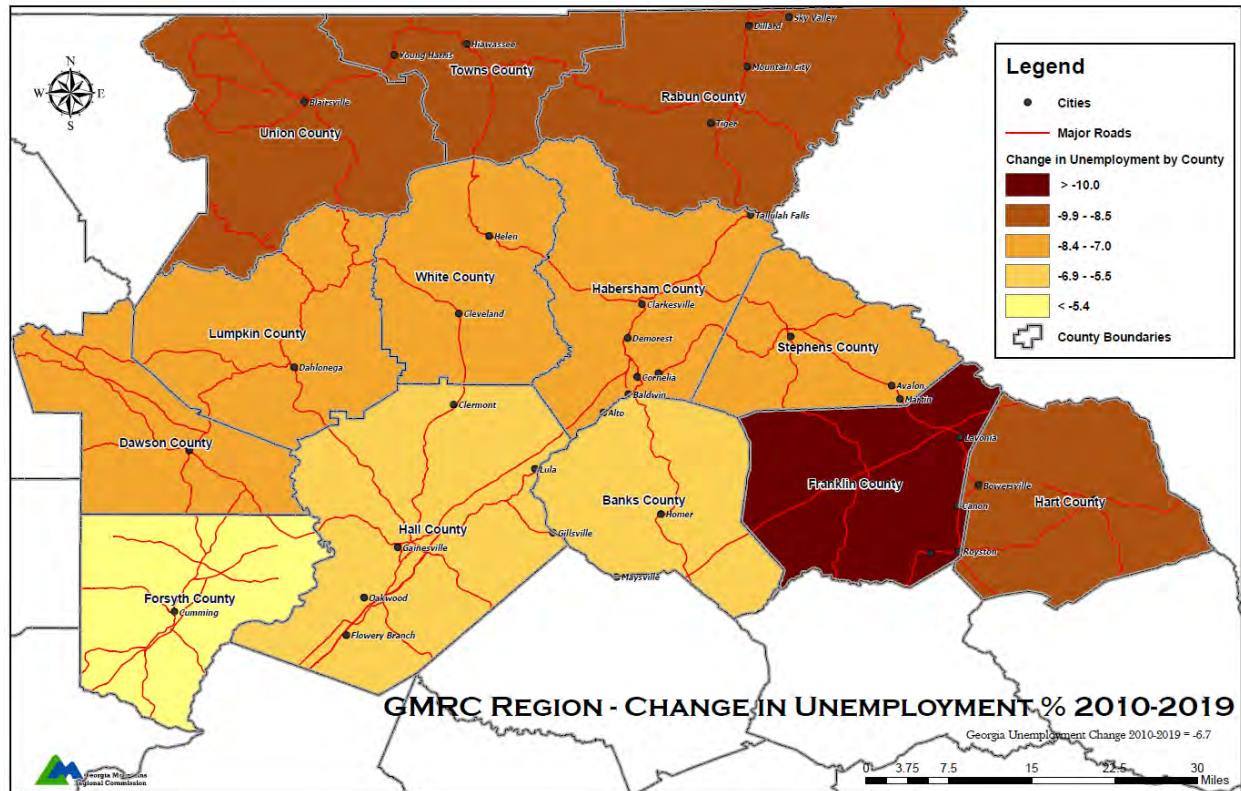
Despite the negative impact of the virus, several industry sectors have continued to grow within the Georgia Mountains Region. Distribution and logistics are industry sectors that continue to grow within the Region. The region's infrastructure is continuing to provide top quality support to the region's economic clusters. Important components of the public infrastructure system to support all segments of the region's economy include, but are not limited to: skilled labor force, strong workforce development facilities, advanced technological resources, and adequate physical infrastructure that includes a reliable water supply, reliable wastewater treatment capabilities, transportation, and a communications infrastructure system capable of handling the needs of today's firms.

Low taxes and tax credits are attracting new industries and supporting the expansion of existing business in the region. The Georgia Mountains Region saw projects resulting in **\$842** million investment and **1,050 new jobs created in FY 2021**, according to the Georgia Department of Economic Development. Georgia's leading industries are food processing, logistics, information technology, aerospace, automotive, and manufacturing.

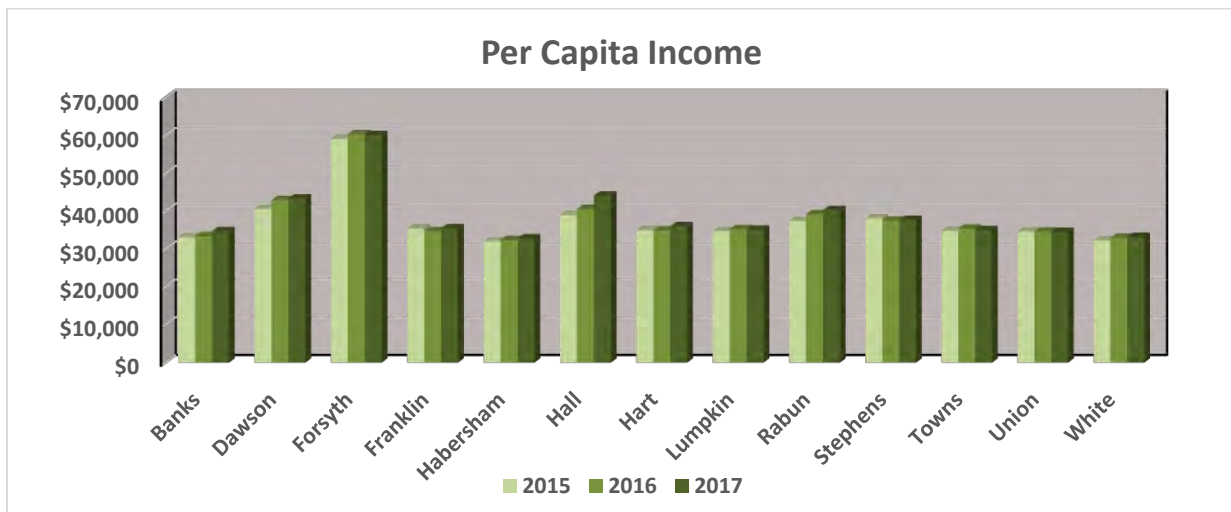
Top Five Region Industries

	Industry	# of Firms	# of Employees	
1	Manufacturing	907	39,636	
2	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,771	33,697	
3	Retail Trade	2,344	31,495	
4	Accommodation and Food Services	1,351	23,798	
5	Education Services	388	23,496	

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wage Program, 1st Quarter 2021



Significant changes in the area unemployment rate for the region occurred during 2021 as a result of COVID-19. The region had an unemployment rate of 2.2% (July 2021) which is lower than the state of 3.7%, and the U.S. rate of 5.4%. 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.



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.

The impact of tourism and related industries has a significant impact on the economy of the Georgia Mountains Region. As a primary gateway to the Blue Ridge Mountains the region annually hosts over seven million visitors to the many mountains, lakes, rivers, museums, and downtowns that make the region unique from the rest of the state. Although the tourism sector took a significant decline in activity as a result of COVID-19, the region continues to see continued investment. Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta, a 2.54-mile International Grand Prix Course, attracts 320,000 visitors annually. The new, state-of-the-art Michelin Tower was unveiled in 2019 and will serve as the primary hospitality and media facility during the **24th Annual Motul Petit Le Mans November 10-13, 2021.**

A fixture in downtown Toccoa, Georgia, the Ritz Theatre (pictured to the right) serves as a community center and performing arts center, hosting musicals and non-musical productions including "Fiddler on the Roof," "Guys and Dolls," "Raisin in the Sun," "Leader of the Pack," and "The Sound of Music" to mention just a few. The Currahee Artists Guild sponsored arts shows featuring visual artists in the area. The Ida Cox Music Series, named for the Toccoa-born artist who made her mark in music in the first part of the 20th century, was created by Main Street Toccoa to fill a need for quality local entertainment.

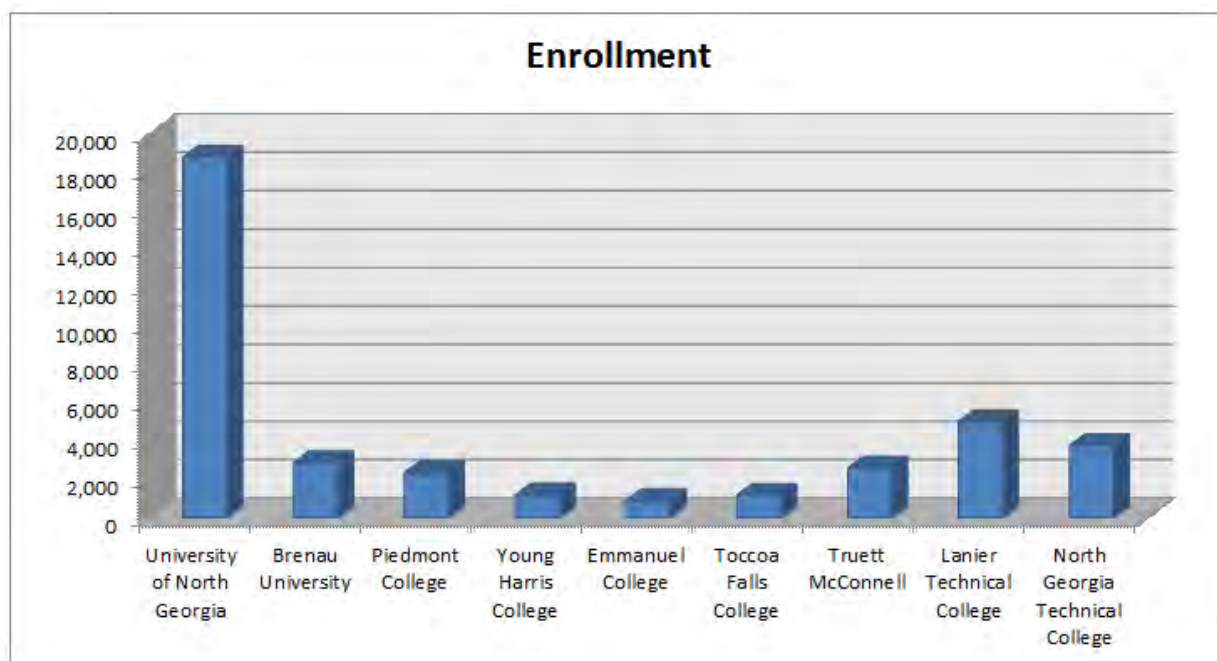


Economic Impact of Domestic Travel by County - 2016

Counties	Expenditures (\$ Millions)	Payroll (\$ Millions)	Employment	Tax Receipts (\$ Millions)	
				State	Local
Banks	\$15.53	\$3.7	154	\$0.73	\$0.44
Dawson	\$50.08	\$12.02	492	\$2.38	\$1.43
Forsyth	\$174.67	\$45.55	1,838	\$7.58	\$5.23
Franklin	\$37.78	\$5.8	282	\$1.53	\$1.13
Habersham	\$52.57	\$10.73	492	\$2.25	\$1.38
Hall	\$314.18	\$68.69	2,856	\$13.73	\$9.42
Hart	\$24.24	\$6.04	253	\$1.09	\$0.63
Lumpkin	\$41.54	\$8.19	343	\$1.83	\$1.16
Rabun	\$54.37	\$13.43	537	\$2.55	\$1.49
Stephens	\$31.34	\$5.94	288	\$1.28	\$0.84
Towns	\$48.78	\$11.37	453	\$2.35	\$1.33
Union	\$26.45	\$5.4	258	\$1.10	\$0.73
White	\$67.46	\$15.13	617	\$3.00	\$1.98
GM Region	\$938.99	\$211.99	8,863	\$40.30	\$27.19
Georgia	\$24,526.00	\$7,853.78	236,090	\$1,170.24	\$703.65

Source: Excerpted from Study Prepared for GDECD by the U.S. Travel Association, Washington, DC

The economic development programs provided through the colleges and technical colleges provide customized training and other services for business and industry to help existing companies remain in the area and succeed and to stimulate new business start-ups. Quick Start training and services are provided to attract new companies to the area, to assist companies to expand, and to help existing companies to implement new technologies.



Labor Force Education Levels

Age Group	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
Elementary	4.9%	9.2%	6.4%	5.3%	13.6%
Some High School	19.5%	11.9%	9.2%	9.4%	14.8%
High School Grad/GED	34.9%	29.7%	27.3%	31.7%	31.2%
Some College	33.7%	20.4%	18.4%	20.2%	16.6%
College 2 Year	3.0%	6.3%	7.2%	7.1%	3.6%
College 4 Year	3.7%	16.0%	22.3%	17.0%	12.2%
Post Graduate Studies	.4%	6.5%	9.2%	9.3%	8.0%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profile

While the overall regional economy has strengthened there are still issues that need attention and several opportunities remain to be built upon. Continued economic diversifications and strengthening the competitiveness of the region's economy are still problems that need to be addressed, as is the depth and quality of the local labor force. Economic growth that occurs from internal business growth rather than from in-migration of businesses must be addressed for business retention.

Improving the economic climate of the region is a common goal and requires policy makers to understand how changes in the region's population will affect the opportunities for economic growth. According to the Georgia Department of Labor it is projected that the region's population in 2025 will reach 805,059 persons, reflecting a 30.3% increase from 2010. Therefore, the goals identified in the *CEDS/Regional Plan* are more important than ever in maintaining the balance between growth and the rural character of the region.



LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Development within the Georgia Mountains Region is dictated largely by three factors: 1) The topography of the mountains and foothills in the north, which limit development opportunities, 2) the proximity to metropolitan Atlanta and the burgeoning suburban development patterns reaching into and through Forsyth and Hall Counties, and 3) the main arterial roads that link the various economic centers within and outside of the region. These three forces have shaped the changing pace and make-up of growth and development that has affected the region, effectively creating 4 main sub-areas that have their own special needs and opportunities.

The *Urbanized/ Developed Area* consists largely of those parts of Dawson, and Hall Counties which have been designated as urban districts due to Census population counts and prevailing traffic volumes. These areas are already past conventional suburban scales of development, often featuring limited open space and agriculture, featuring points of significant traffic congestion, and account for approximately 60% of the region's population and employment.

The *Suburban/ Developing Areas* include those areas on the periphery of the urbanized districts as well as some other pockets of population and economic centers. Many of these represent catchment areas for the next wave of suburban expansion from metro Atlanta, such as portions of Dawson, Habersham and Banks Counties.

The *Conservation Ares* include all those lands recognized within the Georgia Mountains Regionally Important Resource (RIR) document with established levels of natural resource protection. This includes such places as National Forests, State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, and other lands receiving protected or conservation status. These lands represent the region's current ecological infrastructure.

The remaining lands fall within the *Rural/ Undeveloped Area* category. These areas are outside of near-term projected growth and represent the bulk of the existing agricultural and rural residential lands that defined the region's character and history. Where possible these lands should be preserved for ongoing rural forms and uses both to retain that character cherished by so many stakeholders but also for its contribution to the prevalent agrarian economy and preservation of local ecology.

Several market forces have had a direct impact on the development of land use patterns in the Georgia Mountains Region. The nature of these forces can be positive or negative, and often these market forces even create both positive and negative impacts. These forces devise a very complex land use matrix in which portions are easily analyzed and results can be simply forecasted. On the other hand, this matrix is full of intangibles that can be inputted and interpreted subjectively which make predictions, projections and planning at best a difficult and unstable process. Whatever the case, these forces are at work all the time with every commercial transaction, rain storm and person who migrates in or out of the region.

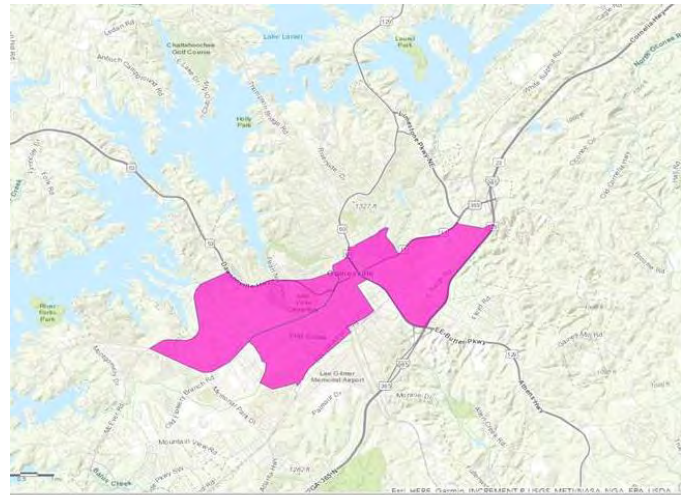
Identified as some of the more significant market forces in the region are: the various industries established in the region, the age of the migrating population, the abundance of natural resources, the property values and tax structure, the infrastructure improvements, the proximity of the region to other areas, the quality of life amenities that exists in the region and the regulatory structure for developers in the region.

There are several types of industries in the Georgia Mountains Region which influence the land use market. However, there are three which stand out from all the rest. They are recreational tourism, poultry and timber.



Another major market force affecting land use patterns is the proximity of the region to other areas. Gainesville/Hall County became its own MSA in 2000, not only by surpassing the amount of persons, but also the density required to become a MSA on its own. The Georgia Mountains Region is within a two hour or less drive from the metropolitan statistical areas (MSA's) of Athens, GA; Atlanta, GA; Augusta, GA/Aiken, SC; Anderson, SC; Greenville/Spartanburg, SC; Chattanooga, TN; Knoxville, TN; and Asheville, NC. From this perspective is easy to recognize proximity as a major market force in the land use development patterns within the region.

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 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.

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.

Community

Young Harris
Gainesville
Stephens Co
Baldwin
Clarkesville
Union Co
Royston
Rabun Co.
Hartwell.

Designation

Enterprise Zone
Opportunity Zone
Opportunity Zone
Opportunity Zone
Opportunity Zone
Opportunity Zone
Opportunity Zone
Opportunity Zone
Rural Zone

NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

The effectiveness of any planning process requires identifying the needs that must be addressed in order to achieve a community's goals, clarifying the targets for the local government. To do this the planning process asks communities and stakeholders to assess the information outlined in an effort to identify their respective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. In doing this SWOT analysis the region can more effectively define their objectives and actions to as to better achieve the desired vision.



This part of the planning process also reviewed various forms of data and information about the region. Information such as Census data and Department of Labor data was reviewed for insight into local conditions, plus member governments were asked to provide summaries of their immediate operational and capital improvement needs to give an indication of their priorities ahead of discussions about public objectives. When evaluating this data and information the planning process focused on whether it verified needs or opportunities identified previously, whether it uncovered new needs or opportunities not previously identified, and whether it indicates significant local trends that need to be considered in the planning process. This information was reviewed and assessed by the standing CEDS committee and the GMRC Planning Committee for comment and recommendations. A summary of key Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats can be found in the summary of survey results in the appendix.

Based on guidance by the stakeholders, the following represents a refined listing of Issues and Opportunities for the Georgia Mountains Region. Some were carried over from the previous plan, but the list has been confirmed and/or refined based on the discussions and analyses throughout the current planning process. *(Also shows year proposed or listed as policy)*

Natural and Cultural Resources

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

As the namesake suggests the Georgia Mountains region is synonymous with an abundance of natural beauty and scenic landscapes. Even as it transitions from the mountains to the foothills and piedmont the region is full of rustic vistas and rural scenes that still define much of the character still cherished by residents and visitors. From National Forests to State Parks, from Wildlife Management Areas to thousands of farms, the Georgia Mountains region remains one very much defined by the land and the southern reach of the Appalachian Mountains.

This relationship between the landscape and local communities has heightened the urgency many area stakeholders feel regarding the protection of natural resources. While there remains ambition to grow there is a very strong desire to preserve the area's rural character as best as possible. There is an overwhelming demand to find ways to preserve the existing natural landscape from overdevelopment, to restrict suburban encroachment into more pristine areas, and to ensure the local ecology remains in good health. This latter part is crucial given the region's dependence on tourism and outdoor recreation.

Acting on this the charge before the GMRC is one of helping our member communities where possible find ways to preserve rural landscapes, protect local water resources, and foster stronger connections between economic development and resource stewardship. The management of water resources will be especially critical as the region (and all of Georgia) continues to grow. To this end the GMRC continues to work with the three State-appointed Water Planning Councils active within the region in support of implementing their respective plans and programs. The GMRC also works with the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D and other partners in planning and carrying out activities that conserve natural resources, support economic development, enhance the environment, and improve the standard of living for all communities. This involves the education in, and the implementation of, specific regulations and policies that ensure best practices of undeveloped land within the region.

Paired with this effort is the need, also, to protect and promote the areas cultural resources. There are many significant historic sites and structures in the region as well as an abundance of older structures that have shaped the character of many communities. From classic urban neighborhoods to vintage farmsteads, these resources are as much a part of the defining trait as the land when it comes to giving rise to the small-town charms that appeal to most stakeholders and to tourists. Most communities wish to retain this sense of character amidst any growth, so that as new development comes into the area the local communities will retain their identity and ties to their past.



Tallulah Gorge

Natural and Cultural Resources

Needs and Mitigation Strategies

Ensure communities employ Georgia's environmental planning criteria

- Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comprehensive plans

Need to improve awareness about conservation design, environmentally sensitive areas, and best management practices

- Conduct/Facilitate a workshop on conservation design
- Develop catalog of best environmental policies for local governments
- Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comprehensive plans
- Promote environmental BMPs within *Excellence Standards*

Need for more/ preserve local greenspace plans

- Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comprehensive plans
- Develop template for greenspace planning to be incorporated into local comprehensive plans
- Inventory of available greenspace in local jurisdictions
- Promote environmental BMPs within *Excellence Standards*

Desire to attract funds for State parks and wildlife management areas

- Support funding measures for management of DNR lands
- Promote cooperative partnerships between State, local governments and private sector

Need to address habitat degradation caused by growth and development

- Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comprehensive plans
- Develop template for greenspace planning to be incorporated into local comprehensive 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
- Inventory/Assessment of brownfields in the region

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
- Promote historic preservation BMPs within *Excellence Standards*
- Convene annual GMRC Historic Resource Forum



Land Use

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

This section provides a brief assessment of select issues and concerns around the region based on geographical reference, used to help each jurisdiction recognize those specific locations in need of special attention through physical investment or change of policy.

Areas where significant Regionally Important Resources (RIRs) are at risk from development

Lake Lanier and the un/underdeveloped parts of Forsyth and Hall Counties are most susceptible to new growth pressures but both communities have recently completed comprehensive plan updates that address these concerns and have policies and programs in place designed to address environmental management. There is concern about the impacts of new housing forms within the mountainous parts of the region, but to date the impact is minimal and communities are monitoring the situation.

Areas where rapid development or change of land uses may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation

As the main arterial between large and growing metropolitan centers, the I-85 Corridor is receiving increased growth and demand for utilities, possibly beyond local capacity. Banks County and Franklin County have updated land use policies and made infrastructure and utility improvements to support growth in their portions of the corridor. All of the local governments with interchanges along this highway are pursuing utility improvements for the purpose of attracting employers, with the potential demand for new service roads and increased traffic, as well as the change in the nature of land use patterns for the area. (Map ID –I-85 Corridor)

Several north-south arterial roadways that serve multiple purposes are at risk of over-congestion. Highways 129 and 17 provide critical access for local and through traffic, particularly for tourists traveling into the Georgia Mountains Region. Congestion levels and development pressures can increase as these roads are explored for commercial and industrial growth, while communities relying on such growth are also looking to preserve the free-flow of traffic and the scenic appeal of these rural arteries. Hall and Habersham Counties have done assessments of Highway 365 resulting in updated land use policies along the corridor. Meanwhile the Ga 400 corridor stretching from Forsyth County into White County has seen expansions on the south side with planned expansions for the north end reaching up to Cleveland. This area will be a prime target for increased suburban development and may experience pressures on utilities, community facilities, etc. (Map ID –North-South Arterials)

Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvement

There are no large areas with regional-scale concentrations of land in need of redevelopment, however the older town centers and neighborhoods should be improved through redevelopment programs. The GMRC is supporting multiple efforts to revitalize these historic downtowns through planning efforts, grant applications, and pursuit of opportunity zone designations. (Map ID –Town Centers)



Land Use

Needs and Mitigation Strategies

Need tools to preserve area farms

- Develop regional development build-out scenario
- Develop updated concept for, and inventory of, primary agricultural areas
- Develop template for comprehensive neighborhood plans and standards
- Review regional Future Development Strategy; Amend as needed
- Assess the performance of BMPs throughout the region

Need to ensure optimum land use planning tools and enforcement at local levels

- Review regional Future Development Strategy; Amend as needed
- Promote BMPs throughout the region as land use alternatives
- Promote neighborhood scale planning

Need to match land use plans with infrastructure plans

- Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy
- Develop regional development build-out scenario
- Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses for new development on utilities and infrastructure

Need to stem the deterioration of downtown areas, buildings and infrastructure, and loss of economic activity as suburbanization occurs in the region

- Review regional Future Development Strategy; Amend as needed
- Develop/ maintain region-wide downtown economic database that includes historic resources
- Develop redevelopment plans for historic downtowns & urban areas
- Create model design guidelines and promote incentive programs for downtown areas
- Advocate for funding/private investment for downtown redevelopment
- Initiate GMRC Downtown Association, promote partnerships (The Georgia Cities Foundation)

Impact of population growth for impact on rural character

- Inventory and map agri-tourism assets of the region, promote Georgia Centennial Farm program
- Develop regional growth and tourism strategy specifically for historic downtowns
- Develop promotional material for area farmer's markets and canneries
- Develop updated concept for, and inventory of, primary agricultural areas
- Develop inventory of regional wineries, breweries, and distilleries for promotional purposes

Lack of identification of plans for growth areas for industrial and commercial development

- Identify areas where future industrial growth may and can occur
- Develop growth management plans
- Identify funding mechanisms for required infrastructure
- Develop map/inventory of commercial and/or industrial properties in the region
- Identify major growth influencers such as the Inland Port or external regional contributors



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.*

Governments across all levels provide or support a myriad of utilities and services that keep communities active, functional, and efficient. From water and roads, to parks and schools, and more. The core facilities and services are critical to ensuring the local economies remain on track to prosper and protect the welfare of area residents and visitors. To this end the overarching goal of the region in managing public facilities and services is to have all the local governments and their affiliated partners, including independent service providers and authorities, coordinate their efforts to efficiently use area resources in pursuit of all the other goals for the region.

Transportation

With the trending population growth in the region comes the need for improvement and maintenance to the highways and state routes within the area. 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.

The GMRC works with local governments to assist with transportation needs and track improvements and new routes added to the area's transportation system. The Georgia Department of Transportation works with cities and counties in the Georgia Mountains Region to prioritize projects that will enhance its transportation network. Projects such as the addition the widening of Georgia State Route 400 in Forsyth County, and the completion of the Appalachian Parkway in White County will help ease travel for tourists and emergency responders traveling in the North Georgia Mountains while also attracting prospective business and industry.

Additionally, the Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) has a significant impact on the state and regional economy. The GPA, together with private sector, account for more than 369,000 jobs statewide, \$84.1 billion dollars in revenue, and income exceeding \$20.4 billion annually.

Hall County will be the site of the next inland port. The planned 104-acre Northeast Georgia Inland Port near Gainesville will provide a direct rail link to the Port of Savannah via Norfolk Southern. This project is expected to create nearly 700 jobs and generate \$185 million in private investment.

Water & Wastewater

The region is home to **37 surface water intakes, serving communities within and outside the 12 counties.** Most of these are managed by municipal or county governments, with two managed by independent authorities, and all are subject to the rules and permitting of the State of Georgia Environmental Protection Division. According to EPD, all of the systems within the region currently meet the requirements to retain their permits and/or are in the process of updating their permits. It is also understood that there are no major violations of water quality standards for public water systems and that each system is currently, or is planning to update, the projected levels of service for the next 20-40 years as part of the State's efforts to manage future water resources.

As a result of this information and other planning efforts, first priority of issues and opportunities has been pulled from four other completed documents. First is the GMRC Regional Resource Plan, which



provides a regional overview of resource management for the drinking water supply sources within the region. This document identifies the reservoirs, rivers and recharge aquifers used to supply local utilities with their water supplies, and will be the primary guide for coordinating resource protection. The other three documents referenced will be the watershed management plans for the three Watershed Management Districts (WMDs) within the Georgia Mountains region:

WM District*North Georgia Metropolitan**Coosa – North Georgia**Savannah – Upper Oconee***GM counties**

Hall

Dawson, Lumpkin, Habersham, Towns, Union, White
Banks, Franklin, Hart, Rabun, Stephens

Each of the WMDs has an organizing committee responsible for the development and oversight of a district management plan. This plan will be used to coordinate State support and planning for resource management and reservoir/intake permitting, and will be used by the local governments to coordinate their overall system management. As these documents address the key regional level issues and opportunities for water supply and treatment, the GMRC will defer to these documents for guidance and reference on these issues.

Telecommunications & Broadband Connectivity

The enhancement of telecommunications technology is critical to the future economic viability of the Georgia Mountains Region. Funding for telecommunication related projects continues to be a constant need by cities and counties in the region. Many regional businesses and industries require significant bandwidth for video applications of data sharing between company locations, distance learning, telemedicine and surveillance.

As communities move forward the importance of access to reliable and high-speed, high-capacity internet connections cannot be overestimated. Unserved and underserved areas of Georgia will not remain economically competitive without sufficient internet infrastructure, as this technology becomes the default utility for all manners of communication.

To address this issue in 2018 the Georgia General Assembly amended the provisions of local planning in Georgia by passing the "Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act," intended to facilitate the enhancement and extension of high-speed internet access in communities that lack such infrastructure. In time the State will support programs and initiatives aimed at delivering the community improvement and empowerment potential that reliable, high-speed internet access can provide to even the most difficult-to-serve citizens, schools, and businesses. As the first step in planning for this critical, potentially catalytic infrastructure, the "Ace" Act requires all local governments to incorporate the "*promotion of the deployment of broadband internet services*" into their local plan.

These changes to state law and regulations dealing with local broadband will open more state rights of way along highways and interstates for broadband infrastructure, free up public money for technology grants and sets the groundwork for public-private partnerships in small communities around the state.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted people's ability to work, access healthcare, and receive education services. Because of the shift to telehealth with "virtual visits", teleworking, and remote continuity of learning, there is a stronger need for reliable broadband.

Healthcare

The primary medical facility within the region is the main campus for the Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS), a regional not-for-profit community health system serving approximately 700,000 residents in

northeast Georgia. NGHS offers a full range of healthcare services through its Joint Commission accredited hospital in Gainesville, Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC), which was named one of the country's 100 Top Hospitals for 2009 by Thomson Reuters. The system features a capacity for 557 inpatients, including 261-skilled nursing beds and a medical staff of more than 500 physicians. Additional facilities in Hall County include: three urgent care centers; a mental health and substance abuse treatment center; two outpatient imaging centers; two long-term care centers; and outpatient physical, occupational and speech therapy clinics. NGMC has now surpassed the \$1.75 billion mark in local and state economic impact according to a recent report by the Georgia Hospital Association (GHA), the state's largest hospital trade association. The report found that, in 2016, NGMC generated \$1,751,543,053 in revenue for the local and state economy; provided more than \$52 million in uncompensated care; and sustained more than 18,000 full-time jobs throughout the region and state – in addition to the more than 8,000 employees directly employed by all of NGHS.



**Photo source: St. Mary's Health System*

The third primary hospital in the region is the St. Mary's Health System based in Lavonia, providing a total of 71 beds and employs 36 registered nurses with 2 pharmacists. The system also serves as a hub for human services in Franklin and Hart Counties with a Clinic and Urgent Care unit, the Women's Wellness Center, and Med Link. St. Mary's Health System has committed to investing an additional \$2.4 million in St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital to improve patient safety and upgrade technology and services in areas ranging from the mother/baby unit to the operating rooms.

Waste Management

All counties in Georgia are required to submit a Solid Waste Management Plan to meet the existing solid waste management needs and future demands, implement waste reduction strategies to meet the state's per capita waste reduction goal and assure that a 10-year solid waste disposal capacity exists. Businesses searching for site facilities need assurances from the municipalities that capacity is available for their waste and recycling needs. In order to preserve waste capacity, waste conservation and reduction is an essential method of waste management.

The North Georgia Resource Management Authority (RMA) was created in 1994 to provide a regional approach to handle existing solid waste issues, to provide for solid waste to be properly and economically diverted from landfill waste streams, to explore potential opportunities, to maximize resources and to expand existing programs. In fact, this Authority recycled 768,663,000 pounds of materials in 2016. Keep Our Mountains Beautiful is the environmental education arm of the RMA and the only regional Keep America Beautiful Affiliate in Georgia. This effort as well as many others such as Keep Hall Beautiful promotes good environmental stewardship.

Energy

The region recognizes the efforts of the local businesses and industries to include the use of renewable energy resources in their production such as wind and solar. Energy efficiency rebate and education programs are some of the methods energy providers in the Georgia Mountains Region perform to promote efficiency. The region receives its energy from Sawnee EMC, Georgia Power, Habersham EMC, Blue Ridge EMC, Jackson EMC, and Hart EMC.

Community Facilities and Services

Needs and 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

Lingering potential for 2nd commercial passenger service airport to support Metro Atlanta



- Inventory and develop plans to improve local and regional airports

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

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.*

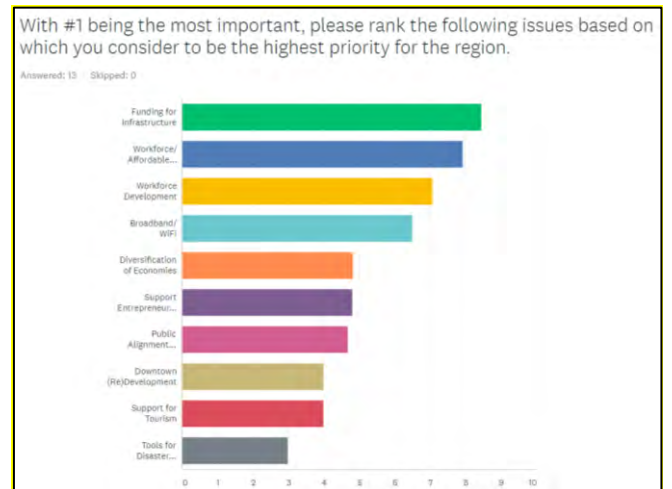
As part of the annual CEDS update process, the GMRC annually surveys its members and partnering agencies regarding the economic development issues facing the region. This information is used to assist the CEDS committee in identifying priorities and key trends that must be addressed in order for the local governments to achieve their aspirations for growth and resiliency.

In 2021, the issues nominated generally reflected the concerns most communities have faced coming out of the Covid-19-induced recession. The broader economy of the region (and, indeed, for much of the state) was already struggling to match workforce skills with available demand, seeing a gap between the two as the nation becomes better educated but the jobs demanding collegiate education decline. There's also the growing need for more workforce housing options as the makeup of households reacts to the shifting wage rates and costs of living.

Based on the results of the 2021 CEDS survey, the following issues were rated as most critical to our regional stakeholders:

- **Funding for Infrastructure Development** – Roads and utilities are seen as critical to sustaining economic growth in the region, due in part to meet the increasing volume of freight traffic and making sure there is the water and wastewater to supply both the incoming businesses and all the new employees they'll attract to the region.

- **Workforce/ Affordable Housing** – The region is already experiencing a shortage in quality available housing that the general workforce can afford, and this crunch is expected to get worse before it improves until new development can come online. Communities also need help in addressing aging, dilapidated structures and ways to accommodate more alternatives to single-family detached models.



- **Workforce Development** – The needs of evolving industries are changing what's demanded of the labor force, so educational institutions and economic development partners are working to help students pursue skills training that will help sustain careers. This shift will take time, however, and more communication is needed to ensure educational institutions know what skills to teach and that students know how to attain these skills with cost efficiency.

- **Broadband & WiFi Connectivity** – Access to the internet was critical before 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic made it absolutely vital. 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.

- **Diversification of Local Economies** – Resilient economies are those with a variety of local industries, providing a buffer for when any one industry is lagging. Coming out of a second recession in 15 years, most communities in the region want to ensure their local economies are built on more than just tourism or agriculture.

Tourism

Goals: *Promote awareness of the Georgia Mountains Region as a tourism destination by fostering viable and sustainable initiatives.*

Update and maintain a master database of tourism assets in the Georgia Mountains Region.

Develop promotional and educational materials for the Georgia Mountains Region.

Foster regional partnerships to create and grow tourism product(s).

Improve infrastructure that supports tourism development and improvement of signage for tourism assets.

Advocate for more funding related to tourism product development.

Tourism is one of the most important economic drivers in the Georgia Mountains region. According to the Georgia Department of Economic Development, tourism is a \$61 billion industry in the State of Georgia. The Georgia Mountains Region is third in annual travel volume by domestic visitors behind only Metro Atlanta and the Georgia Coast.

Tourism Product Development Resource Team

The Georgia Department of Economic Development Tourism Product Development created a new initiative to assist communities interested in developing its tourism potential.

During a Resource Team visit, the team members work in closely with local leadership and assess the portfolio of tourism related assets within the community relevant to the areas of heritage and cultural tourism and Agritourism. The Resource Team's objectives include inventorying and discussing those assets that are the most likely candidates for developing a tourism based economy in a community, as well as identifying obstacles that might impede the implementation of such an effort.

Several communities in the Georgia Mountains Region have benefited from this resource team.



Located in Dahlonega, GA, the Consolidated Gold Mines and gold processing mill built in the early 1900's, was the largest gold mining operation east of the Mississippi River. Tours are conducted daily and guides are actual miners who are open to questions during your tour of underground mine tunnels.

**Photo Source: Dahlonega Consolidated Gold Mine*

Film Industry

Goals: *Attract film industry to the region.*

Create a business friendly environment which is conducive to the film industry.

Georgia is now the No. 1 filming location in the world, according to Film L.A., and the industry has a giant impact on the state's economy. In fact, the State experienced over \$2 billion dollars in direct production spending in 2016, and a recent study showed an overall impact of \$7 billion dollars.

Film and TV production professionals know that Georgia is a Camera Ready state, with highly desirable financial incentives, location diversity, production resources and professional support to make any size production a true success. Recent, notable productions filmed in the Georgia Mountains Region include Trouble with the Curve, Christmas in Homestead, County Line, and Heritage Falls.

The University of North Georgia (UNG) offers a Bachelor of Science in Film & Digital Media and a Bachelor of Arts in Communication with three concentrations: Organizational Leadership, Multimedia Journalism, and Public Relations.

The Georgia Film Festival (GFF) is a two-day film festival hosted by the University of North Georgia on its Gainesville campus. GFF is a festival built to celebrate filmmakers & works made in the state of Georgia and in the southeast. Filmmakers get to showcase their work and build relationships. Students who contribute to hosting the event develop a wide range of leadership and organizational skills. The GFF also helps to increase the visibility of the University, the Communication, Media & Journalism Department, and the Georgia film community.

With the diverse landscape, renowned attractions, and workforce, the Georgia Mountains Region has a unique opportunity to be a part of the State's film industry. The Georgia Film division of the State Department of Economic Development serves as a resource by marketing the state to production companies, scouting locations and coordinating the filming needs of companies with other state agencies, local governments and citizens. Additionally, the State offers a variety of incentives to qualified film projects.

Entrepreneurship

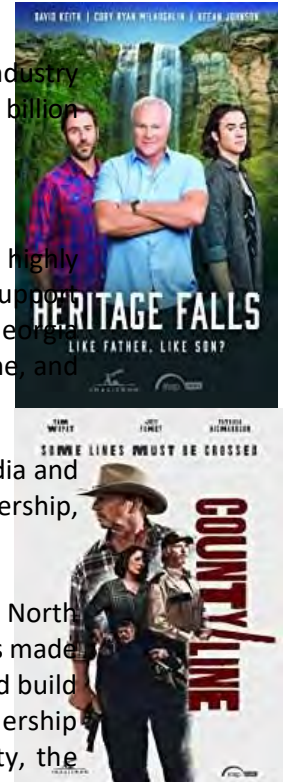
Goals: *To focus on creating new small, high-growth companies in the Georgia Mountains Region.*

Provide the Georgia Mountains Region's Residents with innovative educational resources to help them learn about entrepreneurship and start a new business.

Better connect venture capital, investors, and entrepreneurs within the Georgia Mountains Region.

Improve access to capital for startup and small businesses.

Promote successful entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial practices in the region.





The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Revolving Loan Fund (GMRC-RLF) was very active in FY **2021**. The program works in partnership with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and allows GMRC to assist Region 2 in creating and retaining jobs. As a local economic development initiative, the RLF Program helps expand the region's economy through business development and expansion.

The Revolving Loan Fund is available to businesses of all sizes and varieties. Borrowers are eligible for financing only when credit is not otherwise available. Since inception, the program has loaned out a total of \$5.4 million to 56 businesses throughout the Georgia Mountains Region. Those investments have translated to just over 658 jobs being retained or created.

In FY **2021**, the GMRC received numerous inquiries into the RLF Program. Of those inquiries, 4 applications were submitted and 4 applications were analyzed and approved by the RLF committee and GMRC Council. The GMRLF Program was able to support small business expansion.

In July 2020, GMRC was awarded \$2,101,000 in EDA CARES Act funding, of which \$1.9 million will be reserved for loaning to businesses in all 12 of our counties. Applicants must be able to attest as to how they have been impacted by COVID-19.



Additionally, the region's technical colleges serve as an important partner in the effort to expand entrepreneurship in the region. The Brenau University Business Incubator is a public/private partnership housed at Featherbone Communiversity. Thirty-seven businesses have been launched from the program, and 16 more start-ups are in development. Nineteen patents, 11 copyrights, and 21 trademarks have been developed. The Business Incubator provides entrepreneurs affordable space, access to professional services and educational and technical assistance. Small businesses launched in the Business Incubator have been responsible for the creation of more than 900 jobs since the organization opened ten years ago.

Agribusiness

Goal: *To foster sustainable agriculture by creating and/or retaining jobs and private investment within the agricultural sector and by adding value and developing new products and niche markets.*

Encourage and support the development of community supported agricultural cooperatives to sustain small and mid-sized producers.

Expand opportunities for production based on the byproducts of value-added processing.

Expand and upgrade infrastructure to support farms.

Support efforts to expand agri-tourism in the region.

Support the region's wine industry, breweries, and distilleries by incentivizing and supporting area growers.

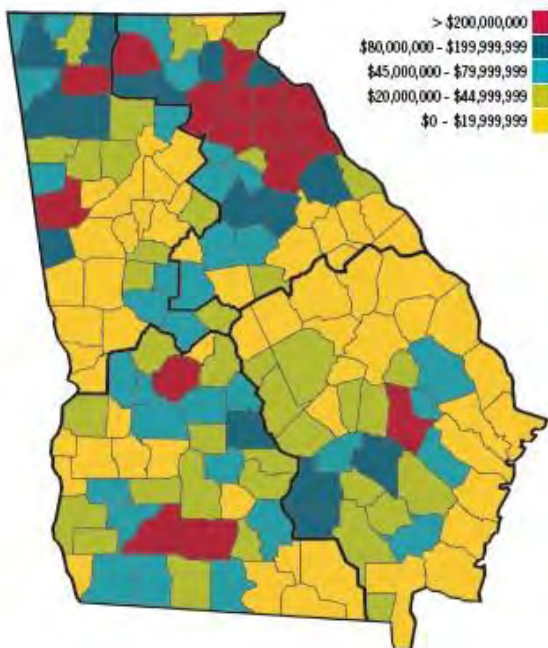
Agri-business is big business in Georgia. This industry is responsible for a \$74.3 billion contribution to Georgia's economy. The State also leads the nation in key poultry production categories.

- According to a study from the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association, the poultry industry employed 11,486 people in Hall County in 2016, and generated an additional 15,193 jobs. The industry was responsible for some \$5.2 billion economic activity throughout Hall County in 2016.
- Hall County is a leader in agribusiness and food processing. In a 2016 report by Garner Economics, Gainesville – Hall MSA ranked as the highest concentrated metro area for food manufacturing and processing in the United States, with over 10,000 employees.
- As much as \$400 million economic impact for the state based on the number of wineries and farms producing fruits and honey for wine production. There are more than 23 wineries and wine tasting rooms throughout the region.
- The University of Georgia Small Business Development Center (SBDC) offers a statewide program of agri-business consulting with the mission to enhance the economic well-being of Georgians by providing a wide range of educational services for small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. In the last five years, the SBDC assisted clients with access to more than \$606 million through commercial loans and equity investments.

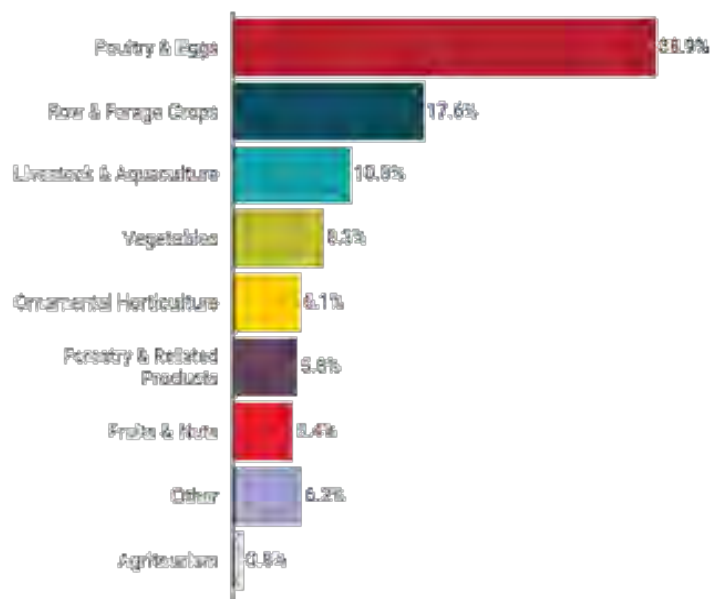
County Economic Importance—Georgia Mountains Region

2016 Total Farm Gate Value

2016 Georgia Farm Gate Value = \$13.75 billion
2015 = \$13.84 billion



TOTAL BY COMMODITY GROUP



Ag - Food & Fiber Related Industries - Total Economic Contribution

County	Farm Gate Value	Output	# of Jobs
Banks	\$262,644,461	\$411,909,603	1,096

Economists at the University of Georgia's Environmental Sciences

Dawson	\$63,890,251	\$221,836,747	918
Franklin	\$394,214,290	\$497,293,095	1,734
Habersham	\$265,108,687	\$787,605,038	3,210
Hall	\$237,310,277	\$4,420,427,400	18,761
Hart	\$385,306,806	\$708,209,086	1,901
Lumpkin	\$48,370,017	\$215,716,397	1,198
Rabun	\$24,365,613	\$151,291,085	603
Stephens	\$64,532,562	\$114,381,968	595
Towns	\$4,016,899	\$12,477,347	208
Union	\$26,122,351	\$56,336,882	729
White	\$105,163,283	\$174,845,515	1,141
Regional Totals	\$ 1,959,732,325	\$ 9,096,681,005	39,523

Source: 2018 Ag Snapshots, University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development, based on 2016 Farm Gate Value Report

Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development annually calculate the total economic contribution (based on the Georgia Farm Gate Value Report) of all the sectors involved in agribusiness from seed and fertilizer to processing for the range of different commodities.

Existing Business and Industry

Goal: *Increase expansion and retention of the region's existing businesses and industries.*

Promote regional leadership and collaboration.

Invest in the beautification and revitalization of downtowns with financial assistance from regional and state partners.

Support new efforts for existing business and industry.

Provide the Georgia Mountains Region's residents with innovative educational resources to help them learn technical and financial resources to expand.

Although Region 2 was negatively impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic, the area experienced another year of significant growth and prosperity with **1,050 jobs created**. **The addition of these jobs resulted in \$842 million** in private investment. The list below are a couple of highlights from the last year.

- **American Trailer World has invested \$20 million in expanding advanced manufacturing operations at its Franklin County Carry-On Trailer™ facility. The company is creating 225 jobs at the Lavonia facility, including welders, painters, and assemblers.**
- **Ammeraal Beltech, a leading global manufacturer of lightweight conveyor belting, will invest more than \$19 million in opening a new production plant in Buford, Georgia. The company's expansion to Buford will create 83 jobs in Hall County.**

Several new initiatives have been unveiled over the past year which support existing business and industry including the Georgia Broadband Initiative and USDA Broadband Re-Connect program.

Rural Zones: Recognizing that many small, rural downtown areas have experienced varying levels of economic distress, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) worked with the Georgia General Assembly to secure passage of a bill calling for the development of "Rural Zones." The establishment of up to 10 zones per year will enable businesses and investors to obtain tax credits for qualified activities occurring within designated Rural Zones. DCA, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, will receive applications and designate zones each year to provide



an incentive for job creation and private investment in the designated locations. In early 2019, the City of Hartwell was the latest GMRC community to receive this designation.

New Business Recruitment

Goal: *Devote local resources to the recruitment of new industry and businesses in the Georgia Mountains region.*

Objectives: *Assess local resources strengths and weaknesses to develop a list of feasible target industries.*

Work supplier networks both up and down stream to develop target industries.

Promote regional showcase events to attract new business and industry leaders and state partners.

Promote a regional marketing effort of regional assets.

Develop an inventory of building product in the region and identify funding for the development of that inventory.

- Georgia consistently receives high marks for its business climate, with Site Selection magazine ranking Georgia No. 1 seven years in a row (2013-2020). Georgia consistently stands out in life sciences, entrepreneurship and technology, earning countless accolades in the past few years.
- It's no surprise that 17 Fortune® 500 headquarters and 30 Fortune® 1000 companies call Georgia home. Georgia makes it easy for firms to grow while keeping costs low. Companies here enjoy a low corporate tax rate (6 percent) that applies to income earned in state. They can earn tax credits for creating jobs, upgrading or expanding, research and more, as well as tax exemptions for purchases and inventory. The state also has incentives to encourage the creation of small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures.



Throughout COVID-19, the Georgia Department of Economic Development has issued good news across all divisions. Most recently, the state announced a new record for jobs and investments during fiscal year 2021. More than 34,000 jobs were created across all regions of the state by economic development projects between July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. These projects mean nearly \$11 billion in new investments.

- Georgia has the infrastructure to speed access to domestic and international markets. Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport simplifies travel to more than 75 countries and 150 U.S. cities daily. Four major U.S. interstates allow you to reach 80 percent of U.S. markets in two days or less.

Economic Resiliency

Goals: *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.*

Ensure all communities have access to, and are aware of, resources providing economic forecasts for their region, county and, where possible, municipality.

Establish a proper chain of communication regarding economic concerns and identify resources, providers and services for implementing economic crisis response actions.



Conduct a forum or concentrated assessment of the economic health and needs of the region's most prominent industries.

In response to the recent global economic recession of 2008-2012, governments and communities are exploring ways of future-proofing their economic development processes. Specifically, while communities know they can't fully immunize themselves from economic downturns, they are strategizing for how best to project potential cycles and prepare and react when downturns occur so that they can more swiftly and more effectively restore their own economies.

Rapid Response's major purpose is to respond to layoffs and plant closings by coordinating services and providing immediate aid to companies and their affected workers. Rapid Response provides customized services on-site at an affected company, accommodates any work schedule, and assists companies and workers through the painful transitions associated with job loss.

The University of Georgia—Carl Vinson Institute of Government is also a resource and partnership program that is available to assist local governments in their efforts. The Archway Partnership's purpose is to enhance connectivity between the university and local governments to address the state's critical economic development needs. Archway is currently working closely with Hart County to address critical community and economic development needs.

Additionally, the development of a stronger broadband and fiber optic network will be a catalyst for improving economic development with enhanced education, healthcare, workforce development, business expansion and recruitment, helping to create and/or retain direct and indirect jobs.



Economic Development, Business and Industry

Needs and Mitigation Strategies

Comparably limited support for agribusiness, especially agri-tourism

- Creation of a regional food hub and promote through print and social media marketing
- Develop promotional material for area farmer's markets and canneries
- Establish a local food guide based on local assessments
- Develop an inventory of tourism industry resources

Potential for continued growth within tourism sub-markets

- 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
- Develop promotional material for area farmer's markets and canneries through social media
- 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

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

- Develop and distribute educational materials for entrepreneur programs
- 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
- Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop
- Develop an entrepreneurship training program for teachers
- Identify and create a database of entrepreneur support resources in the region
- Implement an RLF focused on COVID response

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 to create a “business-friendly” environment for the film industry

- GMRC to serve as a central repository for the collection of draft ordinances to support film production

Need for awareness in the event of cyber attacks

- Identify initiatives or best practices related to cyber security

Diversification of local economies

- Develop local plans to prepare for shifts in retail and commercial corridors
- Expand local entrepreneurial programs of work

Workforce Development

GOAL: *To attract and retain business and industry by promoting education and implementing a world-class workforce development strategy.*

ASSESSMENT

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.



Adult and Dislocated Worker

WorkSource Georgia Mountains Adult and Dislocated Services department served **447 individuals in FY 2021**. Training for individuals 18 years or older was provided by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding. WIOA funding allowed these individuals to attend a technical school or college for up to 24 months to receive specialized training to enter today's competitive job force in a Growth and Demand field in the Georgia Mountains.

- Worked with State and Local Offender Transition Centers to train returning inmates to enter the workforce.

- Incumbent Training is available for assistance to qualifying employers to assist with expenses associated with new or upgraded skills training for full-time, permanent employees.
- WIOA offers an opportunity to improve job and career options for Georgia's workers and companies to fill positions thru the On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program. By promoting OJT, Georgia has the great opportunity to increase its economic health and improve economic competitiveness. We have been working to implement the changes for WIOA as it applies to job seekers and employers in our region.
- Georgia Mountains WorkSource OJT Program assists employers with training costs while putting Georgians back to work. OJT provides employers with the opportunity to train new employees and receive up to 75% reimbursement for their salary during the OJT training period. It also helps employers fill the gap between a potential employees current skills and what is required to fully perform the job.

Career Coaches

Another great service provided by WorkSource Georgia Mountains are the Career Coaches/**Mobile Training Units (MTU)**. Not only do these units allow staff to offer assessment and training at numerous sites, they also serve as a mobile marketing tool, building public awareness of the program.



WorkSource Georgia Mountains Career Coaches/ Mobile Training Units provided services and training for both Adults and Youth combining computer and internet access for job search and career development. The Career Coaches visited 52 many unique locations this year including job fairs, community events, food banks, correctional facilities libraries. The Coaches served 973 individuals all over the Georgia Mountains region. Visitors to the Career Coach received assistance with job searches, online applications, resume assistance, WIOA Overview and application assistance, and more from our Career Coach Instructors. The Career Coaches also assisted several area businesses on on-site during hiring and Rapid Response events.

Youth Activities

The ROUTE (Road to Opportunity Utilizing Training and Enrichment) 180 Center continued to thrive this program year. The ROUTE 180 Center, designed as a training and enrichment center geared toward youth and young adults ages 16-24, provided a place of their own for current and future youth participants to engage in WSGM Youth Services. This year, the Youth Center held GED classes, workshops, and occupational skills training for youth around the region.

Occupational Skills Training

Eligible applicants pursuing college or technical school may receive assistance with the cost of books, tuition, and supplies needed to complete their educational programs. Enrolled participants are also provided with case management services to assist in navigating their career pathway and the transition from training to employment. As a result, 25 participants took part in or earned skills credentials this year.

Project Search

WSGM, in partnership with the Hall County School system, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and Northeast Georgia Medical Center, offers the Project Search program to students with disabilities. The program provides real-life work



experience and helps youth with disabilities transition from school to adult life. Students who graduated from Project Search were prepared for their careers through the Project Search blend of classroom and hands-on training.

GED/Career Pathways

Eligible applicants ages 16-24 who have dropped out of school or eligible high school graduates may be offered assistance, including obtaining a GED through funding for test fees, work skill or employment training, and internships. More than 115 GED students participated in the GED /Career Pathways Program and 35 graduated with their GED.

Youth Department Workshops

Youth workshops are designed for 8th-12th grade students and the young adult population. Mapping Your Future Workshops increase awareness in students of the importance of planning for the future and setting goals for career paths. Before setting up a workshop, the school or agency has the option to let us know what they would like from us. Workshop curriculum can be customized and may include College Knowledge, Making High School Count, Dress For Success, Time Management, WorkSource Overview, and Money Management. Youth staff hosted over 80 virtual workshops for K-12 schools in the Georgia Mountains region this program year.

Credit Recovery Program

15 participants completed Credit Recovery this year. This program assists youth participants who have dropped out of high school or withdrawn from a credit recovery program to retrieve credits for diploma completion. Eligible Youth receive incentives for each credit recovered, while assistance with transportation costs and daycare may also be provided.

SHIFT

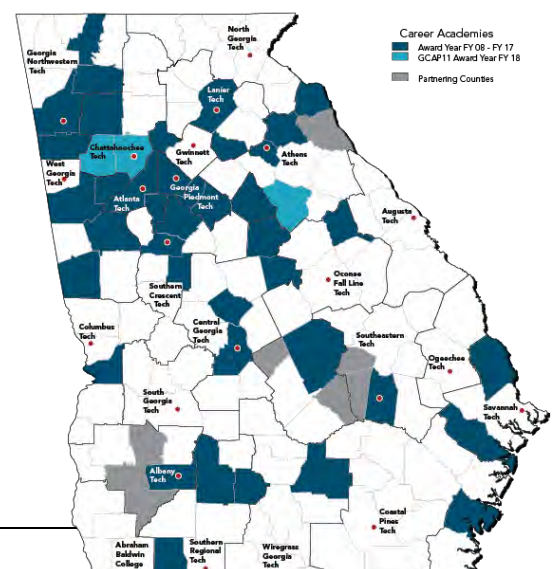
Eligible Applicants ages 16-24, who are currently incarcerated in the Regional Youth Detention Center, on probation, or under court supervision, are offered specific WSGM services to assist them in completing and furthering their educational and employment goals. 11 SHIFT participants earned their GED during the program year with 4 earning additional occupational skills certifications.

Career Academies

Local high schools and their post-secondary partners are joining together to provide the best education possible for the 21st century jobs of today. College and Career Academies are unique learning environments that provide the best opportunities for local communities to focus their educational resources on what is needed in their community and workforce.

Today, students all over Georgia have access to training in the area of engineering, biomedicine, technology, logistics, robotics and many more of the skills needed to compete in the global market. These students are learning in environments that give them the skills to compete, and with 80 percent of jobs requiring some sort of post-secondary education, the College and Career Academies are working to fulfill that challenge.

There are three (3) college and career academies in the Georgia Mountains Region. Specifically in Hart County, Workforce development officials have indicated that the Hart College and Career Academy can provide a pipeline of prepared workers for future jobs in Hart and surrounding counties. The local education system





needs to ensure that a highly skilled workforce is available to attract industries to Hart County. The Hart College and Career Academy is one of several strategies embraced by local officials to meet present and future needs.

High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI)

Economic Development professionals have heard from the private sector that one of the greatest challenges facing businesses in Georgia, nationally, and globally is the need for a consistent, trained, and reliable workforce. In response, Governor Nathan Deal created the High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI) to allow those state partners involved in training Georgia's future workforce to hear directly from the private sector about what specific needs they have from a workforce perspective (i.e.: degrees/majors, certificates, courses, skillsets, etc.). With decision makers from each of these entities at one table, communities are able to gain a clear picture of what the region's businesses need from the workforce and pair them with existing assets and/or collectively tackle any gaps, one by one. WorkSource Georgia Mountains continues to partner with area Economic Developers and industry leaders to implement this initiative.

Life Sciences and Healthcare are in high demand for the Georgia Mountains Region, and it continues to grow. Skilled employees are needed by the over 27,000 establishments employing individuals in this sector.

Training in Soft skills/workplace skills are needed for the Georgia Mountains Region. This type of skills training is offered to some regional residents through Georgia BEST, a business ethics student training program developed through the Georgia Department of Labor with input from area employers. The Hall County School system was one of the first to pilot this initiative. Also, Osborne Wood Products and ASI-Southeast, both Stephens County employers, helped to pilot this program.

One- Stop

The Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that each local workforce development area have at least one comprehensive or full-service One-Stop Center. A One- Stop Center is a place where Employers and Job Seekers can access a wide range of workforce services. In Georgia, there are over 45 "full-service" One-Stop Centers, and most areas have several other locations for accessing workforce services also. A majority of the full-service locations are GDOL Career Centers, while others are separate facilities. Many different education, training, and employment-related services available in the community are also provided by a variety of partner agencies at the One-Stop Center or through referrals.

Currently, the partners in WorkSource Georgia Mountain's comprehensive one-stop system include:

- WorkSource Georgia Mountains - Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth WIOA Services
- Georgia Department of Labor
- Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency – career services
- Legacy Link—Aging services
- Technical College System of Georgia, represented by Lanier, North Georgia, and Athens Technical Colleges – career services
- Adult Education and Literacy Activities, and Post-Secondary Education



Workforce Development

Needs and Mitigation Strategies

Lack of labor skills to support a diverse group of industries

- Work directly with the businesses, career academies, technical colleges to identify lack of skills levels needed for their business and educational institutions
- Work with high schools and technical colleges to prepare individuals in the needed 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 basic skill challenges
- Support GeorgiaBEST and other programs

Perception of low educational attainment by local residents

- Publicize with area newspapers the positive educational and skills attainment achieved in the region

Increasing demand for high quality education facilities and programs

- Start a school mentor / Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in the region
- Program promoting Career Days in primary and secondary schools
- Develop 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 on the importance/stigma of technical education

Historically Low Unemployment

- Re-Engagement of prospective workers who have dropped out of the labor force



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.*

The Housing Element of the comprehensive plan is used to evaluate whether existing and projected development will meet the county's housing needs with respect to supply, affordability, and accessibility. Housing is a critical issue to every community as a primary factor of quality of life. The costs and availability of quality housing is a key gauge in calculating local costs of living and one measure in defining the long-term sustainability of the resident population.

America's recovery from the Great Recession has resulted in increased commercial and industrial activity; however, unlike every other recovery since World War II this one has not had the same effect on the housing market. According to Norton's 2018 Native Intelligence Report, the average mortgage score in 2017 was 735 compared to 661 in 2007. That takes one million households out of the market since the recession took place.

Within the Georgia Mountains Region the prevailing housing stock is single family detached, with most of that in suburban or rural settings. However since about 2000 there is a growing demand for more units and more varieties of housing, from an influx of vacation homes and private retirement communities to urban forms of affordable housing and units for special needs population. There are also the evolving markets for tiny homes, short-term rentals and other styles of housing that are challenging local policies and codes as well as community character. Local communities will need to monitor these trends closely and update their policies and practices so that they are allowing housing needs to be filled in a manner that doesn't adversely impact local resources and infrastructure or detract from local character.

Among the current priority issues:

Rental Housing: The New Standard - Rental housing and developments are becoming more prevalent throughout the United States and in the Georgia Mountains Region. The drivers for rental housing come from a few different factors. The number one driver for rental housing in 2017 was the 55+ age group. This group is looking to "age in place" and individuals are re-prioritizing their wants and needs and either downsizing to age-restricted communities or renting for housing flexibility.

Furthermore, a segment of the millennial population is delaying home purchases due to a meager supply of affordable housing. The tightened market is driving multiple offers and strong price increases for most housing products under \$300,000, which would include the bracket to include most millennials. These scenarios are increasingly prevalent in suburban areas that offer pedestrian-friendly retail areas, access to great restaurants, access to green spaces, and access to quality public schools.

Affordable Workforce Housing: A Serious Issue for the Georgia Mountains Region - One of the most serious issues facing the Georgia Mountains Region in the housing sector continues to be the crisis caused by a rapidly diminishing stock of available affordable housing. According to a forecast prepared by the Norton Group for its annual Native Intelligence™ Report, the absence of affordable, livable, personal homes creates further disparity between the "haves" and the "have nots" (i.e. the wealth gap so widely discussed in America). Home ownership is coupled with wealth accumulation and family unit stability.

According to the Norton Native Intelligence Report™, new affordable home construction is hindered by excessive governmental regulations. These regulations, such as The International Building Code, have had an adverse effect on affordability. As a result, many developers have dropped almost all interest in building \$150,000 to \$200,000 homes. The fixed sunk cost diminishes the higher the price



point, and, as a result of the excessive regulations, traditional builders now run from the lower unit costs.

The housing demand issue has been exacerbated by the region's strong track record in industrial recruitment and existing business expansions. These announcements have been accompanied by the creation of hundreds of new jobs to be filled by qualified and trained individuals living in the district and by those that will relocate to the district. However, the current available housing supply will not be able to support the existing demand. Moving forward, it will be exceedingly difficult for communities to enjoy business expansion without available housing. In short, these two things are not mutually exclusive.

This lingering problem has caused governments to find creative ways to adapt to the current housing supply environment. One way is through the investigation of the construction of tiny homes. However, the challenge that many local governments face is the adaptation of federal, state, and local building and housing codes to facilitate the building of these homes.

When the supply of affordable housing hits zero, consumer spending could slow, new retail could go elsewhere and communities could enter a long cycle of decline. The issue of affordable workforce housing availability is a critical issue that will cause local governments and local residents to rethink their definition of housing and to revisit building and housing codes to address the lack of availability.



HOUSING

Needs and Mitigation Strategies

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
- Develop a regional strategic housing plan
- 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
- Help communities adopt codes to ensure sustainable and quality housing

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 summary report on housing survey findings
- 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)

Slow/limited responsiveness to issues of the housing and development industry

- Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders
- Develop a regional strategic housing plan
- Provide educational seminars and workshops on housing programs and services
- Develop summary report on housing survey findings

Need to assist communities clarify 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

Pre-Disaster Mitigation

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

Any community is prone to hazardous events, either natural or man-made. The Georgia Mountains Region is committed to becoming more resilient with respect to mitigation and preparedness for such disasters, not only protects lives and area resources but to provide more security for economic development. The more prepared the community, the less the affect experienced by hazardous events.

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, and respond to, critical and large-scale emergency situations. An HMP will assess a community's risks and vulnerabilities and then produce recommended mitigation strategies to reduce overall risk to the population and structures. HMPs are also critical for coordination of Federal and State programs 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 disaster damage, restoration, and reconstruction, and repeated damage.



However implementation of these plans is often subject to available funding, shifting local priorities, and evolutions in best practices: The rapid availability and applications of cellphones, for instance, has endowed new technologies for communicating with the public about emergency alerts and how to respond. So to ensure communities are making progress with their HMPs these documents need to be routinely updated and regularly reviewed to ensure recommended actions are being pursued.

COVID –19 Pandemic and Disaster Recovery

GMRC has worked closely with federal, state and local partners to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. A COVID resource page was created on the GMRC website to further assist residents, businesses, and governments within the Region.

Since early 2020, the CEDS Committee held virtual meetings more frequently to discuss the impacts in their respective communities.

In August 2020, GMRC was awarded \$400,000 in EDA CARES Act funding to support regional disaster recovery and resiliency efforts. Key components of the recovery efforts will include: (1) the development



of an economic recovery and resilience plan, tied to the Georgia Mountains Region's approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), to address the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, (2) the deployment of disaster recovery coordinators to orchestrate the region's response to the pandemic, (3) the provision of technical assistance, as necessary, to local governments, businesses, and other stakeholder organizations, and (4) the funding of appropriate technology and staff support for these pandemic-response activities.

It is a priority to create a regional resiliency plan which outlines strategies to equip communities in the Georgia Mountains Region in the event of future natural or economic disasters.

Needs and Mitigation Strategies

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 practices 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.

Need for a regional COVID Disaster Recovery Response

- Implementation of a regional disaster recovery initiative
- Conduct assessments/surveys which will outline effects of COVID-19
- Conduct an economic base and sensitivity study
- Conduct a Medical Accessibility Study
- Conduct a Pandemic Transmission Assessment



PERFORMANCE MONITORING

This section concerns the actual measures and efforts made to achieve the objectives outlined throughout the CEDS/Regional Plan. After reviewing the assessments for each element and defining any needed changes to the issues and strategies identified for the region, the recommended actions are incorporated into the action plan in this section. Furthermore, tracking the progress with past projects and their relative impact on the issues will help monitor the CEDS/Regional Plan for the overall performance in meeting the stated goals over time.

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

Staff Project Reports –The progress of GMRC projects is reported to the Executive Director and the full Council in monthly Staff Project Reports (SPRs). The SPRs identify the status of each project and is displayed by jurisdiction. The SPRs also provide primary staff contact for each work item and a brief description of progress as needed. Copies of these are found with the minutes of each Council meeting packet.

End of Year Review – The update process for the Regional Work Program features an additional overview and evaluation of the status of each project and feasibility of remaining work items. The results provide the first indication of how priorities may need adjusting going forward. This becomes the basis of the draft update and is circulated to local governments for review and comment, providing the first opportunity for nominating new projects for the coming year.

Correlating RC Programs - Additional review of progress with the Regional Plan includes cross-over work with other regional reporting efforts and projects, including the federally mandated GMRC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and all GMRC products for the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

Local Government Interaction –Copies of the Regional Work Program were also distributed to local communities for review and input on the identified objectives and work items. No new regional projects were added as a result of this effort.

CEDS PERFORMANCE METRICS

The goal of the CEDS portion of the document is economic growth and expansion. As a result, an important component of the implementation of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission's CEDS is a monitoring system to track regional performance in the future as a result of this Strategic Plan within those elements required by the federal EDA. Several data sets have been identified that in which local governments can showcase good measures of economic performance. This material will serve to be as good indicators of the overall economic health of the region's communities and citizens.

Many regional economic development organizations use performance metrics, known as "benchmarks," which makes this process very easy and adaptable for local communities. The metrics provided in this plan provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the positive results of the CEDS efforts and policies and help build confidence among citizens that the economy is headed in the right direction for the Georgia Mountains Region.



The GMRC's Performance Metrics for each strategic federally mandated CEDS focus area are:

Community Facilities and Services

Existence and creation of business parks and sites
Available developable acreage with utility services
Expansion and improvement of regional roadways and total miles constructed
Development of a regional public transportation system with routes across the region
Accessible water infrastructure throughout the region
Implemented plan for water management and water protection for the region
Suitable wastewater capacity to meet future growth of region
Available broadband access across the region
Adequate waste disposal and recycling abilities in the region

Economic Development, Business and Industry

Increase visitation, overnight stays, and capital expenditures spent on tourism
Number of new start-up businesses or business expansions
Value added production in niche agriculture markets
Job creation and retention
Increase in capital investment
Number of new tourism venues

Workforce Development

Job growth in non-manufacturing industries
Average wage growth
Unemployment Rate
SAT scores
Educational Attainment
Dropout rates

Housing

Total amount of (housing) grant awards to member governments.
Creation of Regional Housing Advisory Committee
Trends in regional housing in sales
Trends in Homelessness Rate

Pre-Disaster Mitigation

Governmental efficiency and response time
of mitigation projects put in place and funded
of local plan updates

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. The Regional Commission may choose to establish multiple tiers for both standards in order to accommodate the varying size and capacity of local governments in the region, or it may choose to establish a schedule for local governments to comply with these measures during the 3-year timeframe.



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 Standard 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.

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. When the Plan is updated in 5 years, these measures will be reviewed, assessed, and amended as necessary.

Minimum Standard

Items included in the Minimum Standard should be selected as essential activities for local governments to undertake for consistency with the regional plan. The intent is to ensure a consistent and predictable basic level of local requirements across the region. The Regional Commission and the Department will provide technical and training assistance to local governments to help them achieve this Minimum Standard. Regional Commissions may utilize financial assistance in accordance with their contract with the Department for projects that help a local government attain this threshold. Once a local government achieves this threshold, Regional Commissions may utilize financial assistance in accordance with their contract with the Department for local comprehensive plan implementation projects.

- Adopt and maintain a DCA-approved local Comprehensive Plan
- 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

Items included in the Excellence Standard should be selected as desirable activities for local governments to undertake 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.

The Excellence Standard will be awarded to any community employing any 20 of the standards listed below and practicing at least one standard in each element. The GMRC will annually survey local governments regarding these practices, inviting demonstration/evidence of the standards applied. Any local government that attains this threshold will then be eligible for the Regional Steward Incentives Package identified and publicized by DCA.

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

Local Performance Monitoring

- Going into 2022 all GMRC local governments should meet the Minimum Standard once Tiger completes their comprehensive plan update. Several communities have an October 31, 2021 deadline but their work is in progress and at the least the plans should be submitted in October.
- Efforts to assist Franklin County's Service Delivery Agreement update were postponed while the 2020 pandemic stifled local efforts to address the update process. The communities successfully extended their existing SDA and the new leaders for 2021 have formally begun the update process.
- The GMRC is slated to begin incorporating new public involvement techniques based on suggestions raised during various planning forums in 2019. These ideas were suggested during a brainstorming session at the Academy for Economic Development and during regular sessions with the GMRC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy committee.
- Many communities did have limited in-person forums as part of their public involvement procedures during the 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.



IMPLEMENTATION

PROJECT PRIORITY LIST

The CEDS Priority Project List represents a major component of the overall CEDS effort. These projects are funded by multiple funding sources and each one addresses a specific goal or goals within the CEDS. All of the listed projects are important to the local communities and have been included because they help move the Georgia Mountains Region closer to its vision. A limited number of projects are eligible for EDA funding and will be reported when initiated or completed. The list of issues and projects outlined below is comprehensive, but by no means exhaustive. The list reflects the participant's ideas, concerns, and efforts and is expected to be continually updated as new projects emerge and existing projects are completed.

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.

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.

PROJECT PRIORITY LIST

PROJECT	FUNDING OPTIONS	EST. COST
BANKS COUNTY		
Wastewater Treatment	GEFA/USDA/Local	\$20,000,000
Water System Upgrades	CDBG/Local	\$1,000,000
Martin Bridge Sewer	ARC/EDA/USDA	\$6,000,000
County Broadband	USDA/ARC/Local	\$10,000,000
Wofford Road Project	DOT/EDA/Local	\$4,000,000
Faulkner Road Extension	DOT/EDA/Local	\$5,500,000
TOWN OF HOMER		
Water Upgrades	ARC/EIP/CDBG	\$1,500,000
CITY OF MAYSVILLE		
Upgrade of water lines	USDA/Local/CDBG	\$1,500,000
DAWSON COUNTY		
Etowah River Road Improvements	DOT/Local	\$500,000
Bridge Repair	DOT/Local	\$700,000
Road Improvement Project	DOT/Local	\$1,500,000
Blanchard Development	ARC/EDA/EIP/OneGA	\$4,500,000
Shiery Development	ARC/EDA/EIP/OneGA	\$2,500,000
Senior Center Expansion	CDBG/Local	\$2,500,000
CITY OF DAWSONVILLE		
Sewer Expansion	ARC/Local	\$600,000
Sewer Expansion – Company Expansion	ARC/GEFA	\$600,000
Central Franklin Industrial Park	ARC/EDA/SPLOST	\$2,186,017
Water System Improvements	Grants/Local	\$1,500,000
CITY OF FRANKLIN SPRINGS		
Sewer System Improvements	ARC/Local	\$700,000
CITY OF LAVONIA		
Gateway/Lavonia Sewer Sys. Improvements	EDA/ARC/Local	\$4,200,000
Lake Hartwell Increased Allocation	GEFA/ARC	\$1,000,000
CITY OF ROYSTON		
Infrastructure Improvements	CDBG/Local	\$300,000
Lift Station Improvements	ARC/OneGeorgia	\$285,000
Storm Drainage	CDBG/Local	\$200,000

Waterline Installation	ITAD/Local	\$200,000
Sewer Treatment Plant Upgrades	GEFA/Local	\$2,000,000
Raw Intake/Emergency Power	GEMA	\$90,000
HABERSHAM COUNTY		
Airport	Fed/State/Local	\$10,726,000
Industrial Park	ARC/Local	\$1,200,000
Aquatic Center Pool Pack Replacement	Local	\$500,000
Administration Building	Local	\$5,408,000
Landfill Cell Five Construction	Local	\$3,311,000
Senior Wellness Center	CDBG/Local	\$1,000,000
Jail/Detention Center	Undefined	\$33,000,000
CITY OF CLARKESVILLE		
Sewer Improvements	ARC/Local	\$600,000
Downtown Development	USDA/Local	\$750,000
CITY OF CORNELIA		
Sewer Improvements	CDBG/Local	\$700,000
Road Improvements	ARC/Local	\$350,000
Water & Sewer – Fieldale	ARC/EDA	\$2,000,000
Downtown Development	ARC/Local	
CITY OF DEMOREST		
Sewer System Improvements	ARC/Local	\$600,000
Strategic Plan	ARC/Local	\$20,000
HALL COUNTY		
Road Improvements	Local/ARC/GDOT /LMIG	\$40,000,000
Sewer Improvements	Local/GEFA	\$4,825,103
Landfill Expansion	Local	\$5,250,000
Lake Lanier Olympic Venue	ARC/OneGeorgia/Local	\$1,700,000
Healan-Head's Mill Project	ARC/Local	\$226,913
Landfill Expansion	Local	\$5,250,000
Parks and Recreation Improvements	Local/ARC/RTP/LWCF	\$2,855,716
Health and Wellness Capital Improvements	Local	\$273,000
Apprenticeship 101	ARC/Local/Private/State	\$1,972,172
CITY OF GAINESVILLE		
Airport Terminal Renovations	ARC/Local	\$1,000,000
Midtown Greenway – Phase 4	Local, TE, DNR	\$1,000,000
Stormwater Planning	Local	\$200,000
Wireless Hot Zone Project	ARC/Local	\$60,000
CITY OF GILLSVILLE		
Diamond Hill Road Improvements	GDOT/Local	\$75,000
Local Road Improvements	Grants/Local	\$55,000
City Park	GDOT/Grants/Local	\$60,000
Trails	Grants/Local	\$50,000
Water System Expansion	Local	TBD

CITY OF LULA		
Road Improvements	DOT/ARC/Local	\$600,000
Nature Trails Project	RTP/Local	\$110,810
Depot Renovations	ARC/Local	TBD
CITY OF OAKWOOD		
Sewer Improvements	Local	\$300,000
Road Improvements	DOT/EDA/ARC/EIP/Local	\$2,700,000
Industry Way Extension	ARC/Local	\$400,000
HART COUNTY		
Gateway 3 Sewer Lift Station	ARC/Local	\$780,000
Gateway 2 Road Construction and Sidewalks	EDA/Local	\$280,000
CITY OF HARTWELL		
Sewer Expansion	ARC/EIP/Local	\$500,000
Railroad Street	ARC/Local	\$1,200,000
WWTP Upgrades	EDA/Local	\$6,953,000
Depot Street Improvements	ARC/Local	\$434,800
Town of Bowersville		
Water Improvements	Grants/Local	\$1,500,000
Park Renovation & Expansion	Grants/Local	TBD
LUMPKIN COUNTY		
Industrial Park Land Acquisition	SPLOST/Loans	\$3,000,000
Yahoola Creek Reservoir Master Plan	GOSA/Grant/Private	\$5,000,000
Water & Sewer Improvements	SPLOST/GEFA/USDA/ CDBG	\$4,100,000
Senior Center Expansion	CDBG/Local	\$655,326
CITY OF DAHLONEGA		
Sewer Plant Upgrade	ARC/GEFA/Local	\$4,000,000
Recreational Trails and Amenities	RTP/Local	\$150,000
Hancock Park Accessible Playground	LWCF/Local	\$200,000
Cultural Arts & Conference Center	ARC/Local	\$1,200,000
Yahoola High Trestle Trail	ARC/Local	\$205,000
RABUN COUNTY		
Water Improvements	CDBG-ITAD	\$150,000
Business Park Improvements	CDBG-EIP/ARC/Local	\$2,000,000
NEGA Food Hub	EDA/ARC/Private	\$2,500,000
US441 Widening	DOT/Local	\$10,000,000
Potable Water Plant – Business Park	ARC/EIP/GEFA	\$3,000,000
Sewer Line- Sky Valley to Dillard	ARC/GEFA/USDA	\$1,000,000
Water Line Distribution System	GEFA/ARC/Local	\$2,500,000
CITY OF CLAYTON		
Downtown Revitalization	ARC/Local	\$300,000
CITY OF MOUNTAIN CITY		
Drainage Improvements	CDBG/Local	\$500,000

CITY OF SKY VALLEY		
Sewer Infrastructure	ARC/Local	\$600,000
Road & Drainage Improvements	CDBG/ARC/Local	\$500,000
Parks and Amenities	Grants/Local	\$75,000
TOWN OF TALLULAH FALLS		
Terrora Building - Solar	ARC/Local	\$200,000
Water/Sewer Infrastructure	ARC/Local/GEFA	\$3,000,000
Water Improvements	GEFA/ARC/EDA	\$1,000,000
STEPHENS COUNTY		
WWTF	CDBG-EIP/ARC/OneGA	\$2,500,000
Memorial Drive Upgrades	DOT/Local	\$500,000
Road Improvements	DOT/Local	\$10,000,000
Water Supply & Distribution	ARC/GEFA	\$1,500,000
Wastewater Collection Treatment	ARC/EDA/GEFA/USDA	\$5,000,000
Broadband	OneGeorgia/Local	\$6,000,000
Cannery Improvements	ARC/Local	\$600,000
CITY OF TOCCOA		
Veterans Parkway/Big A Infrastructure Improvements	ARC/EDA/GEFA/ OneGeorgia	\$4,000,000
Natural Gas Extension	Local	\$100,000
Historic Ritz Theatre Complex	ARC/Local/Private	\$600,000
Lake Toccoa Pavilion & Pier	LWCF/DNR/Local	\$165,000
Lake Toccoa Trails	DNR/RTP/Local	\$250,000
Additional Trails in Municipal Parks	DNR/RTP/Local	\$250,000
Whitman Street/Emory Johnson Park Improvements	CDBG	\$750,000
Alewine Park Improvements	DNR/LWCF/Local	\$300,000
Sewer Relocation, Drainage, & Street Improvements	CDBG	\$750,000
Downtown Toccoa WiFi	ARC/Local	\$25,000
Downtown Toccoa Streetscape	TE/GDOT/Local	\$500,000
TOWNS COUNTY		
Sewer Improvements	Local/ARC/EDA	\$4,000,000
Industrial Training Lab	ARC/EDA/Local	\$1,282,238
CITY OF HIAWASSEE		
Water/Sewer & Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvements	ARC/GEFA	\$1,400,000
Hiawassee Mayor's Park	DNR/Local	\$400,000
Water Treatment Plant Improvements	GEFA/Local	\$1,300,000
Water Meter Replacement	GEFA/Local	\$500,000
Comprehensive Sidewalk Replacement	GA Tollway Authority/ Local	\$400,000
CITY OF YOUNG HARRIS		
Sewer Improvements	USDA/ARC	\$300,000
Sidewalk Improvements	TE/Local	\$500,000
Brasstown Creek Water Lines	GEFA/Local	\$92,000
Cupid Falls Park	RTP/Local	\$100,000

Drainage Improvements	LMIG/Local	\$300,000
Replace water lines for fire hydrant support	GEFA/Local	\$300,000
Backup Well	USDA/GEFA	\$300,000
Sewer Lines to Jacksonville	Loan/Grant	\$500,000
Scada System Sewer Plant	Loan/Local	\$30,000
New/Expanded Sewer Plant	Loan/Grant	\$100,000
UNION COUNTY		
US129 Connector	DOT/Local	\$10,000,000
Highway 76 East Widening	DOT/Local	\$10,000,000
Water Authority System Improvements	ARC/Local	\$300,000
Manufacturing Training Center	ARC/EDA/Local	\$1,280,000
Special Manufacturing/Industrial Building	OneGA/ARC/TVA/Local	\$1,500,000
Wayfinding Signage	OneGA/Local	\$100,000
Industrial Park Improvements	OneGA/ARC/EDA/Local	\$1,000,000
Brasstown Bald Tower Repair	ARC/Local	\$91,000
Industrial Training Lab	ARC/EDA/Local	\$1,282,238
Double Gym	Grants/Local	\$3,500,000
Jail Improvements	USDA/Local	\$2,000,000
Sports Field Additions	Grants/Local	\$3,000,000
Transfer Station Services Expansion	Grants/Local	\$2,000,000
Historic Buildings Restorations	WJBF/DNR-HPD/Local	\$2,000,000
Trail Improvements– Nottely	RTP/Local	\$250,000
Poteet Creek Expansion & Improvements	Grants/Local	\$500,000
Meeks Park Amphitheater	Grants/Local	\$2,000,000
Meeks Park Pavilion	Grants/Local	\$325,000
Senior Center Expansion	Grants/Local	\$500,000
911 Upgrades and Radio Equipment	Grants/Local	\$650,000
View Grill Expansion	Grants/Local	\$250,000
Volunteer Fire Station 13	Grants/Local	\$500,000
Fire Department Training Facility	Grants/Local	\$120,000
Farmer's Market Road	GDOT/Local	\$150,000
Panther Circle/515	GDOT/Local	\$75,000
Water and Sewer for Sports Field Additions	Grants/Local	\$75,000
Saddle Club Improvements	Grants/Local	\$100,000
Helton Creek Falls Improvements	Grants/Local	\$150,000
CITY OF BLAIRSVILLE		
Infrastructure Improvements	GDOT/Local	\$2,567,178
Airport Terminal Facility	OneGA/DOT/FAA/Local	\$158,100
Sewer System Expansion	GEFA	\$8,000,000
Parking Facility	Local	\$300,000
Downtown Streetscape	DOT/Local	\$500,000
WHITE COUNTY		
Road Improvements	CDBG-EIP/ARC/EDA	\$500,000

Infrastructure– Bypass Technology Park	ARC/EDA/CDBG-EIP	\$1,500,000
Sautee Nacoochee– Heritage District	ARC/Local	\$300,000
Economic Development Plan	ARC/EDA/Local	\$50,000
Yonah Preserve Trails Phase III	RTP/LWC/SORBA/Local	\$305,000
Update of Bike/Pedestrian Plan	ARC/Local	\$50,000
Water System Expansion	ARC/GEFA/Local	\$1,000,000
CITY OF CLEVELAND		
129 N Gravity Sewer Project	GEFA/Local	\$900,000
Water Tank and Well	USDA	\$1,500,000
Sewer Plant Upgrades	Grants/Local	TBD
CITY OF HELEN		
Water Line Extension & Development of Additional Water Source	ARC/Local	\$780,000
Replacement of Two Sewer Lift Stations	Grants/Loans	\$850,000
Sidewalk/Path/Trail Improvements	Grants/Local	\$500,000
Sewer System Improvements	Grants/Local	\$1,000,000
Water System Improvements	Grants/Local	\$1,000,000
Drainage Improvements	Grants/Local	\$500,000
Road Improvements	Grants/Local	\$1,000,000

GMRC 2018 REGIONAL WORK PROGRAM

LAND USE

Priority/ Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Comment/ Ongoing
Priority: To promote and coordinate land use planning and management that supports the other goals and ambitions for the region.					
LU1: Promote development that maximizes existing utilities and infrastructure.	Encourage local plans to feature nodal development that prioritizes utility capacity	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	-	-	Revised to "Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses..."
	Review regional Future Development Strategy; Amend as needed	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs \$5,000	-	Retained
LU2: Support preservation and expansion of historic town centers.	Continue providing urban redevelopment plans (reworded in N&O's)	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs. \$50,000	6-10 yrs. \$50,000	Retained
	Develop regional growth and tourism strategy specifically for historic downtowns	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs. \$10,000	-	Retained
LU3: Promote coordinated land use mgmt. along critical arterials, supporting both local needs and the demands of through traffic critical for tourism and industry.	Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors in conjunction with GDOT and local stakeholders	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	-	6-8 yrs. \$50,000	Revised to "Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses..."
LU4: Promote neighborhood scale planning. (listed as mitigation strategy)	Encourage, and demonstrate, the practice of small-area studies	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	-	-	Program policy
LU5: Support efforts that preserve rural and agricultural uses where desired.	Encourage adoption of conservation design standards and conservation easements	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000	-	Moved to NR priority "Need to improve awareness about..."
LU6: Support advanced development practices within the metropolitan areas.	Inventory metropolitan communities for development trends and needs; Develop a metro-area growth strategy to support urbanizing communities	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$5,000	-	Cancelled; Addressed in other actions



	LU7: Promote agribusiness in a responsible manner, sensitive to the scale and capacity of infrastructure and integrates surrounding residential and commercial areas.	Encourage adoption of conservation design standards and conservation easements	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000	-	Moved to NR priority "Need to improve awareness about..."
		Survey local agribusinesses for needs and priorities	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	-	4-6 yrs. \$10,000	Cancelled; Addressed in other actions
	Need to match land use plans with infrastructure plans	Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy	DOT, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
		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	
	Need tools to preserve area farms	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		
		Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
		Assess the performance of BMPs throughout the region	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$10,000		
	Need to ensure optimum land use planning tools and enforcement at local levels	Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
		Promote BMPs throughout the region as land use alternatives	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
		Promote neighborhood scale planning	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
	Need to stem the deterioration of downtown areas, buildings	Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy

	and infrastructure, and loss of economic activity as suburbanization occurs in the region	Develop/ maintain region-wide downtown economic database that includes historic resources	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$40,000	
		(Continue to) 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		
		Advocate for funding/private investment for downtown redevelopment	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
		Initiate GMRC Downtown Association, promote partnerships (The Georgia Cities Foundation)	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1 yrs. TBD		
	Impact of population growth for impact on rural character	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 specifically 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		
		Develop inventory of regional wineries, breweries, and distilleries for promotional purposes	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$10,000		
	Lack of identification of plans for growth areas for industrial and commercial development	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	
		Identify funding mechanisms for required infrastructure	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
		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 such as the Inland Port or external regional contributors	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
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NATURAL RESOURCES

Priority/ Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
Priority: To conserve, protect and promote the environmental, natural and cultural resources of the region.					
NR1: Promote conservation design ideas and other best management practices for new development.	Encourage adoption of conservation design standards and conservation easements	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000	-	Modified priority/ action to "Need to improve awareness about..."
NR2: Improve and promote the knowledge of existing historic resources and preservation programs. (reworded in N&O's)	Update NHARGIS and regional inventory; Share with communities (reworded in mitigation strategies)	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$50,000	-	Retained
	Develop a region wide downtown economic database that includes historic resources; Place on the web				Cancelled; Addressed through other actions
NR3: Support efforts to implement the State's River Basin Management Plans.	Continue to work with/for the 3 Water Planning Councils	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	-	-	Program policy; Retained as "Support... Water Planning..."
NR4: Promote tighter coordination between land use planning and water supply management.	Develop tool for tracking impact of new development on local water supplies	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	-	4-6 yrs. \$10,000	Retained; Part of "Develop an environmental performance..."
Ensure communities employ Georgia's environmental planning criteria	Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comp. plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
Need to improve awareness about conservation design,	Conduct/Facilitate a workshop on conservation design	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$3,000		



	environmentally sensitive areas, and best management practices	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		
		Promote environmental BMPs within <i>Excellence Standards</i>	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
	Need for more/ preserve local greenspace plans	Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comp. plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
		Develop template for greenspace planning to be incorporated into 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		
		Promote environmental BMPs within <i>Excellence Standards</i>	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
	Desire to attract funds for State parks and wildlife management areas	Support funding measures for management of DNR lands	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
		Promote cooperative partnerships between State, local governments and private sector	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
	Need to address habitat degradation caused by growth and development	Develop an environmental performance monitoring tool for local comp. plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
		Develop template for greenspace planning to be incorporated into local comprehensive plans	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$3,000		
		Encourage redevelopment in underused areas and brownfields instead of new development in greenfields	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
		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		

Support implementation of applicable Water Planning District management plans	Develop Regional Source Water Assessment Plan	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$50,000		
	Annually report to GMRC Council status of Water Planning Council programs	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
	Attend Water Council meetings	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
Promote the knowledge and preservation of existing historic resources	Update GNAHRGIS, survey of regional historic resources	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$50,000		
	Promote historic preservation BMPs within <i>Excellence Standards</i>	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program Policy
	Convene annual GMRC Historic Resource Forum	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$3,000		

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

	Priority/ Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Comment/ Ongoing
	Priority: Enhance all segments of transportation networks in the region to promote economic development and personal safety.					
	CFS1: 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	-	Retained
		Develop a freight/ truck route transportation plan	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$20,000	-	Retained
	CFS2: 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	Retained
		Inventory and develop plans to improve local and regional airports.		-	6-7 yrs. \$5,000	Retained
		Update Regional Bike/Ped Strategy & related work program		1-2 yrs \$10,000	-	Retained
		Develop Regional Rural Transit Plan		1-3 yrs \$10,000	-	Retained
		Develop Commuter Traffic Study		1-2 yrs \$2,000	-	Retained
	Priority: Provide adequate water supply and promote conservation.					
	CFS3: Support the development of water supply to ensure infrastructure for businesses and residents.	Develop inventory of all potential new water sources in the region	DNR, Local Govts., Local Authorities	-	6-8 yrs. \$25,000	Cancelled; Defer to Regional Water Plans

CFS4: Improve water quality and wastewater planning to ensure infrastructure for businesses and residents.	Assist water planning councils with routine survey of local best practices	DNR, Local Govts., Local Authorities	-	-	Revised; Now NR element "Support implementation..."
Priority: Ensure new telecommunication networks for needed accessibility and reliability.					
CFS5: Prepare to meet industry and business telecommunication needs by assisting with fiber optic network development.	Develop template material for assessing broadband capacity in local plans	Local Govts., Local Authorities	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	Complete
Priority: To foster community-based wellness initiatives and increase the availability of affordable high-quality health care services.					
CFS6: 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	-	Retained
	Regional assessment of emergency services	Local Govts., Local Authorities	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	Retained
CFS7: 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	-	Retained
CFS8: Promote and support the use of health information technology (HIT). (listed in mitigation strategies)	Use CEDS to emphasize HIT benefits and needs	Local Govts., Local medical care providers	-	-	Revised; "Develop and implement..."
	Develop inter-regional/state telecommunications strategy	Local Govts., Local Authorities	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	Revised; Under WD, "Develop hi-tech..."
Priority: Provide adequate waste management for domestic and industrial usage.					
CFS9: Improve waste management planning to ensure availability for current and future economic growth.	Develop waste mgmt. component for next regional plan update	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	Retained
Priority: Ensure adequate energy supplies for the region and promote environmental standards in all infrastructures.					
CFS10: Support development of low-cost energy and maintain energy reliability.	With utility providers, monitor and promote local green initiatives	Local Govts., Utility providers	-	-	Cancelled; Priority deferred
CFS11: Promote environmental standards in the development of businesses and industries.	Ensure local governments are aware of, and promote, LEED/green bldg. standards	Local Govts., Utility providers	-	-	Cancelled; Priority deferred



	Priority/ Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
	Growing demand for water supply sources, from both within and outside the region	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 in-house service for calculating cost- benefit analyses for new development & utility improvements	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
		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		
		Promote water conservation programs	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.			Program policy
	Growing demand and environmental need for public sewer services	Develop regional development build-out scenario	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$20,000		
		Develop in-house service for calculating cost- benefit analyses for new development & utility improvements	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
		Develop regional water infrastructure map	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
		Assessment of septic system inventory	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	2-4 yrs. \$15,000		
	Strong need for, and great potential with, health care services and facilities	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		
	Impact of growth and changing demographics on transportation needs	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 Develop a freight/ truck route transportation plan	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$20,000		
		Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors in conjunction with GDOT and local stakeholders	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
		Develop an I-85 corridor access and multi-modal study	GDOT, EDA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$50,000		
		Develop 365 Corridor study to assess impact of future development and inland port	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
		Assess impact of large transportation and development projects on transportation network	GDOT, Local Govts.			Program policy
	Several State arterials struggle to sustain efficiency in serving both local and through traffic	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. \$10,000		
		Develop a freight/ truck route transportation plan	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$20,000		
		Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors in conjunction with GDOT and local stakeholders	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
		Develop Highway 441 Tourism Study	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$10,000	
		Develop 365 Corridor study to assess impact of future development and inland port	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
		Assess impact of large transportation and development projects such as Inland Port on transportation network	GDOT, Local Govts.			Program policy
	Growing need for bike trails and on-road bike lanes	Update regional bicycle and pedestrian plan	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-2 yrs \$10,000		
		Promote existing and proposed routes	GDOT, Local Govts.			Program policy



	Lingering potential for 2nd commercial passenger service airport to support Metro Atlanta	Inventory and develop plans to improve local and regional airports	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
	Potential support for revenues through the Transportation Investment Act of 2010	Develop Commuter Traffic Study	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
	Demand for improvements to I-85 and intersection arterials	Develop an I-85 corridor access and multi-modal study	GDOT, EDA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$50,000		
		Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors in conjunction with GDOT and local stakeholders	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
		Develop a metro-area growth strategy to support urbanizing communities	GDOT, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
		Assess impact of large transportation and development projects such as Inland Port on transportation network	GDOT, Local Govts.			Program policy
	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	GDOT, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$20,000		
		Explore potential for increased rural transit services and autonomous vehicles/ride sharing within the region	GDOT, Local Govts.			Program policy
		Inventory local housing programs, leaders and policies in each community	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		
	Improve waste mgmt planning to ensure availability for economic growth.	Develop waste mgmt. component for next regional plan update	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$10,000	
	Support local governments with capital improvement planning	Develop departmental assessments for emergency services, parks and recreation, and public works	GEMA, DCA, Local Govts.			Program policy
		Regional assessment of emergency services	GEMA, DCA, Local Govts.	3-5 yrs. \$5,000		



Priority/ Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
Priority: Promote awareness of the Georgia Mountains Region as a tourism destination by fostering viable and sustainable initiatives.					
ED1: Update and maintain a master database of tourism assets in the Georgia Mountains Region.	Review/ Update existing datasets with GA DED	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1 yr. \$1,000	-	Complete
ED2: Develop promotional and educational materials for the Georgia Mountains Region.	Include promotional section in new GMRC web site	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1 yr. \$5,000	-	Revised; “Develop an inventory...”
ED3: Foster regional partnerships to create and grow tourism product(s).	Develop a regional tourism forum w/ GA DED	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	Retained
	Explore downtown tourism networking with NC and SC		1-3 yrs NA	-	Cancelled; Deferred as a priority
	Develop an I-85 corridor access and multi-modal study.		1-3 yrs \$20,000	-	Retained; Addressed in CFS
	Develop Highway 441 Tourism Study		-	6-7 yrs \$10,000	Retained
ED4: Improve infrastructure that supports tourism development and improvement of signage for tourism assets.	Identify and assess conditions of roadways based on tourism impact	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-3 yrs. \$20,000	-	Cancelled; Addressed in other actions
ED5: Advocate for more funding related to tourism product development.	Inventory funding for local tourism programs	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	3-6 yrs. \$5,000	Complete
Priority: Attract film industry to the region.					
ED6: Work to ensure that all counties in the Georgia	Survey Counties for knowledge of program; Identify gaps	ARC, Local Govts., Local	1-3 yrs. \$10,000	-	Retained action

	Mountains Region are Camera Ready Certified.		Chambers & ED authorities			
	ED7: Create a business friendly environment which is conducive to the film industry.	Establish local contact list for use by film industry	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-2 yrs. \$2,000	-	Retained
Priority: To focus on creating new small, high-growth companies in the Georgia Mountains Region.						
	ED8: Provide the Georgia Mountains region’s residents with innovative educational resources to help them learn about entrepreneurship and start a new business.	Develop an entrepreneurship training program for teachers	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	4-7 yrs. \$50,000	Retained
		Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop in conjunction with the SBDC and Universities.	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-2 yrs \$1,000	-	Retained
	ED9: Better connect venture capital, investors, and entrepreneurs within the Georgia Mountains Region.	Create a GMRC entrepreneurship network; Promote with lenders and local Chambers	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-3 yrs. \$10,000	-	Cancelled; Addressed through other actions
	ED10: Improve access to capital for startup and small businesses.					
	ED11: Promote successful entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial practices in the region.					
Priority: To foster sustainable agriculture by creating and/or retaining jobs and private investment within the agricultural sector and by adding value and developing new products and niche markets.						
	ED12: Encourage and support the development of community supported agricultural cooperatives to sustain small and mid-sized producers.	Provide models of, and contact info for, existing cooperatives	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	2-4 yrs. \$5,000	-	Cancelled; Deferred as a priority
	ED13: Expand opportunities for production based on the byproducts of value-added processing.	TBD	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities			Cancelled; Deferred as a priority

ED14: Expand and upgrade infrastructure to support farms.	Identify and assess conditions of roadways based on agribusiness impact	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-3 yrs. \$20,000	-	Cancelled; Deferred as a priority
	Inventory and map agri-tourism assets of the region.	Local Govts, Local Chambers	3-5 yrs \$5,000	-	Revised; Included with "Develop an inventory..."
ED15: Support efforts to expand agri-tourism in the region.	Develop a regional tourism forum w/ GA DED	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-2 yrs. \$5,000	-	Cancelled; Addressed through other actions
ED16: Support the region's wine industry by incentivizing and supporting area growers.	Continue to collect and promote data about local industry to local and State officials	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	-	Complete
Priority: Increase expansion and retention of the region's existing businesses and industries.					
ED17: Promote regional leadership and collaboration.	Develop inventory of leadership programs available to area residents/ businesses	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	2-4 yrs. \$5,000	-	Cancelled; Deferred as a priority
ED18: Invest in the beautification and revitalization of downtowns.	Continue providing urban redevelopment plans (reworded in mitigation strategies)	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-5 yrs. \$50,000	6-10 yrs. \$50,000	Retained
ED19: Support new efforts for existing business and industry.	Work with local Chambers and dev. authorities to assist efforts to grow local business	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	-	Cancelled; Addressed through other actions
ED20: Provide the Georgia Mountains Region's residents with innovative, educational resources to help them learn technical and financial resources to expand.	Work directly with the businesses to identify lack of skills levels needed for their business;	DOL, ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-3 yrs. \$20,000		Cancelled; Addressed through other actions
Priority: Devote local resources to the recruitment of new industry and businesses in the Georgia Mountains region.					



ED21: Assess local resources strengths and weaknesses to develop a list of feasible target industries.	Create/Update inventory of regional assets and economic base industries	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	4-6 yrs. \$10,000	Cancelled; Addressed through other actions
ED22: Work with supplier networks both up and down stream to develop list of target industries.	Create list of local businesses' imports	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	6-8 yrs. \$10,000	Cancelled; Addressed through other actions
ED23: Promote regional showcase events to attract new business, industry leaders and state partners.	Continue to inventory and promote regional events	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	-	Cancelled; Addressed through other actions
ED24: Promote a regional marketing effort of regional assets.	Develop Regional Fact Sheet/ web site targeted for econ. development	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	6-7 yrs. TBD	Complete
ED25: Develop an inventory of available sites in the region (reworded from original)	Collect/ develop GIS dataset of available industrial sites; Place on web	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	3-6 yrs. \$15,000	Retained
Priority: 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.					
ED26: Ensure all communities have access to, and are aware of, resources providing economic forecasts for their region, county and, where possible, municipality	Update catalog of resource programs; Distribute to local econ. developers	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-3 yrs. TBD	-	Complete
ED27: Establish a proper chain of communication regarding economic concerns and identify resources, providers and services for implementing economic crisis response actions.	Ensure CEDS has complete and updated issues and priorities for the regional businesses	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-3 yrs. \$5,000	-	Complete
ED28: Conduct a forum or concentrated assessment of the	Develop regional industrial profile	ARC, Local Govts., Local	1-3 yrs. \$20,000	-	Complete



economic health and needs of the region's most prominent industries.		Chambers & ED authorities			
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Priority/ Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
Comparably limited support for agribusiness, especially agri-tourism	Creation of a regional food hub and promote through print and social media marketing	DNR, CCRC&D, Local Chambers, DED		4-7 yrs. TBD	
	Develop promotional material for area farmer's markets and canneries	DNR, CCRC&D, Local Chambers, DED	1-3 yrs. \$5,000		
	Establish a local food guide based on local assessments	DNR, CCRC&D, Local Chambers, DED	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
	Develop an inventory of tourism industry resources	DNR, CCRC&D, Local Chambers, DED	1-3 yrs \$5,000		
Potential for continued growth within tourism sub-markets	Develop an inventory of tourism resources and promote through print and social media marketing	DCA, Local Chambers, DED	1-3 yrs \$5,000		
	Develop Highway 441 Tourism Study	GDOT, Local Govts., Local Chambers		6-7 yrs \$10,000	
	Initiate GMRC Downtown Association, promote partnerships (The Georgia Cities Foundation)	DCA, GCF, Local Chambers, DED	1-3 yrs. NA		
	Assist in the development of multi-county tourism task force focusing on Lake Hartwell	DCA, Local Chambers, DED		4-6 yrs. NA	
	Develop promotional material for area farmer's markets and canneries through social media	DNR, CCRC&D, Local Chambers, DED	1-3 yrs. \$5,000		
	Develop a regional tourism forum w/ GA DED	ARC, Local Govts., Local	1-2 yrs. \$5,000		



			Chambers & ED authorities			
	Lack of diversity within economic base; too much reliance on a few large industries	Develop and maintain a region wide downtown economic database	DCA, Local Chambers, 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, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-2 yrs \$1,000		
	Demand for expansion of goods-production industries	Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop in conjunction with the SBDC/colleges	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-2 yrs \$1,000		
	Potential within existing cities to nurture small business and entrepreneurship	Develop and distribute educational materials for entrepreneur programs	DOL, ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	2-4 yrs. TBD		
		Initiate GMRC Downtown Association, promote partnerships (The Georgia Cities Foundation)	DCA, GCF, Local Chambers, DED	1-3 yrs. NA		
		Assist in the development of multi-county tourism task force focusing on Lake Hartwell	DCA, Local Chambers, DED		4-6 yrs. NA	
		Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-2 yrs \$1,000		
		Develop an entrepreneurship training program for teachers	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	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		

	Strong potential in health service industries, particularly around hospitals	Develop and implement a public awareness campaign about health information technology	Local Govts., Medical orgs.	2-4 yrs. TBD		
	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	DOL, DED, DCA, Local Chambers & ED Authorities	1-3 yrs. NA		
		Actively market existing industrial parks	DOL, DED, DCA, Local Chambers & ED Authorities			Program Policy
		Work to enhance Georgia Statutory incentives in order to be competitive	DOL, DED, DCA, Local Chambers & ED Authorities			Program Policy
		Develop a website/ social media to market the region for new business development and expansion	DOL, DED, DCA, Local Chambers & ED Authorities	1-3 yrs. TBD		
	Need for coordinated informational and directional signage along entrance corridors	(Continue to) Develop redevelopment plans for historic downtowns & urban areas	DNR, DCA, Local Govts.	1-5 yrs. \$50,000	6-10 yrs. \$50,000	
		Assist local governments develop strategies and materials for wayfinding signage in the region	DOT, DCA, Local Govts.		4-6 yrs. \$20,000	
	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	DOL, DED, DCA, Local Chambers & ED Authorities			Program Policy
	Create a business friendly environment which is conducive to the film industry.	Establish local contact list for use by film industry	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-2 yrs. \$2,000		
		Survey Counties for knowledge of Camera Ready program; Identify gaps	ARC, Local Govts., Local Chambers & ED authorities	1-3 yrs. \$10,000		
	Develop an inventory of available Industrial sites in the region	Collect/ develop GIS dataset of available industrial sites; Place on web	ARC, Local Govts., Local	-	3-6 yrs. \$15,000	



			Chambers & ED authorities			
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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

	Priority/ Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
	Priority: To attract and retain business and industry by promoting education and workforce development.					
	WD1: Lower the high school dropout rate.	Start a school mentor / Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in the region	DOL, ARC, TCSG	-	-	Retained; Policy program
	WD2: Retain graduates and the educated workforce within the region.	Implement program promoting Career Days in primary and secondary schools (reworded in mitigation strategies)	DOL, ARC, TCSG	3-5 yrs. \$20,000	-	Retained
	WD3: 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.	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	-	Retained
	WD4: Increase basic and technical skills.	Work with high schools and technical colleges to prepare individuals in the needed skill sets	DOL, ARC, TCSG	-	-	Retained; Policy program
	WD5: Help alleviate unemployment and underemployment in the Georgia Mountains Region.	Develop program linking local schools with area Technical Colleges	DOL, ARC, TCSG	3-5 yrs. \$10,000	-	Retained
	WD6: Address lack of family support.	TBD	DOL, ARC, TCSG	-	-	Changed to "Educate parents" action item
	Strategy WD7: Address challenges facing the unemployable citizens.	Further develop Apprenticeship, internship, work-based learning and mentoring programs	DOL, ARC, TCSG	-	2-6 yrs. \$40,000	Retained
	Lack of labor skills to support a diverse group of industries	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		



		Work with high schools and technical colleges to prepare individuals in the needed skill sets	DOL, ARC, TCSG	-	-	Policy program
	Lack of basic soft skills and state standards that do not match with industry needs	Through regional awareness, inform State officials about the basic skill challenges	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-2 yrs. \$3,000		
		Partner with colleges/universities in the region for training opportunities	DOL, ARC, TCSG			Policy program
	Perception of low educational attainment by local residents	Publicize with area newspapers the positive educational and skills attainment achieved in the region	DOL, ARC, TCSG	1-2 yrs. \$3,000		
	Increasing demand for high quality education facilities and programs	Start a school mentor / Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in the region	DOL, ARC, TCSG	-	-	Policy program
		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., Local Chambers & ED authorities	-	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

	Priority/ Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Comment/ Ongoing
	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.					
	H1: Encourage local governments to examine inclusionary zoning measures to effectively plan for the present and future housing needs of the regional workforce.	Provide template resources for assessing development policies	DCA, Local Govts., Financial institutions	3-5 yrs. \$5,000	-	Changed to “educational seminars and workshops” action item
		Produce survey and distribute to local housing leaders.	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$5,000	-	Retained
		Develop summary report on housing survey findings	DCA, Local Govts.,	3-5 yrs. \$1,000	-	Retained
	H2: To inform local leaders and citizens on available housing programs and services.	Ensure local govts. have knowledge of programs and communication strategy	DCA, Local Govts.	-	6-8 yrs.	Changed to “educational seminars and workshops” action item
	H3: Develop a regional strategic housing plan. (listed in mitigation strategies)	Development of GMRC Regional Housing Plan	DCA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs. \$5,000	-	Moved to action item
	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	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		



		Market/Promote single and multifamily developments for seniors	DCA, Local Govts.,			Policy
		Help communities adopt codes to ensure sustainable and quality housing	DCA, Local Govts.,HUD, APA		3-5 yrs. TBD	
	Lack of and need to ensure sustainable quality of affordable workforce housing	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	
		Attract multi-family housing developers	DCA, Local Govts.,			Policy
	Slow/limited responsiveness to issues of the housing and development industry	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	
	Need to assist communities clarify affordable housing vs. low-income or subsidized housing	Work with media and other outlets to educate citizens and communities about the difference	DCA, Local Govts.,HUD, APA	1-3 yrs. \$1,000		
	Need to ensure local development codes are not unintentionally prohibiting new	Assisting communities to develop building codes and ordinance measures that promote housing development	DCA, Local Govts.,HUD, APA		3-5 yrs. TBD	

workforce housing development					
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DISASTER MITIGATION

Priority/ Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Comment/ Ongoing
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.					
DM1: Creation of a Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan. (reworded in mitigation strategies)	Development of GMRC Hazard Mitigation Plan	GEMA, FEMA	1-3 yrs. \$20,000	-	Moved to action item; In progress
DM2: Create public awareness of plan/community outreach.	Ensure every community has an HMP promulgation strategy	GEMA, Local Govts.	-	6-7 yrs.	Moved to Priority/ Strategy
DM3: Establish a regional post-disaster response framework.	Ensure every community has co-op agreements in place	GEMA, FEMA, Local Govts.	-	10 yrs.	Moved to new Priority; In progress
	Develop Regional Post-Disaster Response Framework.	GEMA, Local Govts.	1-3 yrs NA	-	Cancelled
Need to ensure every community has AND USES their Hazard Mitigation Plan	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.	
Opportunity to provide regional support and coordination with local hazard mitigation planning	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		
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REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LAND USE

	Priority/ Strategy	Action	Status	Comment
	LU1: Promote development that maximizes existing utilities and infrastructure.	Encourage local plans to feature nodal development that prioritizes utility capacity	In Progress	Revised to “Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses...”
	LU3: Promote coordinated land use mgmt. along critical arterials, supporting both local needs and the demands of through traffic critical for tourism and industry.	Develop long-range management plans for targeted corridors in conjunction with GDOT and local stakeholders	In Progress	Revised to “Develop model cost-benefit impact analyses...”
	LU4: Promote neighborhood scale planning. (listed as mitigation strategy)	Encourage, and demonstrate, the practice of small-area studies	Complete	Program policy
	LU5: Support efforts that preserve rural and agricultural uses where desired.	Encourage adoption of conservation design standards and conservation easements	In Progress	Moved to NR priority “Need to improve awareness about...”
	LU6: Support advanced development practices within the metropolitan areas.	Inventory metropolitan communities for development trends and needs; Develop a metro-area growth strategy to support urbanizing communities	Cancelled	Addressed in other actions
	LU7: Promote agribusiness in a responsible manner, sensitive to the scale and capacity of infrastructure and integrates surrounding residential and commercial areas.	Encourage adoption of conservation design standards and conservation easements	In Progress	Moved to NR priority “Need to improve awareness about...”
		Survey local agribusinesses for needs and priorities	Cancelled	Addressed in other actions
	Need to match land use plans with infrastructure plans	Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy	Complete	Program Policy
	Need tools to preserve area farms	Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy	Complete	Program Policy
		Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy	Complete	Program Policy



	Need to ensure optimum land use planning tools and enforcement at local levels	Promote BMPs throughout the region as land use alternatives	Complete	Program Policy
		Promote neighborhood scale planning	Complete	Program Policy
	Need to stem the deterioration of downtown areas, buildings and infrastructure, and loss of economic activity as suburbanization occurs in the region	Annually review regional Future Development Strategy to gauge accuracy	Complete	Program Policy
		Advocate for funding/private investment for downtown redevelopment	Complete	Program Policy
	Lack of identification of plans for growth areas for industrial and commercial development	Identify funding mechanisms for required infrastructure	Complete	Program Policy

NATURAL RESOURCES

Priority/ Strategy	Action	Status	Comments
NR1: Promote conservation design ideas and other best management practices for new development.	Encourage adoption of conservation design standards and conservation easements	In Progress	Modified to “Need to improve awareness about...”
NR2: Improve and promote the knowledge of existing historic resources and preservation programs. (reworded in N&O's)	Develop a region wide downtown economic database that includes historic resources; Place on the web	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
NR3: Support efforts to implement the State's River Basin Management Plans.	Continue to work with/for the 3 Water Planning Councils	Complete	Program policy
NR4: Promote tighter coordination between land use planning and water supply management.	Develop tool for tracking impact of new development on local water supplies	In Progress	Addressed in “Develop an environmental performance...”
Need to improve awareness about conservation design, environmentally sensitive areas, and best management practices	Promote environmental BMPs within <i>Excellence Standards</i>	Complete	Program Policy
Need for more/ preserve local greenspace plans	Promote environmental BMPs within <i>Excellence Standards</i>	Complete	Program Policy
Desire to attract funds for State parks and wildlife management areas	Support funding measures for management of DNR lands	Complete	Program Policy
	Promote cooperative partnerships between State, local governments and private sector	Complete	Program Policy
Need to address habitat degradation caused by growth and development	Encourage redevelopment in underused areas and brownfields instead of new development in greenfields	Complete	Program Policy
Support implementation of applicable Water Planning District management plans	Annually report to GMRC Council status of Water Planning Council programs	Complete	Program Policy
	Attend Water Council meetings	Complete	Program Policy
Promote the knowledge and preservation of existing historic resources	Promote historic preservation BMPs within <i>Excellence Standards</i>	Complete	Program Policy

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Priority/ Strategy	Action	Status	Comment
CFS4: Improve water quality and wastewater planning to ensure sufficient infrastructure	Assist water planning councils with routine survey of local best practices	In Progress	Addressed under NR element “Support implementation...”
CFS5: Prepare to meet industry and business tele-communication needs by assisting with fiber optic network development.	Develop template material for assessing broadband capacity in local plans	Complete	
CFS8: Promote and support the use of health information technology (HIT). (listed in mitigation strategies)	-	In Progress	Addressed under item “Develop and implement...”
	-	In Progress	Addressed under WD element as “Develop hi-tech...”
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
Growing demand for water supply sources	Promote water conservation programs	Complete	Program policy
Impact of growth and changing demographics on transportation needs	Assess impact of large transportation and development projects such as Inland Port on transportation network	Complete	Program policy
Several State arterials struggle to sustain efficiency in serving both local and through traffic	Assess impact of large transportation and development projects such as Inland Port on transportation network	Complete	Program policy
Growing need for bike trails and on-road bike lanes	Promote existing and proposed routes	Complete	Program policy
Demand for improvements to I-85 and intersection arterials	Assess impact of large transportation and development projects such as Inland Port on transportation network	Complete	Program policy
Impact of changing demographics on transit demands, specifically the growing volume of retirement age residents and growing numbers of households with Hispanic/Latino ethnicity	Explore potential for increased rural transit services and autonomous vehicles/ride sharing within the region	Complete	Program policy



Improve waste mgmt planning to ensure availability for economic growth.	Develop departmental assessments for emergency services, parks and recreation, and public works	Complete	Program policy
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Priority/ Strategy	Action	Status	Comment
ED1: Update and maintain a master database of tourism assets in the Georgia Mountains Region.	Review/ Update existing datasets with GA DED	Complete	Complete
ED2: Develop promotional and educational materials for the Georgia Mountains Region.	Include promotional section in new GMRC web site	In Progress	Added to “Develop an inventory...”
ED3: Foster regional partnerships to create and grow tourism product(s).	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
ED4: Improve infrastructure that supports tourism development and improvement of signage for tourism assets.	Identify and assess conditions of roadways based on tourism impact	Cancelled	Addressed in other actions
ED5: Advocate for more funding related to tourism product development.	Inventory funding for local tourism programs	Complete	Complete
ED9: Better connect venture capital, investors, and entrepreneurs within the Georgia Mountains Region.	Create a GMRC entrepreneurship network; Promote with lenders and local Chambers	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
ED10: Improve access to capital for startup and small businesses.			
ED11: Promote successful entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial practices in the region.			
ED12: Encourage and support the development of community supported agricultural cooperatives to sustain small and mid-sized producers.	Provide models of, and contact info for, existing cooperatives	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority

ED13: Expand opportunities for production based on the byproducts of value-added processing.	TBD	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
ED14: Expand and upgrade infrastructure to support farms.	Identify and assess conditions of roadways based on agribusiness impact	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
	Inventory and map agri-tourism assets of the region.	In Progress	Added to “Develop an inventory...”
ED15: Support efforts to expand agri-tourism in the region.	Develop a regional tourism forum w/ GA DED	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
ED16: Support the region’s wine industry by incentivizing and supporting area growers.	Continue to collect and promote data about local industry to local and State officials	Complete	
ED17: Promote regional leadership and collaboration.	Develop inventory of leadership programs available to area residents/ businesses	Cancelled	Deferred as a priority
ED18: Invest in the beautification and revitalization of downtowns.	Continue providing urban redevelopment plans (reworded in mitigation strategies)	Complete	Program Policy
ED19: Support new efforts for existing business and industry.	Work with local Chambers and dev. authorities to assist efforts to grow local business	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
ED20: Provide the Georgia Mountains Region’s residents with innovative, educational resources to help them learn technical and financial resources to expand.	Work directly with the businesses to identify lack of skills levels needed for their business;	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
ED21: Assess local resources strengths and weaknesses to develop a list of feasible target industries.	Create/Update inventory of regional assets and economic base industries	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
ED22: Work with supplier networks both up and down stream to develop list of target industries.	Create list of local businesses’ imports	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
ED23: Promote regional showcase events to attract new business, industry leaders and state partners.	Continue to inventory and promote regional events	Cancelled	Addressed through other actions
ED24: Promote a regional marketing effort of regional assets.	Develop Regional Fact Sheet/ web site targeted for econ. development	Complete	



ED25: Develop an inventory of available sites in the region (reworded from original)	Collect/ develop GIS dataset of available industrial sites; Place on web	In Progress	
ED26: Ensure all communities have access to, and are aware of, resources providing economic forecasts for their region, county and, where possible, municipality	Update catalog of resource programs; Distribute to local econ. developers	Complete	
ED27: Establish a proper chain of communication regarding economic concerns and identify resources, providers and services for implementing economic crisis response actions.	Ensure CEDS has complete and updated issues and priorities for the regional businesses	Complete	
ED28: Conduct a forum or concentrated assessment of the economic health and needs of the region's most prominent industries.	Develop regional industrial profile	Complete	
Competition from South Carolina and North Carolina – border region	Actively market existing industrial parks	Complete	Program Policy
	Work to enhance Georgia Statutory incentives in order to be competitive	Complete	Program Policy
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	Complete	Program Policy



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

	Priority/ Strategy	Action	Status	Comment
	WD1: Lower the high school dropout rate.	Start a school mentor / Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in the region	Complete	Policy program
	WD2: Retain graduates and the educated workforce within the region.	Implement program promoting Career Days in primary and secondary schools (reworded in mitigation strategies)	Complete	
	WD3: 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.	Work directly with the businesses, career academies and technical colleges to identify lack of skills levels needed for their business and educational institutions	Complete	
	WD4: Increase basic and technical skills.	Work with high schools and technical colleges to prepare individuals in the needed skill sets	Complete	Policy program
	Lack of labor skills to support a diverse group of industries	Work with high schools and technical colleges to prepare individuals in the needed skill sets	Complete	Policy program
	Lack of basic soft skills and state standards that do not match with industry needs	Partner with colleges/universities in the region for training opportunities	Complete	Policy program
	Increasing demand for high quality education facilities and programs	Start a school mentor / Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in the region	Complete	Policy program



HOUSING

	Priority/ Strategy	Action	Status	Comment
	H1: Encourage local governments to examine inclusionary zoning measures to effectively plan for the present and future housing needs of the regional workforce.	Provide template resources for assessing development policies	In Progress	Changed to “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
	H2: To inform local leaders and citizens on available housing programs and services.	Ensure local govts. have knowledge of programs and communication strategy	In Progress	Changed to “educational seminars and workshops” action item
	H3: Develop a regional strategic housing plan. (listed in mitigation strategies)	Development of GMRC Regional Housing Plan	In Progress	Moved to action item
	Shortage of specialty housing to accommodate retirement age population; Need to monitor long-term impacts and sustainability of the second-home market	Market/Promote single and multifamily developments for seniors		Policy
	Lack of and need to ensure sustainable quality of affordable workforce housing	Attract multi-family housing developers		Policy

**DISASTER MITIGATION**

	Priority/ Strategy	Action	Status	Comment
	DM1: Creation of a Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan. (reworded in mitigation strategies)	Development of GMRC Hazard Mitigation Plan	In Progress	
	DM2: Create public awareness of plan/community outreach.	Ensure every community has an HMP promulgation strategy	In Progress	
	DM3: Establish a regional post-disaster response framework.	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



APPENDIX

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT REPORT

SAMPLES OF PROMOTIONS AND PUBLIC MEETINGS

QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS

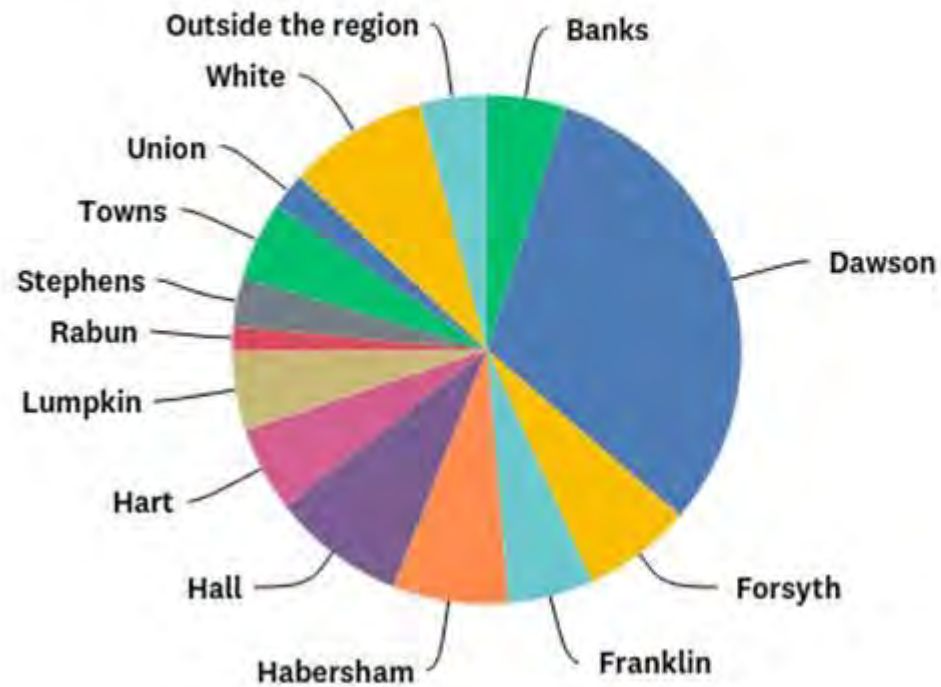
DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA

MAPS

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

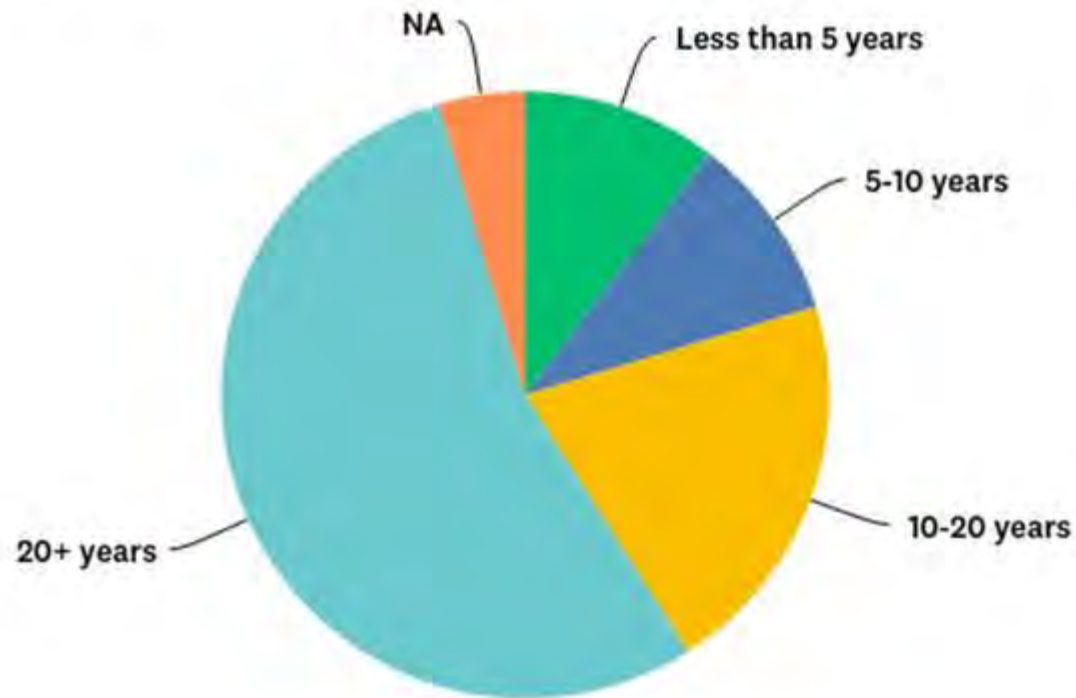
Q1: Please tell us in which county you live:

Answered: 259 Skipped: 2



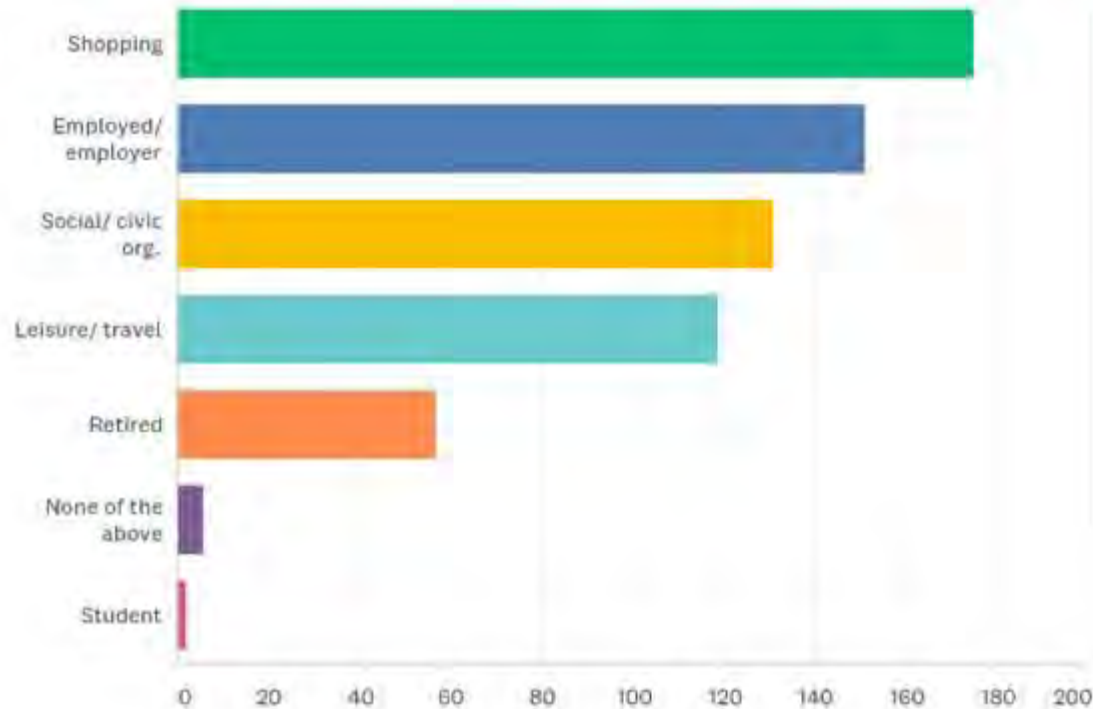
Q2: How long have you lived within the GMRC region?

Answered: 261 Skipped: 0



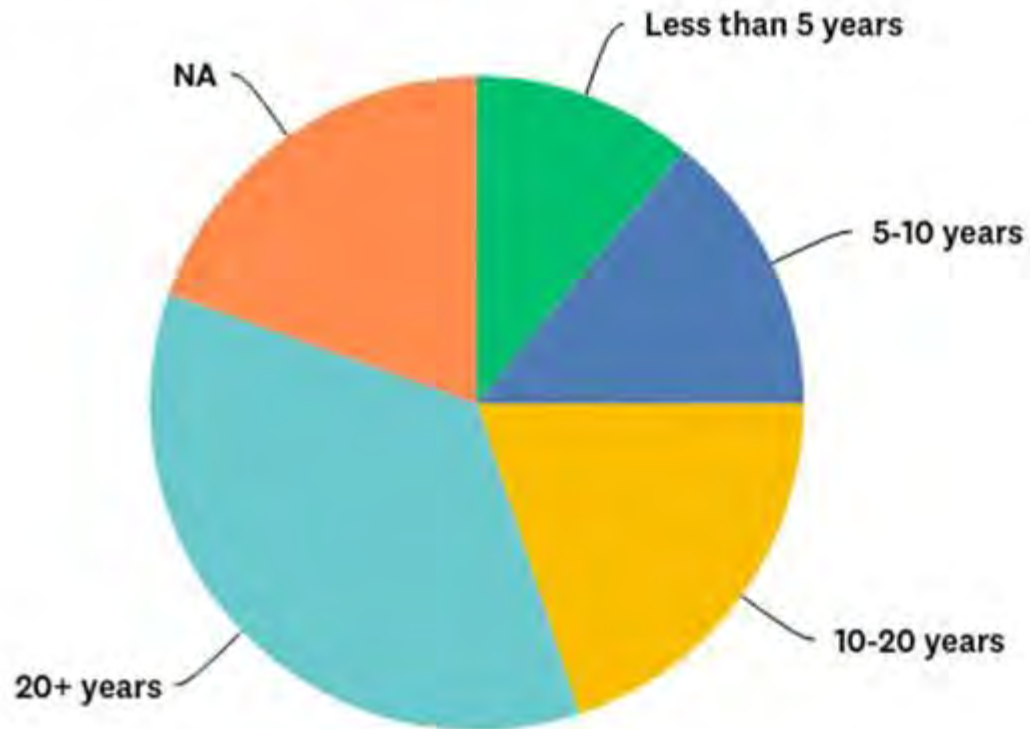
Q3: Which of the following activities do you do within the GMRC region? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 261 Skipped: 0



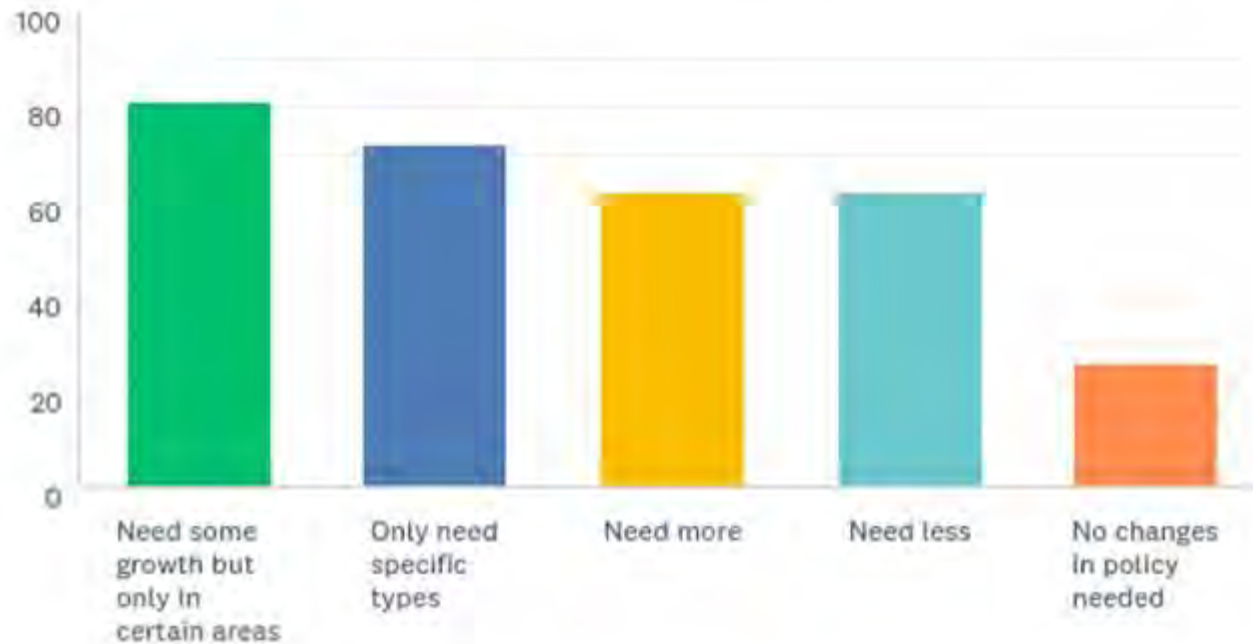
Q4: How long have you worked within the GMRC region?

Answered: 256 Skipped: 5



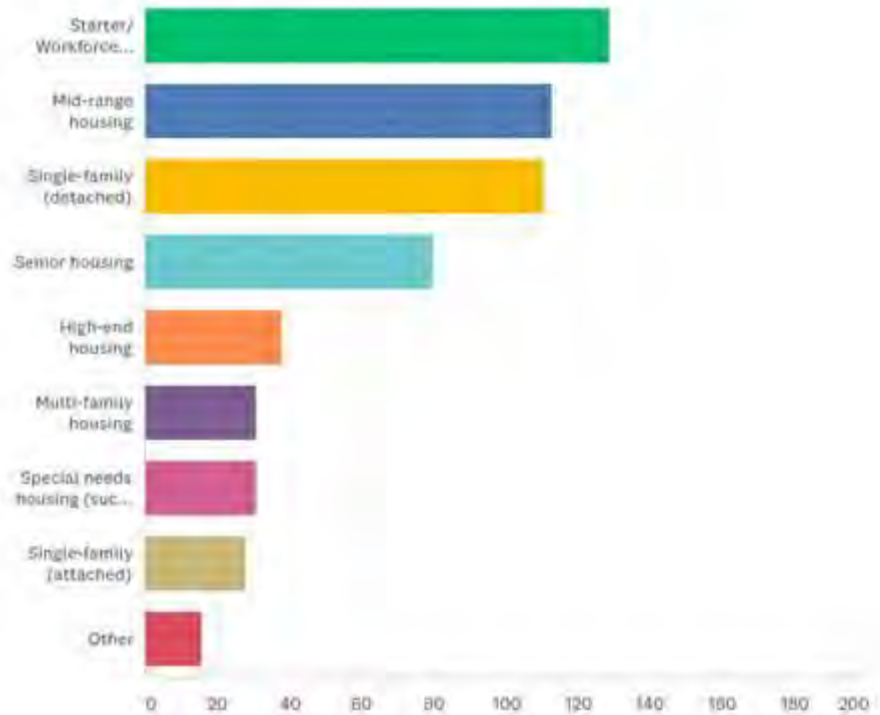
Q5: With regard to residential growth and development, which of the following concerns do you think applies to the region? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 236 Skipped: 25



Q6: Which, if any, types of residential development is most needed in the region going forward? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 225 Skipped: 36



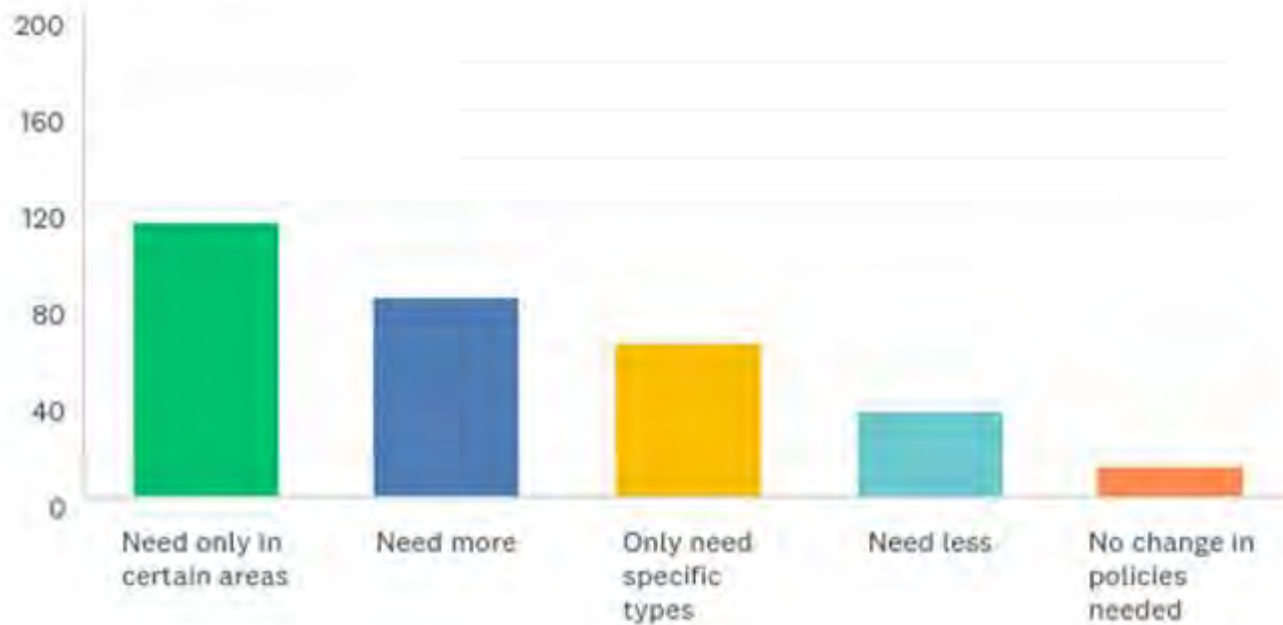
Q7: If the region were to continue growing, which areas would you like to see receive more residential growth? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 231 Skipped: 30



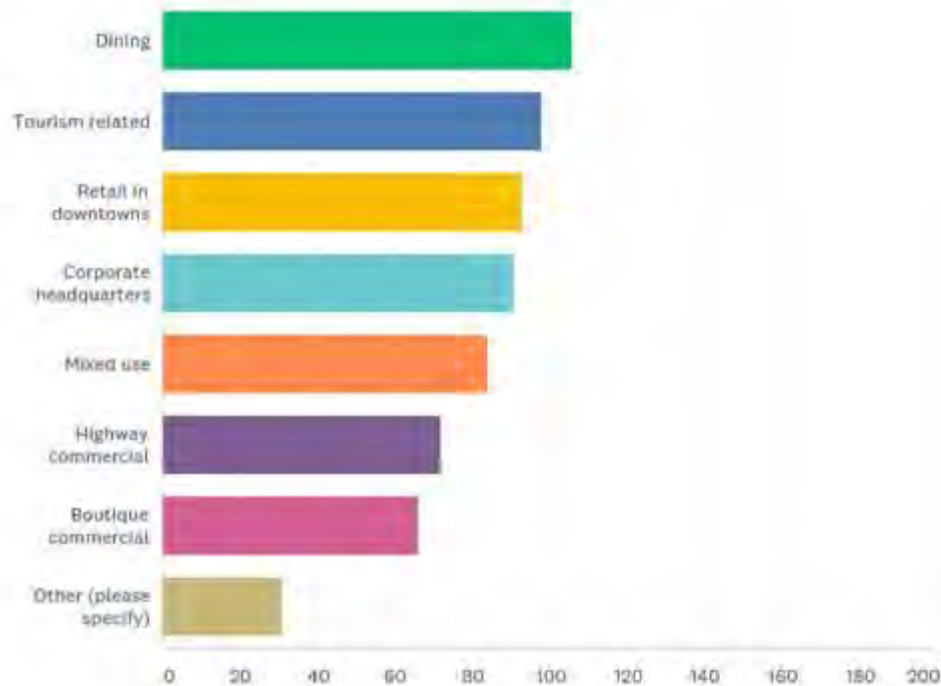
Q8: With regard to commercial growth and development, which of the following concerns do you think applies to the region? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 234 Skipped: 27



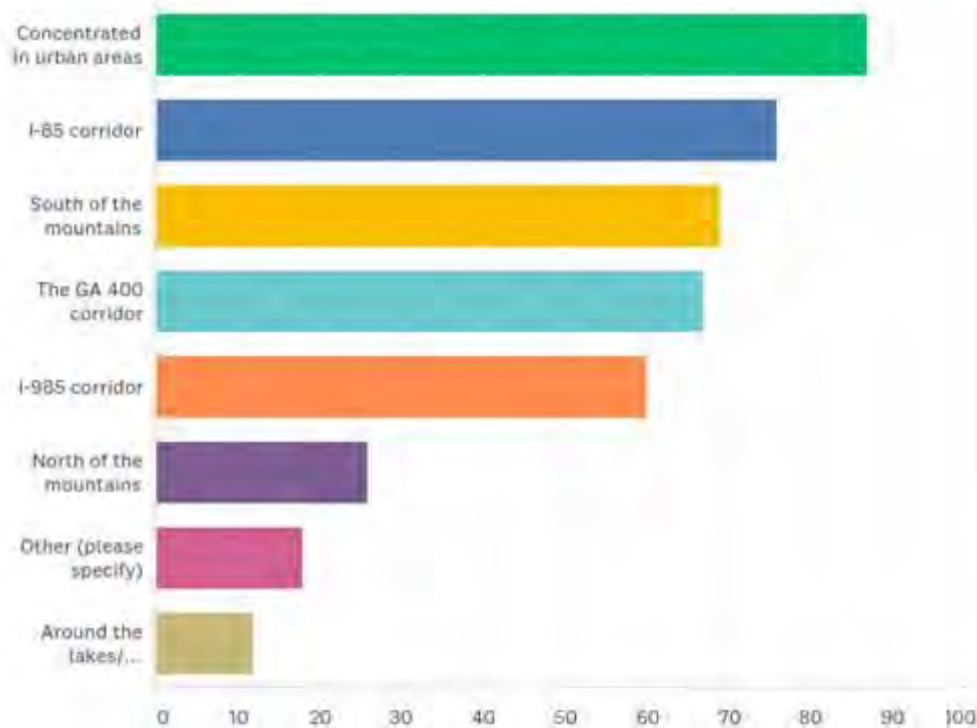
Q9: Which, if any, types of commercial development is most needed in the region going forward? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 230 Skipped: 31



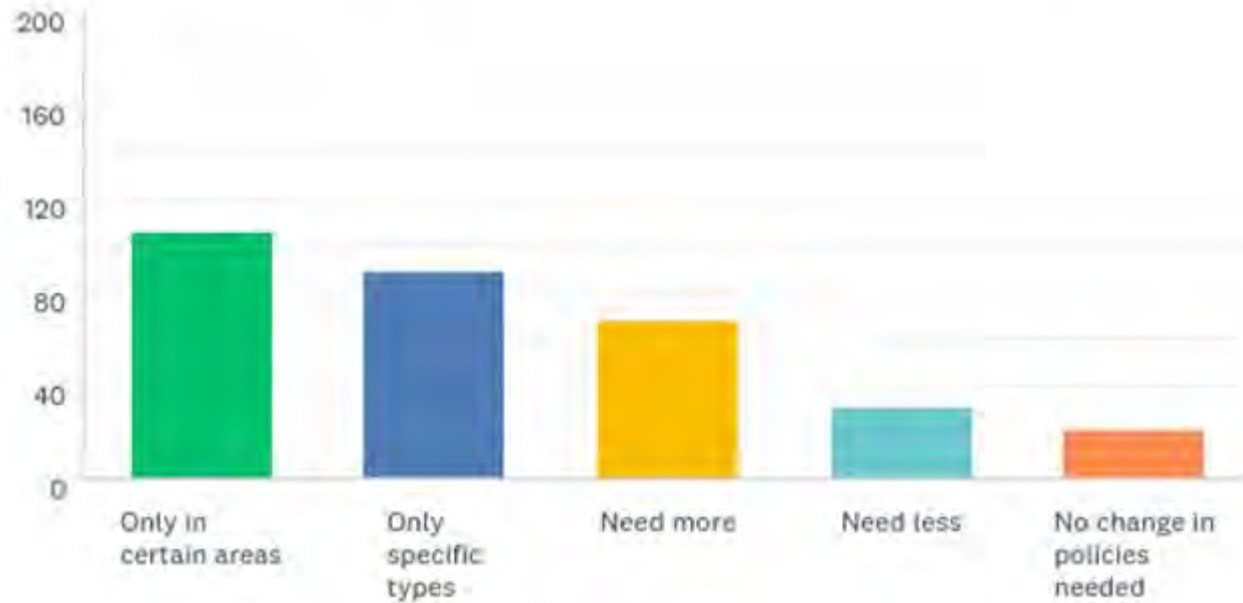
Q10: If the region were to continue growing, which areas would you like to see receive more commercial growth? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 233 Skipped: 28



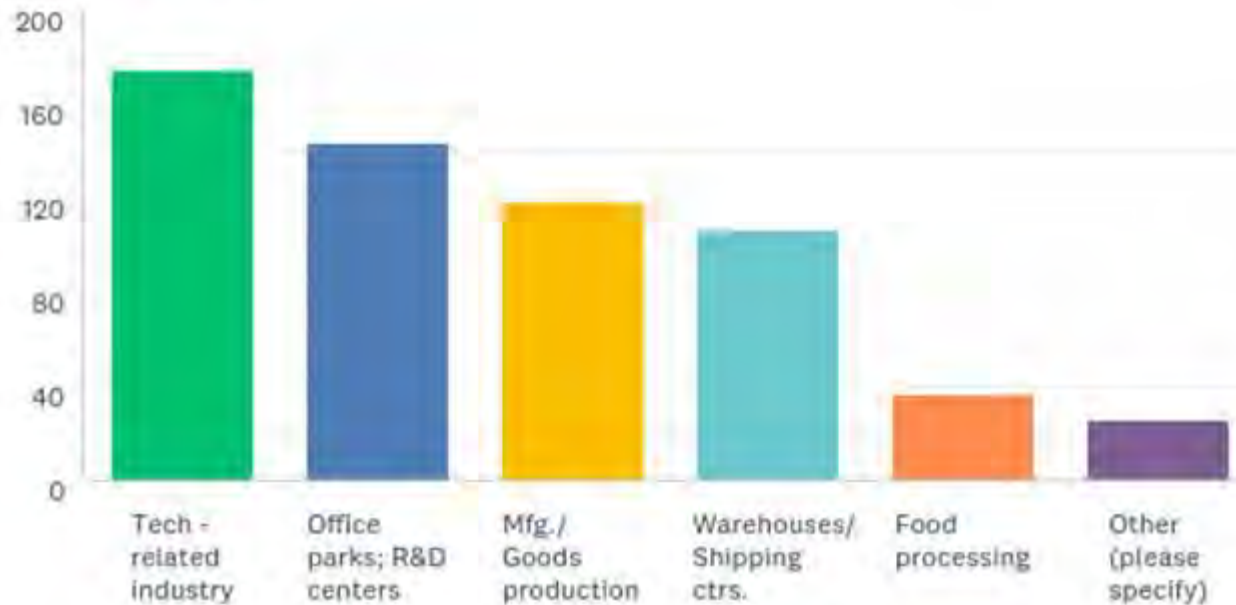
Q11: With regard to types of industrial growth and development, which of the following concerns do you think applies to the region? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 236 Skipped: 25



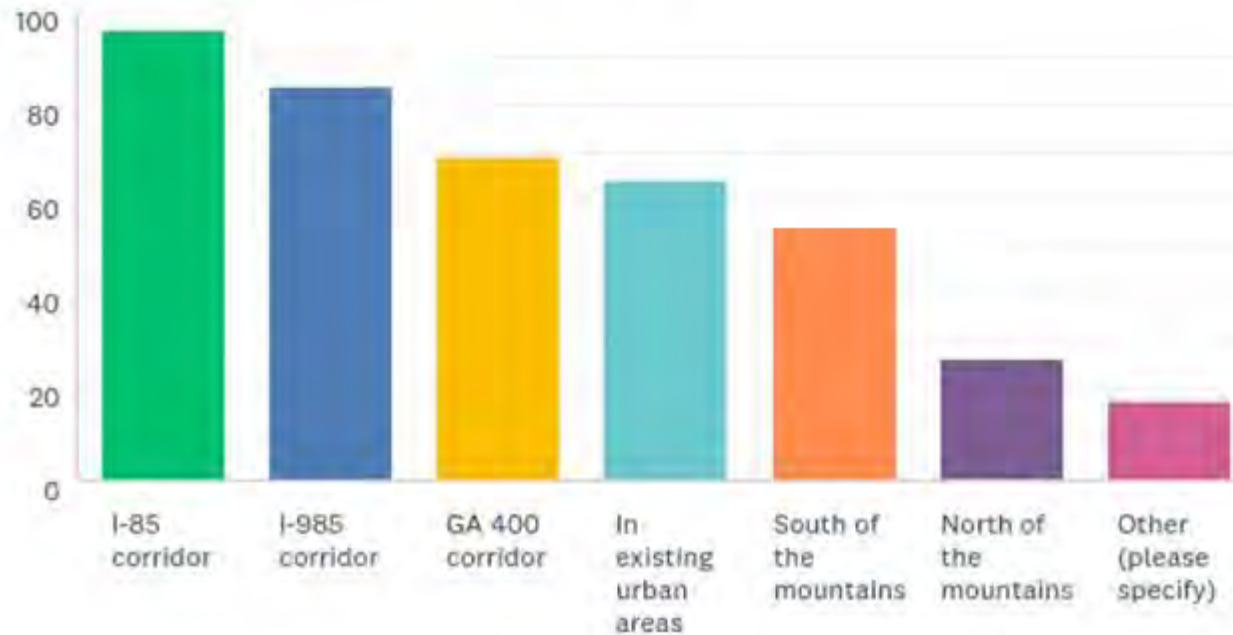
Q12: Which, if any, types of industrial development is most needed in the region going forward? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 227 Skipped: 34



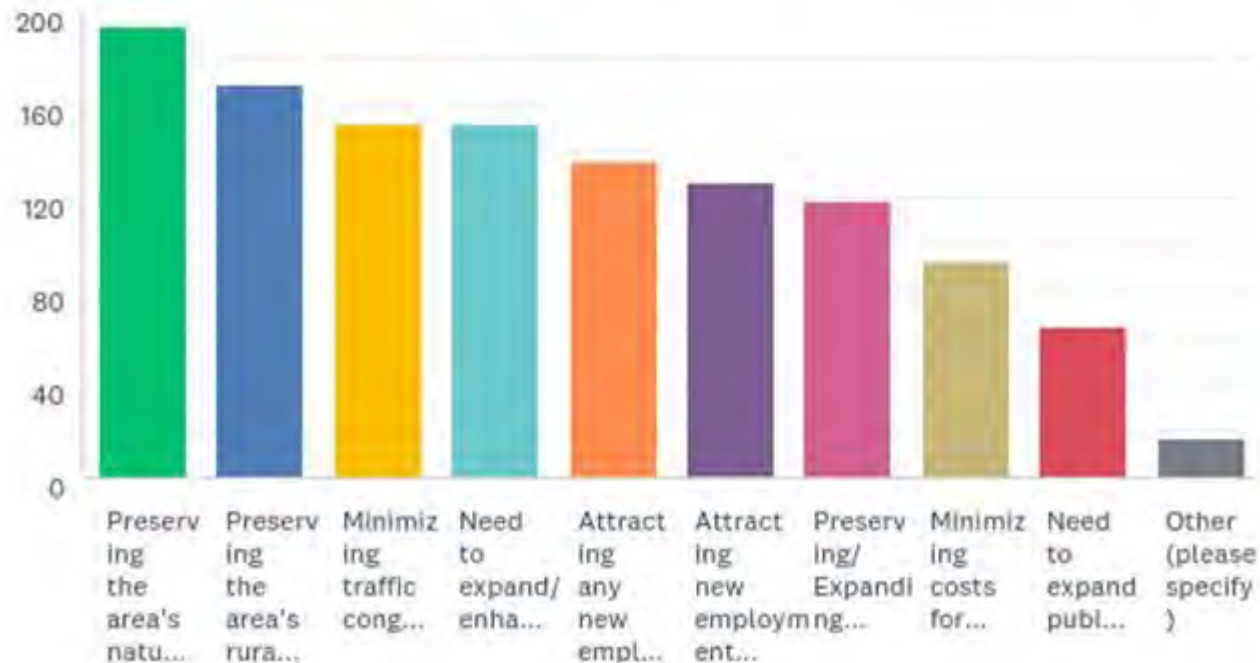
Q13: If the region were to continue growing, which areas would you like to see receive more industrial growth? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 230 Skipped: 31



Q14: With regard to general growth and development, which, if any, of the following issues do you consider a priority within the region? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 237 Skipped: 24



Q14: With regard to general growth and development, which, if any, of the following issues do you consider a priority within the region? (Choose all that apply)

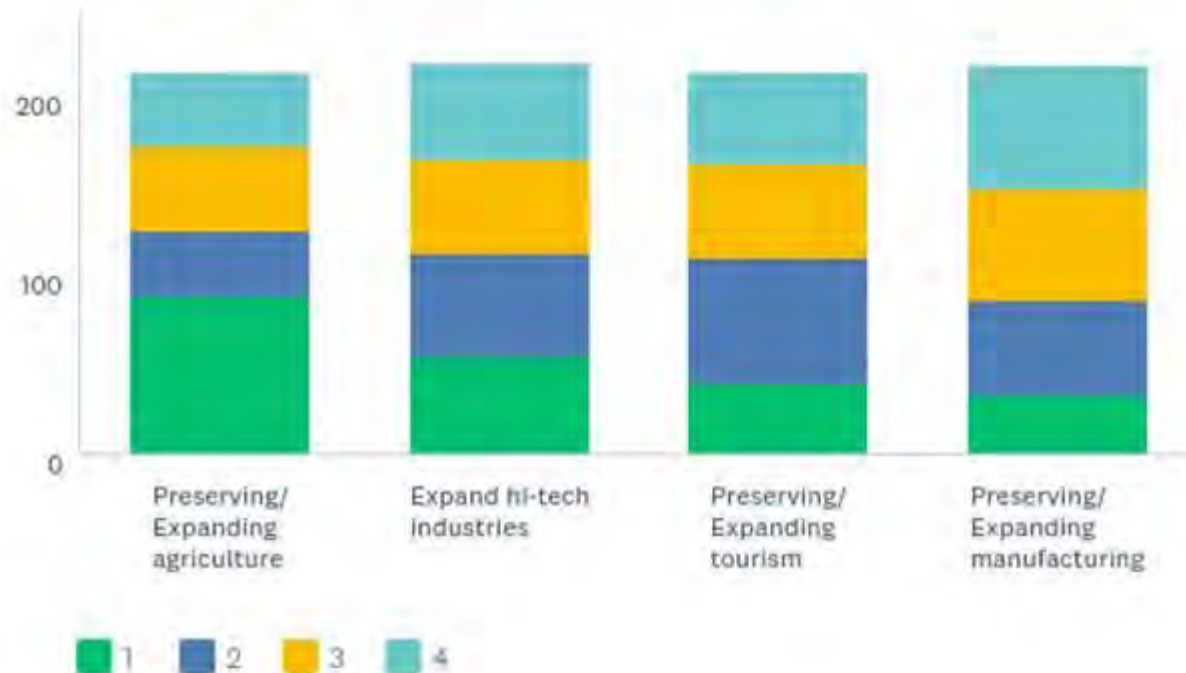
Answered: 237 Skipped: 24

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Preserving the area's natural resources	81.86%	194
Preserving the area's rural character	71.31%	169
Minimizing traffic congestion	64.14%	152
Need to expand/ enhance internet capacity	64.14%	152
Attracting any new employment that provides strong salaries	57.38%	136
Attracting new employment options within each county to minimize commuting	53.59%	127
Preserving/ Expanding agriculture and related industries	50.21%	119
Minimizing costs for utilities and infrastructure	39.24%	93
Need to expand public water supplies	27.43%	65
Other (please specify)	7.17%	17
Total Respondents: 237		



Q15: With regard to economic development please rank the following priorities for the region, with #1 being the most important to you:

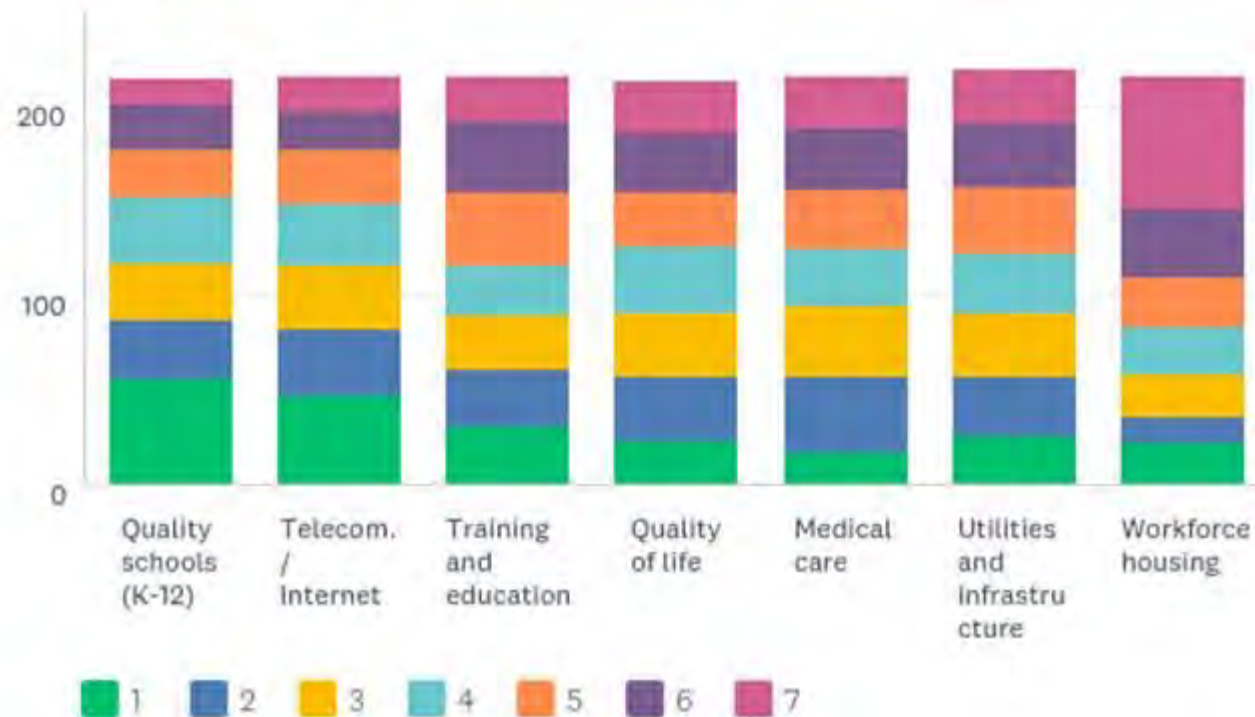
Answered: 222 Skipped: 39





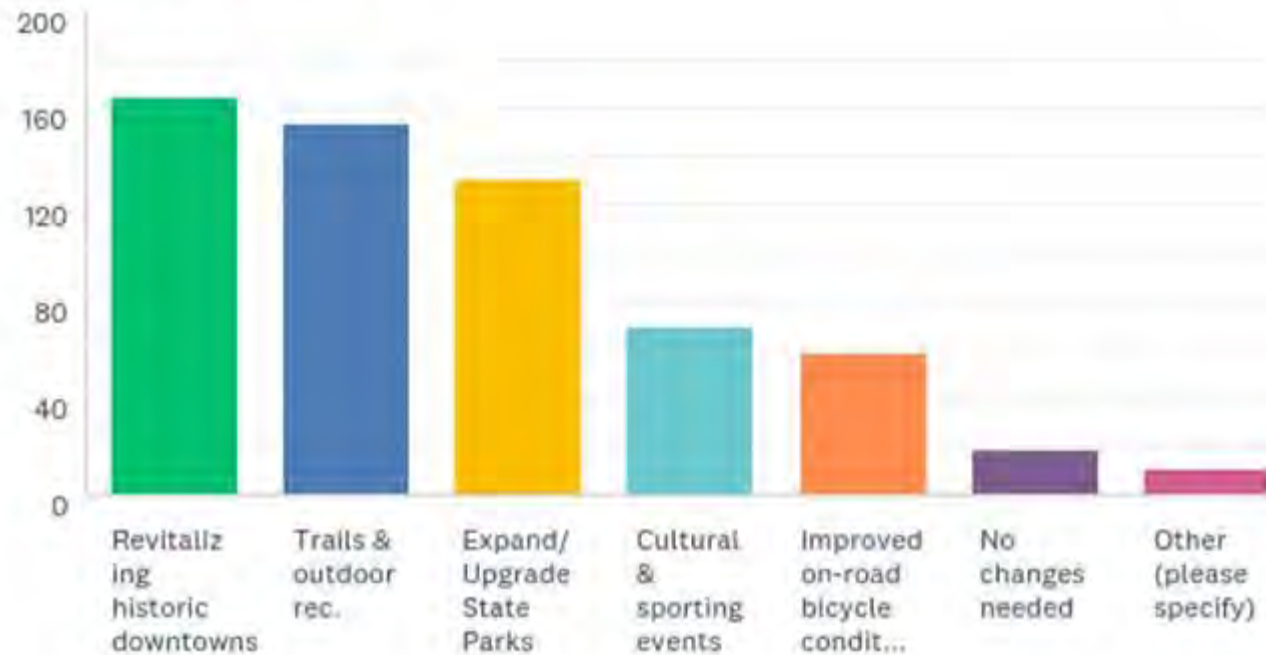
Q16: With regard to economic development please rank the following priorities for the region, with #1 being the most important to you:

Answered: 223 Skipped: 38



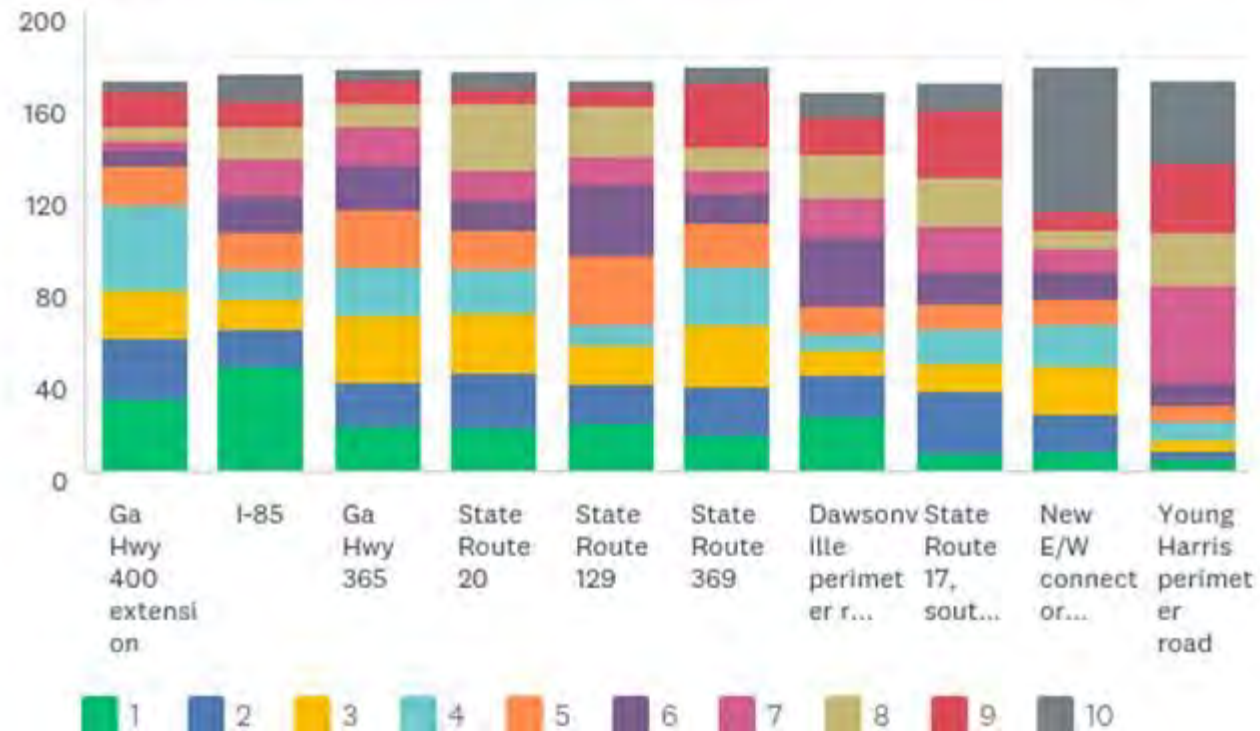
Q17: Which, if any, of the following ideas would you favor to increase tourism in the region? (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 224 Skipped: 37



Q18: With regard to roads and transportation, please rank the following based on need of capacity and/or safety improvements, with 1 being the most important.

Answered: 201 Skipped: 60



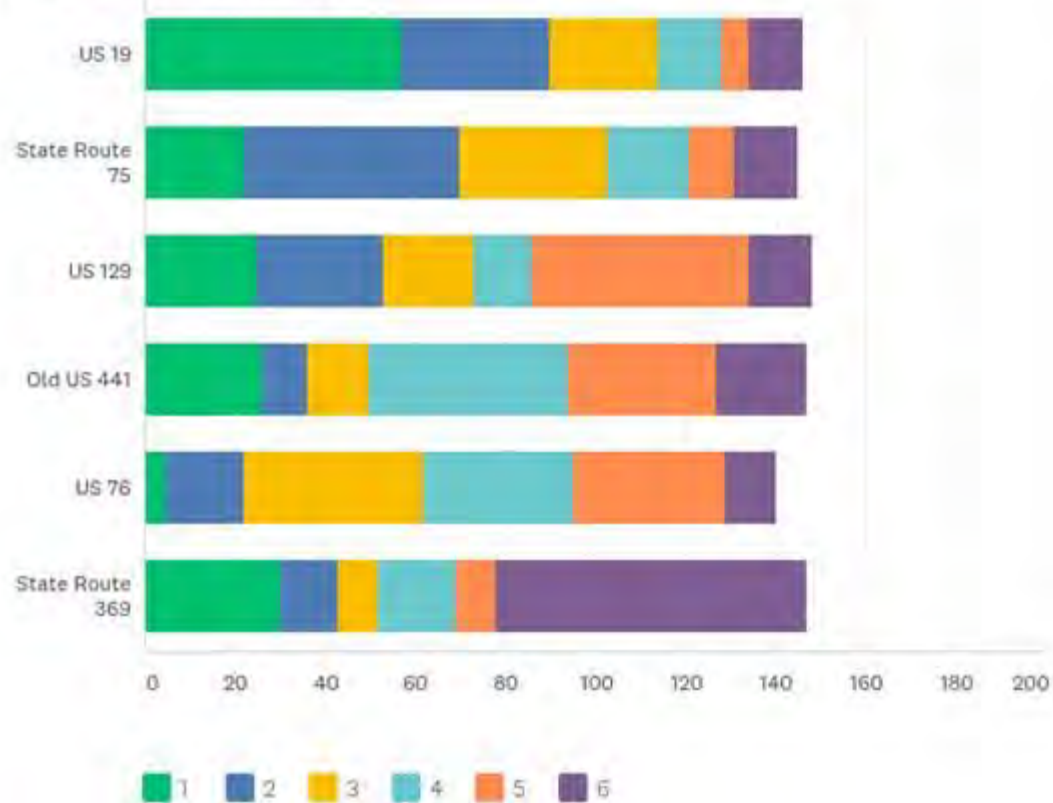
Q19: Please tell us which part of the region's road network do you think most needs improvement or expansion?

Answered: 169 Skipped: 92

Ga. 400	14.9%
East/West Connector	11.7%
Hwy 53	11.0%
Hwy 365	11.0%
US I-85	10.4%

Q20: Of the currently busiest on-road biking corridors which do you feel is most in need of improvements?

Answered: 168 Skipped: 93





Q21: What other corridors, if any, you would recommend for bicycle-related improvements?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 167

- Hwy 129
- SR 17
- SR 53

Complaints about bikers = 9%

Q22: As briefly as possible, what do you consider the three greatest strengths of the Georgia Mountains region?

Answered: 173 Skipped: 88

Strengths	
87.7%	Natural Resources/ Scenic Beauty
65.5%	Rural/ Small-Town Character
27.3%	Quality of Life
26.1%	Low Cost of Living
19.5%	Recreation/Leisure Opportunities

Q23: As briefly as possible, what do you consider the three greatest weaknesses of the Georgia Mountains region?

Answered: 176 Skipped: 85

Weaknesses	
44.9%	Road Conditions/ Traffic
32.4%	Overdevelopment/ Uncontrolled Growth
21.6%	Lack of Affordable Housing
21.0%	Accessible, Quality Internet/Broadband
20.5%	Jobs/ Labor Skills Gap
19.3%	General Infrastructure Issues



Q24: As briefly as possible, what do you consider the three greatest opportunities for the Georgia Mountains region?

Answered: 168 Skipped: 93

Opportunities	
24.1%	Tourism
23.4%	Greenspace/ Outdoor Recreation
20.3%	Growth Management Practices
18.1%	Access to Metro Amenities
16.5%	Education/ Social Infrastructure/ Quality of Life



Q25: As briefly as possible, what do you consider the three greatest threats facing the Georgia Mountains region?

Answered: 174 Skipped: 87

Threats	
71.2%	Overdevelopment/ Overpopulation
50.7%	Unmanaged Growth
38.6%	Impact of Change on Local Culture
19.5%	Traffic/ Aging Infrastructure
14.2%	Exodus of Youth/Talent



STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT REPORT

The full update for the GMRC CEDS/RP was done featuring a variety of stakeholder participation measures including committees, surveys and direct outreach. The intent throughout was to solicit input from a wide range of stakeholders, developing the best possible guidance in shaping objectives and priorities for the region. Regional partners included public officials, community leaders, economic development professionals, representatives of workforce development boards and institutions of higher education, minority and labor groups, and private individuals.

As part of the process GMRC staff reviewed the goals and objectives from every current local comprehensive plan in an effort to ensure the Regional Agenda would primarily reflect the interests of our member communities. The GMRC also engaged in a month-long campaign visiting every local government office with various staff, directly soliciting their thoughts on critical issues and concerns. These efforts provided a base for the regional goals and objectives as well as identifying some very specific needs and action items.

The CEDS planning process enabled leaders to articulate a vision and define a set of goals for sustaining economic growth, identified strategic focus areas for the region to focus its limited resources on to achieve economic health, recognized the vital projects and programs deemed critical for future growth, and established an action plan geared towards achieving the CEDS vision. After the strategic focus areas were identified, the CEDS committee pursued a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of the region and progressed toward the development of the Action Plan and identification of priority programs and projects.

Purpose

The purpose of the Stakeholder Involvement Program is to ensure that the regional plan reflects the full range of regional values and desires, by involving a diverse spectrum of stakeholders in development of the Regional Agenda. This broad-based participation in developing the Regional Agenda will also help ensure that it will be implemented, because many in the region are involved in its development and thereby become committed to seeing it through. The Stakeholder Involvement Program is intended to supplement, not replace, the regional hearing required in section 110-12-6-.08 (2)(a).

Requirements

The three elements required in developing the Stakeholder Involvement Program, as per the rules and standards for regional planning in Georgia, are listed below. These requirements are designed to ensure the process engages the public and key stakeholders, focusing on the input, interests and concerns of the region's residents, business owners and others with vested interests in the local communities. The result must be a concise schedule to guide development of the Regional Agenda, including planned participation events or meetings at key points during this process.



An inventory of key stakeholders and interested parties is devised in advance of most planning exercises to ensure that a proper involvement program is pursued as part of the process. The Regional Plan is designed, after all, not only as a compliment to local and State community development efforts, but also as a means to engage people about topics and issues that might otherwise have been missed through either the smaller scale local plans or broader and more general State plans.

As part of the Georgia Mountain Planning process, the GMRC will engage various layers of stakeholder groups in different ways. This is intended not only to ensure a full and proper representation of regional interest throughout the planning process, but also allow GMRC staff to be more direct and effective in communicating with each group about specific issues and concerns.

The foremost group to be addressed will be the local governments themselves, which are the core of community development within the region and for whom the GMRC serves. The Regional Plan will be devised primarily as a vehicle to compliment the goals and interests of local plans, and as such special attention will be paid to securing the participation of local government staff and officials. Similarly, the GMRC will be reaching out to top-layer local organizations and stakeholder groups that are active in the development and implementation of local planning objectives. This includes development authorities, chambers of commerce, convention and visitors boards and other organizations working for the betterment of area cities and counties.

The next layer of stakeholders to be other organizations and people active in the local communities but not consistently addressing community development issues. This includes representation from prominent business and institutions, such as area colleges, Northeast Georgia Medical Center and area hospitals, major employers, media organizations and more. Special efforts will be made to engage the poultry and agricultural industry as well as the major health care providers due to their prominence in the region and critical role in future economic development efforts. GMRC staff will work with the local chambers of commerce to identify other select businesses for their targeted involvement in the process. This outreach will also concentrate on communication with local activist groups and larger social networks (churches, neighborhood organizations, etc).

An additional layer of stakeholders to be engaged will be the general public. The GMRC will promote their participation through web media and through local council and commission meetings, inviting area residents to provide their comments, concerns and questions to the GMRC during the planning process.

Finally, the GMRC will solicit input and comment from State Departments and other outside-based organizations that have an active role and key interest in the development of the Georgia Mountains Region. This will help those organizations better understand and support local and regional objectives, and will also provide additional perspectives on the visions and issues facing the region.

State and Regional Organizations

**Preliminary Stakeholders Identified for Participation Local Organizations**

Local Governments – Elected Officials	Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Local Governments – Planning Staff/ Officials	Georgia Department of Transportation
Development Authorities	Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Chambers of Commerce	Georgia Department of Economic Development
Convention and Visitors Bureaus	Georgia Emergency Management Authority
Main Street/Better Hometown Managers	Georgia Forestry Commission
Historic Preservation Committees	US Forest Service
School Boards	Appalachian Regional Commission
Local Hospital Boards/Authorities	Legacy Link (Transit & Senior Services)
Gainesville- Hall MPO	Georgia Mountains WIB
Private Sector Interests	Local Colleges and Universities
Charitable organizations (Goodwill, Red Cross)	Poultry industry representatives
Area churches	Retirement community managers
Real estate professionals (Norton, etc)	Local developers
Family Connection Collaborative	Outdoor recreational interests (SORBA, Ducks Unlimited...)
Ethnic and minority groups	Major employers
Local banks (UCB, HB&T...)	Low-income group representatives
Georgia Farm Bureau	
Cattlemen’s Association	
Insurance companies	

Natural and Cultural Resource Interests

(See: GMRC Regional Resource Plan)

The GMRC will make special efforts to engage representatives from the development industries, including such organizations as Norton Reality and major banks within the region. Additional Stakeholders will be identified throughout the process and be invited to participate. Where the GMRC does not have direct access to a particular targeted group of stakeholders (minorities, developers), the GMRC will provide Regional Plan materials and contact info to local organizations that work with those groups and invite participation. Where possible, representatives of select groups will be contacted directly for input.

IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

Given the variety of stakeholders identified and the nature of the regional planning process, several different measures for soliciting and managing public input will be employed in developing the Regional Agenda. The following is an overview of the methods proposed.

Direct Outreach and Communication

Local government officials will receive regular notices of progress, invitations to review material and provide and questions directly with GMRC staff. This approach will ensure every GMRC member government is contacted regarding the development of the plan and given the most



direct and efficient means for participating. Where possible this will be done through eblasts, but for those smaller communities without email fax service will be used. GMRC will also directly engage with local staff where possible throughout the process in visits to local governments or contacting select governments to solicit their comments.

GMRC Council Meetings

The GMRC Council will be notified of progress during their monthly meetings, invited to comment and instructed to share this news with local officials at their respective communities. There will also be opportunity to formally discuss the plan at select meetings during the planning process.

Surveys

A brief survey will be produced to solicit opinion on the validity and priority of the various issues and opportunities before the region. The survey will be provided online and be available for distribution to those who prefer/need conventional media. The survey will be promoted to all identified stakeholders and, as possible, to the general public.

Web Interaction

A page of the GMRC web site will be dedicated to the update of the Regional Plan, providing users with access to a calendar of events, a schedule for the planning process, the means to review draft material, participate in any online surveys and contact GMRC staff. This site will serve as the primary portal for casual interaction and select formal activities.

Public Workshops

GMRC staff will also coordinate and facilitate at least two public workshops dedicated exclusively to the planning process. These may coincide with existing regular forums featuring City and County managers and/or local planning staff and officials, but will include directed discussion of plan topics and review of plan-related issues. One will occur during the front of the Agenda development process as the GMRC moves to validate the issues, opportunities and prospective vision. The second will occur near the end of the process to review draft objectives and possible implementation strategies. Additional meetings will be established as needed/able, and the GMRC will be available to produce such workshops in conjunction with other events where able.

GMRC Planning Committee

The GMRC employs a standing Planning Committee comprised of several members of the GMRC Council. Their role is to assist the Planning Department in matters regarding DRIs and regional plan development. They will be called upon to serve as a steering committee for the Agenda development process and will meet at least three times. The Committee will also be advised throughout the process via email and teleconference as needed.

SAMPLES OF PROMOTIONS AND PUBLIC MEETINGS

Regional Commission seeks public input

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is in the process of updating its Regional Plan, the state required document that helps shape the work program and ability to coordinate support for member local governments.

As part of this process, GMRC staff have created a brief online survey asking people to give their thoughts on select issues and priorities for the region.

This survey will be accessible through March 31 and is open to anyone with a

vested interest in the GMRC region.

Anyone wishing to participate should visit www.gmrc.ga.gov/RegionalPlan.htm and click the link marked "GMRC Regional Plan Survey" to share their thoughts.

In addition to the online surveys, there will be public meetings held throughout the region over the course of the spring, starting with an opening hearing on Thursday, February 21, from 6-7 p.m. at the GMRC offices at 1310 West Ridge Road in Gainesville.

This meeting will be a walk-in/walk-out forum with no fixed agenda but will give area residents the chance to see materials and ask questions about the regional plan and the update process.

More meeting dates and locations across the region will be announced shortly and posted on the web site and shared through local media outlets.

Any questions about the public involvement process can contact Adam Hazell at the GMRC at 770-538-2617.

GMRC is a sub-state district

created by local governments in 1962 under provisions of Georgia Enabling Law.

One of 12 Regional Commissions in Georgia, the purpose of the GMRC is to locally promote and guide development of human, natural, physical, social and economic resources in the Georgia Mountains Region.

The area covers 3,500 square miles, and includes Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White counties.

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Regional commission conducting survey

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission is in the process of updating its Regional Plan, the state required document that helps shape the commission's work program and its ability to coordinate support for our member local governments.

As part of the process, the commission created a brief online survey asking people to provide their thoughts on select issues and priorities for the region. This survey will be accessible through March 31 and is open to anyone with a vested interest in the GMRC region. Anyone wishing to participate should visit www.gmrc.ga.gov/RegionalPlan.htm and click the link marked "GMRC Regional Plan Survey" to share their thoughts.

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The Tullahoma Record

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2019

GMRDC reviewing region plan

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is a sub-state district created by local governments in 1962 under provisions of Georgia Enabling Law.

One of 12 regional commissions in Georgia, the purpose of the GMRC is to locally promote and guide development of human, natural, physical, social and economic resources in the Georgia Mountains Region.

The area covers 3,500 square miles, and includes Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, and White counties.

The GMRC is in the process of updating its Regional Plan, the state-required document that helps shape our work program and our ability to coordinate support for our member local governments.

As part of this process we've created a brief online survey asking people to give us their thoughts on select issues and priorities for the region.

This survey will be ac-

cessible through March 31 and is open to anyone with a vested interest in the GMRC region.

Anyone wishing to participate should visit www.gmrc.ga.gov/RegionalPlan.html and click the link marked "GMRC Regional Plan Survey" to share their thoughts.

In addition to the online surveys there will be public meetings held throughout the region over the course of the spring, starting with an opening hearing on Thursday, Feb. 21, from 6-7 p.m. at the GMRC offices at 1310 West Ridge Road in Gainesville.

This meeting will be a walk-in/walk-out forum with no fixed agenda but will give area residents the chance to see materials and ask questions about the regional plan and the update process.

More meeting dates and locations across the region will be announced shortly and posted on our web site and shared through local media outlets.

Any questions about the public involvement process can contact Adam Hazell at the GMRC at 770-538-2617.

Wednesday, February 27, 2019

dawsonnews.com | DAWSON COUNTY NEWS | 9A

Georgia Mountains Commission seeks public input for regional plan

From staff reports

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is in the process of updating a regional plan that will have an impact on how Dawson and surrounding counties grow and develop in the future.

The GMRC is a sub-state district created by local governments in 1962 under provisions of Georgia Enabling Law. One of 12 regional commissions in Georgia, the purpose of the GMRC is to locally promote and guide development of human, natural, physical, social and economic resources in the Georgia Mountains Region.

The area covers 3,500 square miles,

and includes Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White Counties.

The GMRC is in the process of updating its regional plan, which is required by the state and helps shape the commission's work program and its ability to coordinate support for the member local governments.

As part of this process, the commission has created a short online survey asking people to provide their thoughts on select issues and priorities for the region.

The survey will be accessible through March 31 and is open to anyone with a

vested interest in the GMRC region.

Anyone wishing to participate should visit www.gmrc.ga.gov/RegionalPlan.htm and click the link marked "GMRC Regional Plan Survey" to share their thoughts.

In addition to the online surveys, there will be public meetings held throughout the region over the course of the spring. More meeting dates and locations across the region will be announced shortly and posted on the commission's web site and shared through local media outlets.

Any questions about the public involvement process can call Adam Hazell at the GMRC at (770) 538-2617.

Georgia Mountains Regional Commission seeks public input for update of regional plan

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission is in the process of updating its regional plan, the state-required document that helps shape the commission's work program and its ability to coordinate support for member local governments.

As part of this process GMRC has created an online survey asking people to give their thoughts on select issues and priorities for the region. This survey will be accessible through March 31 and is open to anyone with a vested interest in the GMRC region.

Anyone wishing to participate should visit www.gmrc.ga.gov/RegionalPlan.htm and click the link marked

"GMRC Regional Plan Survey" to share their thoughts.

In addition to the online surveys, there will be public meetings held throughout the region over the course of the spring, starting with an opening hearing on Thursday, Feb. 21, from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the GMRC offices at 1310 West Ridge Road in Gainesville. This meeting will be a walk-in/walk-out forum with no fixed agenda but will give area residents the chance to see materials and ask questions about the regional plan and the update process. More meeting dates and locations across the region will be announced shortly and posted on our web site and shared through local media outlets.

Any questions about the public involvement process can contact Adam Hazell at the GMRC at 770-538-2617.

The GMRC is a sub-state district created by local governments in 1962 under provisions of Georgia Enabling Law. One of 12 regional commissions in Georgia, the purpose of the GMRC is to locally promote and guide development of human, natural, physical, social and economic resources in the Georgia Mountains Region. The area covers 3,500 square miles, and includes Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, and White counties.

2/21/19 White Co News



GMRC posts survey as it updates Regional Plan

By Scott Kimbler *Reporter*

Posted 4:00PM on Sunday 24th February 2019 (2 days ago)

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission is in the process of updating its regional plan and would like input from the public.

As a means of gaining input, the GMRC has set up an online survey. The survey questions are designed to gain input on select issues and priorities.

The GMRC area of concern covers White, Union, Towns, Stephens, Rabun, Lumpkin, Hart, Hall, Habersham, Franklin, Forsyth, Dawson and Banks counties.

The agency will also be holding public input meetings; dates and time will be announced at a later time.

The survey will be available until the end of March.

Click [here](#) for GMRC survey.



<http://accesswdun.com/article/2019/2/766743/gmrc-post-survey-as-it-updates-regional-plan>

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Hall Commission hears update of financial status, will hear public...

<http://accesswdun.com/print/2019/2/767093/hall-commission-hea...>



 Print

Hall Commission hears update of financial status, will hear public comment on short term rentals

By Marc Eggers *Anchor / Reporter*

Posted 5:25PM on Monday 25th February 2019 (1 day ago)

GAINESVILLE – The Hall County Commission agreed at its work session Monday afternoon to begin taking public comment on the contentious issue of short term housing rentals and changes to the existing code proposed by the Hall County Planning Department when they meet on Thursday.

While there was no discussion by commissioners Monday afternoon on the proposed code amendments, and no public comment by interested citizens, there will likely be plenty of verbal give-and-take Thursday evening.

The February 28th voting session begins at 6:00 p.m. in the Hall County Government Center.

Commissioners also received a Six Month Financial Status Update from Financial Services Director Zach Propes on the county's fiscal condition at the halfway point of the 2019 budget year.

Propes began his report with good news. "Basically, overall, the operating funds, we are seeing some increased revenue, additional revenue that has come into the county and therefore we're looking at increasing the overall county budget...right at \$3.7 million."

"Two additional revenues that are performing real well for us are LOST (Local Option Sales Tax)... we're seeing about a four-and-a-half to five percent increase from prior year collections...and then TAVT, which is the Title Ad Valorem Tax," Propes said.

"That revenue stream is continuing to see some real strong increases comparatively," Propes explained, saying that the increase in TAVT was roughly twenty percent.

Propes encouraged commissioners to maintain a cautious approach even though revenues were robust. "It's good now but in the long term we probably just need to be reminded that a more conservative approach needs to be maintained."



Hall Commission hears update of financial status, will hear public...

<http://accesswdun.com/print/2019/2/767093/hall-commission-hea...>



Zach Propes, Hall County Financial Services Director

<http://accesswdun.com/article/2019/2/767093/hall-commission-hears-update-of-financial-status-will-hear-public-comment-on-short-term-rentals>

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**Georgia Mountains
Regional Commission**



**GMRC REGIONAL PLAN
COMMITTEE MEETING
NORTH GEORGIA TECH**

1:00 PM, February 21, 2019

Sign In Sheet

Name

Denise McKay

Liz Ordiales

Connie Tabor

David Webb, Forsyth

Mitch Griggs, Union

Kathy Papa, DCA

Beth Thomas, Franklin County



**GMRC REGIONAL PLAN
COMMITTEE MEETING
NORTH GEORGIA TECH**

1:00 PM, March 21, 2019

Sign In Sheet

Name

Liz Orsiales

Matt Lugo

Sarah McQuade

David Webb

Christine Hammen

Dennis McKay



Regional Plan Stakeholder Meeting

Thursday May 2, 2019

Sign In Sheet

Name

Sarah MacEach	Hall County
David Webb	Forsyth County
Connie Tabor	City of Toccoa
Mitch Cripps	Union Co.



Regional Plan Public Comment Meeting

City of Oakwood, GA

Wednesday April 3, 2019

Sign In Sheet

Name

B.R. White City of Oakwood



**GMRC REGIONAL PLAN
PUBLIC FORUM
RUBY C. FULBRIGHT AQUATIC CENTER**

4:00 PM March 21, 2019

Sign In Sheet

Name

Jeremiah Wicks



**GMRC REGIONAL PLAN
PUBLIC FORUM
CUMMING CITY HALL**

4:00 PM APRIL 1, 2019

Sign In Sheet

Name

Scott Morgan

Jerry Oberholtzer - FC P&D

David Webb - Forsyth P&D



**GMRC REGIONAL PLAN
PUBLIC HEARING
GMRC OFFICES**

4:00 PM, JUNE 26, 2019

Sign In Sheet

Name

Cheryl Smith
Rachel P. P. P.
Barbara M. M.
Nona L. L.
Karen A. Clerk

Regional commission seeks public input

*Banks Co. News
4/19/19*

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Regional Plan, the State required document that helps shape the work program and the ability to coordinate support for member local governments. A draft of the updated document can be found on the GMRC web site: www.gmrc.ga.gov/RegionalPlan.htm

There will be a public hearing and comment opportunity on Wednesday, June 26, from 4-6 PM at the GMRC offices in Gainesville, GA. (1310 West Ridge Road, near Exit 20 for I-985).

This will be a walk-in/walk-out forum with no fixed agenda but will give area residents the chance to see materials and ask questions about the regional plan and the update process. Any questions about the public involvement process can contact Adam Hazell at the GMRC at 770-538-2617.



QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS

As part of the regional planning process, the RC is called upon to evaluate the current policies, activities, and development patterns in the region for consistency with DCA's Quality Community Objectives (QCOs). This analysis is used to identify additional issues and opportunities for adapting activities, development patterns and implementation practices to the QCOs, and adding them to the above list of potential issues and opportunities.

Economic Prosperity: Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

Health care and goods production has grown significantly and the Georgia Mountains Region remains blessed with strong tourism and agribusiness industries, proactive economic development organizations and a variety of quality resources to support local efforts. There is the potential for more small-business recruitment and expansion as the region grows in population and within the many historic town centers. There is also the need to continue efforts to diversify the economic base and to try to replace employment lost in the goods production sectors.

Resource Management: Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. This may be achieved by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; encouraging green building construction and renovation; utilizing appropriate waste management techniques; fostering water conservation and reuse; or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.

As evidenced by the public comments the communities within the region are acutely aware of the value of local natural and cultural resources, which contribute greatly to area tourism, recreation and the appeal for luring new residents and businesses valuing the mountain character of the area. Most communities have adopted environmental policies or other regulations to ensure the highest standard of protection, though additional efforts and best practices may be needed as the region sees more and more development. There are, however, a large and growing variety of interest groups helping to educate and monitor resource management, which is helping protect many of these resources.

Efficient Land Use: Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community; designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed; carefully planning expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.



The prevailing mountainous topography helps manage land use and development but the region is experiencing ongoing pressures for suburban forms and more intense land uses within historically rural areas. Newer housing forms and housing near agricultural uses are causing some communities to revisit policies to mitigate conflicts. More communities have adopted some form of land use management policies in response, but ensuring the policies are current, effective, and enforced can be an issue depending on community resources.

Local Preparedness: *Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges; or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.*

Communities within the Georgia Mountains Region are more educated and capable in addressing growth and land use management. Through coordination with the GMRC, ACCG and GMA, local governments are regularly provided resources to improve their knowledge and be more proactive in shaping land use within their regions. Most communities now have training requirements to ensure staff and officials are more acutely aware of land use policies and best practices.

Sense of Place: *Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community; or protecting scenic and natural features that are important to defining the community's character.*

The Georgia Mountains Region is uniquely defined by the natural landscape and many reservoirs that have made the area a destination for people and businesses looking for a rural or outdoor lifestyle. Most communities are working to preserve and build off their historic town centers and retain the mountain character that has drawn and retained so many people.

Regional Cooperation: *Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. This may be achieved by actively participating in regional organizations; identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer; or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.*

With few exceptions most communities within the Georgia Mountains region are seeking out more and more levels of intergovernmental cooperation, especially in terms of land use coordination and resource and utility management. Continued progress is desired and there is ambition to better utilize technology to assist in this effort. Regional reservoirs and arterial roadways will remain major factors in future discussions.

Housing Options: *Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging development of a*



variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socio- economic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.

The region is experiencing a rebound in housing development and sales since the recession but affordable workforce and senior housing will continue to be sharp needs in most communities. Most real estate experts in the area predict a lapse in supplies for those markets over the next few years as employment opportunities outpace existing housing supply. This pressure is expected to increase demand for more multi-family housing and increased density beyond what is normally pursued in this rural region, so communities are seeking ways to accommodate those within existing urbanized areas.

Transportation Options: *Address the transportation needs, challenges and opportunities of all community residents. This may be achieved by fostering alternatives to transportation by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit; employing traffic calming measures throughout the community; requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments; or coordinating transportation and land use decision-making within the community.*

Overall the various systems remain in good status but as the population grows there will be more need for rural transit services and to sustain traffic flow on select State arteries serving high volumes of both local and through traffic. Recent improvements to GA 400 in Forsyth County will help, as will the recent bridge replacements over Lake Lanier, however I-85 remains in need of expansion and several other arterials are at risk of increased congestion. Alternative modes remain a growing need, as well, with improved on-road bike corridors a major need as well as expanded rural transit programs.

Educational Opportunities: *Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions. This can be achieved by expanding and improving local educational institutions or programs; providing access to other institutions in the region; instituting programs to improve local graduation rates; expanding vocational education programs; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.*

The Georgia Mountains Region does have an abundance of educational facilities and resources for the resident population. Several technical colleges, private colleges and 2 State universities provide ample opportunities within the 13 counties, while the proximity to Athens and Atlanta means many other opportunities are within convenient access. There is a growing demand, however, for increasing the number of satellite facilities for the technical colleges, which are considered critical to maintaining the quality of the labor force at affordable rates. Improved broadband accessibility, as well, which can increase the potential for at-home learning.



Community Health: *Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities. This may be achieved by providing services to support the basic needs of disadvantaged residents, including the disabled; instituting programs to improve public safety; promoting programs that foster better health and fitness; or otherwise providing all residents the opportunity to improve their circumstances in life and to fully participate in the community.*

Overall the level of health care is considered strong but plans must be made to coordinate with transportation and housing to ensure the accessibility to these services as the population grows within the more remote areas. Proposed facility expansions/ improvements in Dahunega and Habersham Counties will increase the access to emergency care, and the recently developed hospital in Clayton has greatly enhanced the options available within the northern-most corner of the region.



DEMOGRAPHIC AND EMPLOYMENT DATA

Purpose

The Supporting Data and Analysis element checks the validity of potential issues and opportunities and projected development patterns by evaluating the information required of the process. It is presented as an appendix and in an abbreviated format to improve accessibility of the information. Any and all questions about the data and information presented herein should be directed to the GMRC.

Requirements

The Supporting Data and Analysis element must, at a minimum, present and evaluate the data and information listed in the Rules and Standards for Regional Planning, as provided by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The Regional Commission must employ a 20-year planning time frame when evaluating these data and information items. The minimum general categories for information required in the element include:

Population
Economic Development
Housing

Community Facilities
Transportation

Information regarding Natural and Cultural Resources has been collected and assessed within the GMRC Regional Resource Plan, an affiliated document that was completed prior to this planning process.

For this document, the GMRC Planning Department included an assessment regarding intergovernmental coordination issues, as well. This information is not required as part of regional plans in Georgia, however, as it is required of local comprehensive plans the GMRC felt a regional counterpart was necessary.

When evaluating all the required data and information, the element focuses on:

- Whether it verifies potential issues or opportunities identified above;
- Whether it uncovers new issues or opportunities not previously identified;
- Whether it indicates significant regional trends that need to be brought to the attention of decision-makers;

Whether it suggests adjustment of the Projected Development Patterns Map (e.g., to avoid intrusion into environmentally sensitive areas, etc.).

POPULATION

The Population Element provides an inventory and analysis of demographic data, defining significant trends and attributes to help determine how human services, public facilities, and employment opportunities can adequately support existing and future populations. The information may also assist in establishing desired growth rates, population densities, and development patterns consistent with the goals and policies for the region. The inventory presents various statistics for the region over the past twenty years, and, where applicable, shows projections for the next twenty years. In some categories local performance is also compared with the state and other communities in Georgia.

Total Population

The total population defines the volume of citizens within a defined region. It explores the total size (volume) of the populace as well as the trends that produced that size. Tracking a region's total population will introduce comparisons to others as well as provide a basis for which other calculations and projections will be made. Population growth can identify numerous trends, ranging from economic expansion and a large volume of in-migration, to highlighting a comparably slow growth in relation to other areas. This information can then be used to address concerns over net migration, death and fertility rates, which in turn express greater issues to be addressed in other elements.

Table 1 - Total Population

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2018	2030*	2040*
Georgia	5,457,566	6,478,216	8,186,453	9,908,357	10,519,475	12,173,406	13,413,400
ARC	1,896,189	2,514,066	3,429,379	4,365,867			
NWGRC	478,163	548,220	697,410	845,372			
GMRDC	244,839	304,462	455,342	625,578	719,021	879,749	1,049,426
NEGA RDC	275,449	328,223	438,300	585,627			

As % of Ga.

ARC	34.7%	38.8%	41.9%	44.1%			
NWGRC	8.8%	8.5%	8.5%	8.5%			
GMRDC	4.5%	4.7%	5.6%	6.3%	6.8%	7.2%	7.8%
NEGA RDC	5.0%	5.1%	5.4%	5.9%			

GMRC Counties

Banks	8,679	10,308	14,422	16,912	18,988	19,427	19,383
Dawson	4,774	9,429	15,999	22,358	25,083	30,251	34,934
Forsyth	27,959	44,083	98,407	179,003	236,612	334,694	450,066
Franklin	15,153	16,650	20,285	21,556	23,023	24,089	24,959
Habersham	25,345	27,261	35,902	43,652	45,388	51,898	57,837
Hall	75,409	95,428	139,277	190,015	202,148	244,958	280,791
Hart	19,383	19,712	22,997	24,207	26,099	26,417	26,238
Lumpkin	10,762	14,573	21,016	27,748	32,955	37,267	40,577
Rabun	10,466	11,648	15,050	16,638	16,867	16,454	16,145
Stephens	21,764	23,257	25,435	25,779	26,035	26,046	25,702
Towns	5,639	6,754	9,319	11,079	11,852	12,931	14,917
Union	9,387	11,993	17,289	21,260	24,001	23,724	24,361
White	10,119	13,006	19,944	25,371	29,970	31,593	33,515

Estimates source: U.S. Dept of Commerce, Bureau of Census

*=Projections from various local plans and GMRC

Most projections for the region and its counties indicate continued growth near metro Atlanta, particularly in Forsyth, Hall, and Dawson Counties. The I-85 corridor (Banks, Franklin, Hart, and Stephens) and Highway 365 (Habersham) is also expecting an increase within the planning time frame, but the wave of that growth isn't expected to begin making an impact for another few years. The growth is both following and driving the expansion of area freight corridors along major arterials, with an uptick in industries such as warehousing and goods distribution, plus service industries locating near the growing populations. As this expansion northward continues, the southern-most counties within the region will need to adapt and be prepared for increasing demand for services. For some counties that demand might also entail a push for higher quality services (namely in parks, schools, and the extent of full-time firefighting staff) than is the convention currently on offer.

Age Distribution

As defined by Woods & Poole, *"the mix of age groups defines the region's character and indicates the types of jobs and services needed."* Each age group, from children to retirement age, requires special needs with respect to public services and facilities, making it important for the providing government to identify the prevailing age distribution. Moreover, by defining the present age make-up of the community a government is also producing a portrait of future age distribution and can more effectively plan for future needs and concerns.

Age Distribution

	< 18			18-65			65+		
	2009	2017	'09-'17	2009	2017	'09-'17	2009	2017	'09-'17
Georgia	26.3%	24.1%		63.4%	62.4%		10.3%	13.5%	
GMRC		24.2%			59.5%			16.3%	
Banks	25.2%	22.3%	-2.9%	62.7%	60.6%	-2.1%	12.1%	17.1%	5.0%
Dawson	23.4%	20.8%	-2.6%	63.7%	59.5%	-4.2%	12.9%	19.7%	6.8%
Forsyth	29.9%	27.9%	-2.0%	61.8%	60.4%	-1.4%	8.3%	11.7%	3.4%
Franklin	23.7%	22.0%	-1.7%	59.5%	59.2%	-0.3%	16.8%	18.8%	2.0%
Habersham	24.5%	22.6%	-1.9%	60.3%	59.4%	-0.9%	15.2%	18.0%	2.8%
Hall	28.6%	25.6%	-3.0%	61.2%	59.7%	-1.5%	10.2%	14.7%	4.5%
Hart	22.6%	21.3%	-1.3%	60.0%	57.3%	-2.7%	17.4%	21.4%	4.0%
Lumpkin	22.4%	17.8%	-4.6%	65.4%	65.3%	-0.1%	12.2%	16.9%	4.7%
Rabun	21.5%	17.2%	-4.3%	57.3%	55.9%	-1.4%	21.2%	26.9%	5.7%
Stephens	23.1%	22.7%	-0.4%	59.0%	58.1%	-0.9%	17.9%	19.2%	1.3%
Towns	16.4%	13.2%	-3.2%	54.7%	52.3%	-2.4%	28.9%	34.5%	5.6%
Union	18.4%	16.2%	-2.2%	55.9%	51.2%	-4.7%	25.7%	32.6%	6.9%
White	22.9%	20.1%	-2.8%	60.5%	57.7%	-2.8%	16.6%	22.2%	5.6%

Source: U.S. Dept of Commerce, Bureau of Census

While the number of retirement age residents is increasing, the foremost demographic shift on offer in the region is the relative decrease in the share of school-age children. Many rural communities are feeling the effects of fewer households having children, and often having those children later in life. This means schools in select areas are not experiencing growth strains but are in fact losing students. More importantly, it means these markets are not seeing a natural growth of the local labor force to replenish existing workers. For places like Towns County and Stephens County this means either more pressure for in-migration or risk job stagnation.

It also means that many communities will continue to face pressure to serve the aging population cohorts. Demands for health care, rural transit, and specialty services will increase in these areas that have become havens for retirement-age households. This can be a boon in communities where many of these households are well off, like those retiring to some place that offers lake side living. For the places in between, however, it can mean a strain on the affordable housing market as less affluent retirees compete with younger members of the labor pool for affordable housing.

Adult Education Levels

The highest level of education achieved is one measurable indicator of someone's skills and capabilities as part of the labor force. At the community scale this is often presented as the education levels achieved by the resident adult population, aged 25 and over. While not every job requires an advanced degree, the higher the numbers of adults with at least a high school diploma and some collegiate education suggests a more capable pool of labor for sustaining and attracting employers.

Education Levels, 2013-2017

County	Persons Age 25+	Highest Educational Attainment Achieved						
		< 9th Gr	HS - No Diploma	HS/ GED	Some College - No Degree	Assoc. Degree	Bach. Degree	Grad. or Pro. Degree
Banks	12,610	7.9%	15.2%	41.8%	17.3%	5.9%	7.3%	4.6%
Dawson	16,644	4.5%	8.6%	28.6%	20.8%	6.3%	19.4%	11.7%
Forsyth	136,116	3.5%	4.0%	16.9%	18.4%	7.1%	33.4%	16.7%
Franklin	15,254	8.3%	14.4%	39.1%	17.6%	7.7%	8.1%	4.6%
Habersham	29,498	10.0%	11.9%	33.8%	19.3%	6.5%	10.1%	8.2%
Hall	124,695	11.4%	10.4%	27.5%	20.5%	6.6%	14.7%	8.8%
Hart	18,073	4.8%	14.1%	39.2%	20.4%	7.8%	8.3%	5.4%
Lumpkin	19,786	5.7%	11.0%	28.9%	21.2%	6.5%	15.0%	11.6%
Rabun	12,302	5.1%	11.1%	33.4%	18.9%	6.2%	14.2%	11.2%
Stephens	17,196	5.4%	12.9%	36.1%	18.9%	7.0%	10.6%	9.0%
Towns	8,133	5.0%	5.9%	30.4%	24.1%	9.0%	15.1%	10.5%
Union	17,387	2.7%	8.7%	34.6%	23.0%	9.1%	12.0%	10.0%
White	20,066	3.4%	11.4%	31.7%	24.0%	9.2%	11.9%	8.3%

Source: U.S. Dept of Commerce, Bureau of Census; 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Educational attainment levels have steadily improved over the years in accordance with national trends, whereby younger residents take advantage of more resources to attain at least high-school level educations. More and more high school graduates are also pursuing at least some collegiate-level training, as well, both an indicator of a more skilled workforce but also a sign that the modern job market demands a more diverse and well-trained labor pool. Many of the conventional goods-production jobs from the mid-20th Century, jobs which required minimal education but provided a track to sustainable careers, have been lost or replaced with different job options that are either lower skilled and for lower pay or are more technical and require additional training. Local economic development stakeholders are working aggressively with local high schools and post-secondary institutions to expand and hone programs that introduce younger students to career guidance and formal job-skills building, in hopes of making future members of the region's workforce more adept and in-tune with future industry needs.



Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnic make-up of a population are other features of demography. Changes in the racial make-up of a community can signify greater social changes and/or needs, including language issues or shifts in cultural leanings. None of these factors present right or wrong values, but they can provide a measure of marketable influences and directions based upon strong shifts in racial compositions.

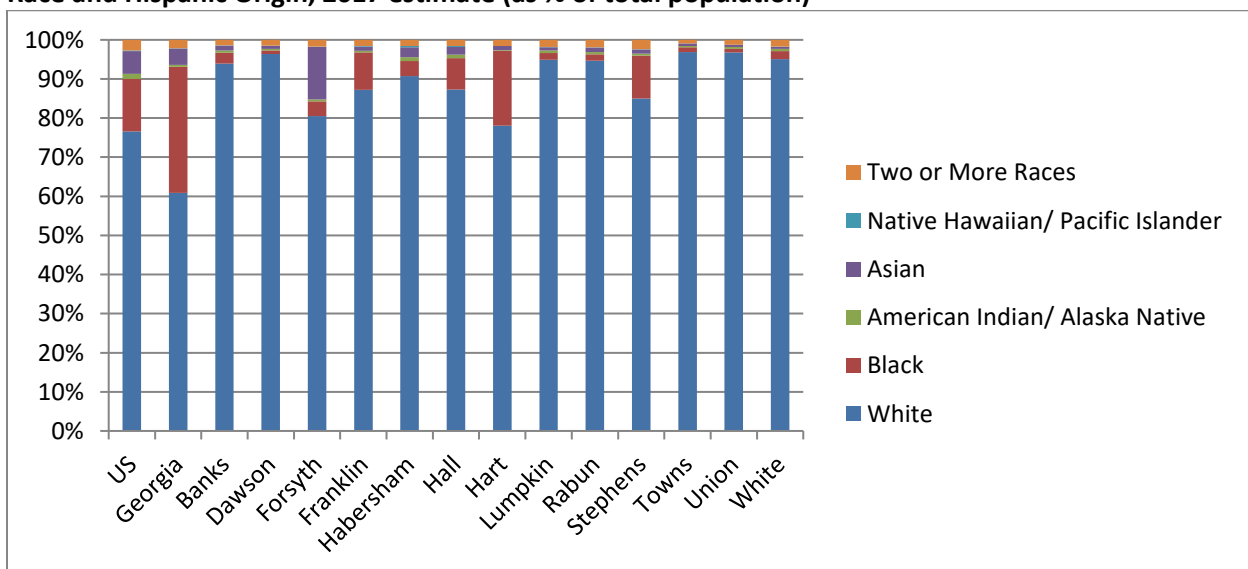
Minority Share of Total Population, %

	2000	2010	2018	'00 – '18
Banks	4.8	5.0	6.3	1.5
Dawson	1.9	2.9	3.8	1.9
Forsyth	2.5	10.9	21.0	18.5
Franklin	10.0	10.9	13.2	3.2
Habersham	8.1	8.4	9.5	1.4
Hall	10.0	12.2	12.9	2.9
Hart	20.6	20.9	22.1	1.5
Lumpkin	4.3	4.0	5.2	0.9
Rabun	2.4	3.8	5.1	2.7
Stephens	13.8	13.7	15.0	1.2
Towns	1.0	1.7	3.5	2.5
Union	1.7	2.5	3.3	1.6
White	4.2	3.9	4.9	0.7
Georgia	32.4	36.6	39.5	7.1

Source: U.S. Dept of Commerce, Bureau of Census

The Georgia Mountains Region continues to diversify, most notably Forsyth County, whose growth featured a significant number of new residents of Indian/ South Asian ethnicity as well as Hispanic households. The change reflects the county's evolution as part of metro Atlanta, and the local school system has begun taking measures to account for more students that may come from households with limited English proficiency.

Race and Hispanic Origin, 2017 estimate (as % of total population)



For the remainder of the region the change has been relatively steady, mirroring the general diversification of Georgia as a whole. The majority of new non-White residents feature Hispanic

backgrounds, particularly those congregating in or near Gainesville and its hub of poultry processing business and related agricultural partners. This sector and others have actively engaged the minority populace in providing employment. The trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future, which has in turn pushed more government programs to explore measures for improving Title VI conditions in providing services to limited-English speaking residents.

Income

Income levels provide an indication of the economic health of the population. Just as education levels offer insight into employment conditions and the quality of the labor pool, per-capita and household income levels measure the financial stability of the population, and how the local economy is responding to the educational climate. Higher income levels suggest a thriving economy, and offer a good indicator as to the success of a community.

Per Capita Income

	1990	2000	2010	2017	'00-'17	% of persons in poverty (2017)
Banks	\$15,977	\$16,558	\$19,497	\$19,451	-0.24%	13.5%
Dawson	\$17,410	\$22,167	\$25,557	\$31,954	20.02%	9.4%
Forsyth	\$21,858	\$31,484	\$35,385	\$39,896	11.31%	5.3%
Franklin	\$17,616	\$19,071	\$19,276	\$19,663	1.97%	18.7%
Habersham	\$17,560	\$20,375	\$19,286	\$20,656	6.63%	13.3%
Hall	\$19,504	\$22,134	\$23,675	\$26,283	9.92%	13.3%
Hart	\$16,722	\$19,989	\$19,124	\$21,668	11.74%	18.9%
Lumpkin	\$16,285	\$19,993	\$20,088	\$23,364	14.02%	13.9%
Rabun	\$15,650	\$19,421	\$22,471	\$26,942	16.59%	17.8%
Stephens	\$16,660	\$20,704	\$18,285	\$21,657	15.57%	18.7%
Towns	\$15,598	\$20,779	\$21,527	\$22,301	3.47%	13.8%
Union	\$14,913	\$19,796	\$24,182	\$26,755	9.62%	15.4%
White	\$18,310	\$20,193	\$23,680	\$23,630	-0.21%	13.3%
GMRC	\$17,236	\$20,975	\$22,437	\$31,177	28.03%	12.3%
Georgia	\$20,715	\$25,433	\$25,134	\$28,015	10.28%	14.9%
United States	\$22,871	\$26,988	\$27,334	\$29,432	7.13%	11.4%

Source: Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.; US Census Bureau (2010 & 2017)

Income trends for the region have, for the most part, shown steady improvement since the 1990s. However, some communities saw a decrease or negligible increase from 2010 to 2017, indicating the lingering effects of the Recession in some parts of the region. For Banks and Franklin Counties this trend is possibly linked to their limited goods production base and smaller populations, signaling a high degree of sensitivity to outside market influences, while White County's stagnation was due to some business losses in the area. Pockets of marked growth occurred along the GA 400 corridor (Forsyth, Dawson, Lumpkin), indicating the benefit of that area's connection to metro Atlanta, and the northeast pairing of Rabun and Stephens Counties. The latter might be explained by a combination of increasing in-migration of well-off retirees to the area, and targeted business recruitment by each county that has sought to replace lost textile manufacturing jobs over the years.

This data point will be revisited after the 2020 Census and related ACS data is available for a consistent 10-year demarcation.



HOUSING

The Housing Element of the comprehensive plan is used to evaluate whether existing and projected development will meet the county's housing needs with respect to supply, affordability, and accessibility. Housing is a critical issue to every community as a primary factor of quality of life. The costs and availability of quality housing is a key gauge in calculating local costs of living and one measure in defining the long-term sustainability of the resident population.

Housing Type and Mix

In reviewing the housing trends across a community, the number of units alone does not provide the most accurate picture. Instead, the number of housing units must also be divided into three categories that further define the type of housing involved. For the purposes of this plan, the assessment of housing units will utilize three primary housing types: Single family, multi-family, and manufactured housing. Because each type of housing provides different options for lifestyle choices and economic conditions for local households, they also require varying sets of needs and demands with respect to land conditions, public services, and facilities. Understanding the different housing types and how they are dispersed throughout a community can assist governments in more effective distribution of public services and facilities.

Single-family units are defined as free-standing houses, or as units that are attached but completely separated by a dividing wall. Associated with the "American Dream," single family housing is often the most desirable by all parties involved; To residents for the ownership rights and symbolism of achievement, to governments for the tax revenue and investment in the community, and to developers for the potential return value.

Multi-family housing consists of structures containing two or more units, including large multi-unit homes, apartment complexes, and condominiums. Compared to single family housing, multi-family units are more cost effective to produce and associated with a more temporary residency, factors which have spurred the growth of this market in a national society achieving new levels of mobility.

Manufactured housing is currently defined by the US Census as all forms of pre-fabricated housing, with a special HUD definition for units produced before June 10, 1976. This category is generally the least expensive means of housing production and ownership, but is also often associated with weaker economic conditions because of how local communities continue to evolve in their approach to taxing such structures, treating modern units the same as their mobile-home predecessors. However, the difference between modern manufactured housing and conventional housing is growing smaller and smaller, with much of the remaining difference being stylistic and less in terms of functionality or impacts on public services. The issue of how manufactured units fits into overall housing plans will remain prevalent until the real and taxable values of manufactured housing can be clearly defined in relation to conventional units.

One issue to be explored in the future is the shifting market demands for housing types in the region, driven both by cost factors and evolving residency patterns. Forces like short-term rental properties, micro-housing and tiny homes, and an increasing demand for mixed use neighborhoods, will encourage communities in the region to embrace development patterns other than conventional suburban subdivisions, which may require some communities to amend their codes. Similarly, the pressure for more multi-family units in the area is growing, both for the special-needs and elderly populations and for regular workforce households in need of affordable options.

Table 15 - Housing Units in the Georgia Mountains Region

	2000	2010	2016	2013-2017			
				Single Family - Detached	Single Family - Attached	Multi-Family	Mobile Home/ Trailer
Banks	5,808	7,600	7,527	67.5%	0.3%	3.3%	29.0%
Dawson	7,163	10,434	10,897	82.7%	1.4%	6.1%	9.9%
Forsyth	36,505	64,226	77,444	86.2%	5.7%	3.9%	4.1%
Franklin	9,303	10,550	10,445	61.2%	0.8%	7.5%	30.5%
Habersham	14,634	18,150	18,055	76.3%	0.8%	6.1%	16.9%
Hall	51,046	68,845	70,954	72.8%	3.5%	14.2%	9.4%
Hart	11,111	13,004	12,937	70.2%	1.5%	4.5%	23.8%
Lumpkin	8,263	12,933	13,306	66.8%	3.2%	10.8%	19.2%
Rabun	10,210	12,327	12,499	72.9%	2.0%	8.9%	16.1%
Stephens	11,652	12,661	12,477	68.7%	2.6%	7.3%	21.3%
Towns	6,282	7,741	8,062	81.8%	0.5%	5.7%	11.9%
Union	10,001	14,069	14,415	83.6%	0.5%	4.5%	11.4%
White	9,454	16,072	16,003	74.5%	0.8%	4.8%	19.9%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

The prevailing housing concern within the Georgia Mountains Region remains the extent to which the affordable workforce housing segment is dependent on mobile homes and older units in the rural areas. While these units offer low priced options, they are traditionally properties that do not increase in value and allow the resident to build wealth, when compared to conventional site-built units. Many of the older units in the region's rural communities are dilapidated or in need of significant reinvestment in order to compete with modern market-rate housing. Residents who cannot afford to address possible contamination issues from asbestos or lead, or who simply lack the funds to replace aging structural components, risk their property becoming a liability instead of an asset. Especially for the Counties along the I-85 corridor, where growth is expected to occur in the next 10 years and where mobile homes constitute a significant portion (min. 21%) of the housing supply, it will be critical to see if those communities can attract viable alternatives for the resident workforce in a way that invites owners of these units to invest in improvements or sell for a profit.

Condition

The US Census of Housing includes information on units without complete plumbing and water service, allowing governments to target concentrations of such housing for service upgrades or redevelopment. The number of housing units constructed prior to 1939 is one indicator of the overall age and productivity of the local housing market.

Overall housing conditions in the region continue to improve as the share of older and incomplete units decreases over time as new development comes on board. Within the planning time frame it is anticipated that the share of incomplete units will reach negligible shares, and that most of the truly older homes are those with historic value and/or have received investment and rehabilitation. This alone won't mean the prevailing conditions in the region are devoid of dilapidated units, but that the most significant issues going forward will be tied to historic contaminants or units needing structural repair. A notable volume of older units belong to elderly residents on fixed incomes, whereby they're capable of affording the home but not able to reinvest in the property for needed maintenance.

Table 16 – Housing Conditions in the Georgia Mountains Region

	Units built before 1939		Units with incomplete kitchens		Units with incomplete plumbing	
	2000	2017	2000	2017	2000	2017
Banks	8.5%	4.2%	0.7%	0.3%	0.7%	0.8%
Dawson	2.9%	1.1%	0.0%	0.7%	NA	0.0%
Forsyth	1.5%	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%
Franklin	9.8%	4.0%	0.3%	0.7%	0.3%	0.0%
Habersham	8.2%	4.8%	0.3%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%
Hall	4.3%	2.6%	0.3%	0.8%	0.5%	0.4%
Hart	5.9%	5.6%	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%	0.9%
Lumpkin	3.5%	0.8%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%	0.3%
Rabun	7.0%	5.5%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%
Stephens	4.0%	3.3%	0.1%	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%
Towns	3.2%	3.0%	NA	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%
Union	3.4%	1.2%	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%	0.2%
White	4.3%	4.2%	0.3%	0.7%	0.2%	0.3%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Occupancy/Residency characteristics

Similar to the different economic and social needs defined by demographic statistics, occupancy and residency conditions can also indicate specific trends or needs of the region's population. Whether a housing unit is being leased or owned indicates the financial abilities of the household, as well as suggesting the health of the local economy. Vacancy rates, meanwhile, tell whether the market is ahead or behind the pace of population growth and demands. Typically, a strong market is defined by a relatively high percentage of homeowners and low occupancy rates.

Table 17 – Occupancy Characteristics (Share of total units)

County	Occupancy - 2000			Occupancy - 2012-2016		
	Owner	Renter	Vacant	Owner	Renter	Vacant
Banks	74.7%	17.6%	7.6%	64.9%	21.0%	14.1%
Dawson	69.0%	15.7%	15.3%	62.0%	18.0%	19.9%
Forsyth	83.3%	11.3%	5.3%	78.4%	14.7%	6.9%
Franklin	67.2%	17.6%	15.2%	53.4%	25.5%	21.1%
Habersham	69.1%	21.5%	9.4%	60.9%	21.1%	18.0%
Hall	66.0%	26.8%	7.2%	58.8%	30.6%	10.6%
Hart	66.2%	15.7%	18.0%	56.1%	21.3%	22.6%
Lumpkin	66.0%	25.2%	8.8%	55.2%	30.8%	14.0%
Rabun	48.9%	12.6%	38.5%	38.7%	14.5%	46.8%
Stephens	62.1%	23.3%	14.6%	52.4%	21.0%	26.6%
Towns	54.2%	9.4%	36.4%	46.3%	12.0%	41.7%
Union	58.9%	12.7%	28.4%	48.7%	13.6%	37.7%
White	64.8%	17.0%	18.2%	49.8%	19.0%	31.2%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Occupancy rates in the region are typically distorted by the share of seasonal and rental units available in the area, due to the high demand in tourism. Many communities around the region's lakes and in the mountains have properties considered second-homes for folks that visit for weekends, vacations, or on a seasonal basis. Many other units are exclusively geared for short-term rental uses designed to capitalize on the region's tourism appeal.



Presently there are no concerns among region communities regarding occupancy rates, but a caution going forward over the demand for affordable workforce units that may shift pressure onto the rental landscape.

Cost of Housing

Understanding the physical conditions of housing options within a community is relatively useless without also understanding the market for housing affordability. An assessment of housing costs is critical to understanding the accessibility of the housing supply to the residents and goes a long way toward explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the housing supply.

As previously discussed, the immediate concern for most region communities is the prospects for affordable workforce housing. There is a limited supply of rental units geared for that sector, and the construction industry has been cautious in responding to the market since the Recession. Hall, Dawson, and Forsyth have seen development in-line with, or close to, demand as they are accessible to metro Atlanta developers. However, the growth projected along the I-85 corridor and creeping north of Hall County along Hwy. 365 have some communities wondering about the types of development that may be offered in response to increasing demand. Some of these Counties and municipalities don't have accommodations for multi-family housing due to past regulations, and some have such loose regulations that there is growing concern about the prospects of prohibiting low-end cluster housing that taxes utilities and is incapable increasing in value.

The other big fear is the possible influence of increased demand for short-term rental properties inflating the costs for "affordable" housing. As more landowners in tourist-laden districts seek to utilize their properties for profit as short-term rental units, that might decrease the number of units available for actual residents, and thus raising the demand and subsequent pricing for available units. While this issue is in its nascent form now the number of region properties found on web listing services like AirBNB and VRBO continues to increase every year, now numbering in the thousands. In the absence of much new multi-family construction, it means that the affordable housing market remains highly dependent on single-family units, and it is that sector which is experiencing more pressures from these new markets that may impact affordability.

The other factor to monitor going forward is how the historic desire of communities to lean on single-family units will influence development options and costs. Many communities in the region have historically limited multi-family construction and established regulations demanding conventionally rural and suburban scale development: Minimum of 1 acre and 1,200 or 1,400 sf. At these scales, and given the increasing costs for land, it means new development will still often be priced at 10, 20, or even 30% greater than the prescribed housing budget for the average household income in those communities. In other words, the default housing form prescribed by local codes may be driving costs to points beyond what the local economy alone can sustain. This means either the codes need to invite more affordable options, or the pressure is on the economy to significantly grow beyond present levels.

Owner Occupied Housing Costs

		< \$300	\$300 - \$499	\$500 - \$799	\$800 - \$999	\$1,000 - \$1,499	\$1,500 - \$1,999	\$2,000 +	2017 Median (dollars)
Banks	2010	18.4%	18.4%	14.9%	11.5%	19.4%	11.5%	5.9%	774
	2017	18.0%	22.1%	15.2%	9.5%	22.0%	6.9%	6.2%	671
Dawson	2010	11.0%	16.4%	11.9%	6.5%	26.5%	11.7%	16.1%	1,089
	2017	8.2%	15.0%	14.6%	10.2%	22.8%	14.2%	14.8%	1,038
Forsyth	2010	4.2%	7.1%	7.5%	4.0%	18.5%	23.5%	35.3%	1,684
	2017	4.5%	9.1%	9.4%	5.8%	18.7%	21.4%	31.1%	1,559
Franklin	2010	24.9%	20.5%	19.7%	9.4%	15.1%	7.0%	3.5%	557
	2017	20.5%	24.1%	17.8%	7.9%	19.1%	5.4%	5.3%	566
Habersham	2010	19.3%	18.2%	16.3%	11.3%	20.0%	7.7%	7.1%	714
	2017	17.4%	23.8%	15.4%	12.1%	19.9%	5.7%	5.7%	673
Hall	2010	9.8%	11.0%	11.6%	8.3%	28.4%	15.1%	15.9%	1,150
	2017	8.9%	16.7%	14.2%	10.7%	24.2%	13.0%	12.4%	992
Hart	2010	24.8%	20.3%	18.0%	10.0%	13.7%	6.0%	7.1%	568
	2017	17.2%	26.9%	17.5%	8.8%	15.4%	7.9%	6.3%	593
Lumpkin	2010	16.6%	13.6%	11.7%	9.5%	25.0%	12.4%	11.2%	958
	2017	16.8%	13.8%	18.5%	6.5%	27.7%	7.7%	9.0%	833
Rabun	2010	26.3%	18.4%	18.5%	5.7%	14.3%	9.0%	7.6%	564
	2017	19.3%	23.4%	19.8%	5.7%	14.7%	7.1%	10.0%	576
Stephens	2010	18.1%	20.9%	20.8%	11.9%	15.9%	8.7%	3.6%	643
	2017	17.9%	20.9%	24.6%	9.6%	15.5%	6.3%	5.3%	644
Towns	2010	27.9%	18.6%	18.6%	5.8%	17.8%	7.6%	3.8%	550
	2017	15.1%	21.7%	20.0%	10.6%	16.3%	8.0%	8.3%	686
Union	2010	21.7%	19.8%	11.0%	9.9%	17.6%	8.0%	11.8%	701
	2017	16.9%	28.4%	20.4%	8.5%	15.5%	6.2%	4.0%	545
White	2010	16.6%	19.2%	15.1%	10.6%	18.3%	10.8%	9.5%	786
	2017	15.5%	21.5%	18.6%	8.9%	21.9%	8.9%	4.7%	689

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Renter Occupied Housing Costs

		< \$300	\$300 - \$499	\$500 - \$799	\$800 - \$999	\$1,000- \$1,499	\$1,500- \$1,999	\$2,000 +	No cash rent	2017 Median (dollars)
Banks	2010	5.0%	16.9%	45.4%	8.1%	3.3%	0.3%	0.2%	20.8%	774
	2017	2.6%	4.6%	45.8%	14.9%	6.2%	0.7%	1.9%	23.4%	671
Dawson	2010	3.2%	2.9%	32.9%	20.4%	22.5%	2.3%	1.5%	14.3%	1,089
	2017	0.8%	5.8%	22.1%	28.9%	22.3%	5.1%	3.8%	11.2%	1,038
Forsyth	2010	0.5%	5.9%	12.8%	18.6%	37.3%	12.8%	2.7%	9.4%	1,684
	2017	1.3%	2.3%	11.3%	12.8%	34.7%	22.4%	9.9%	5.2%	1,559
Franklin	2010	14.1%	23.1%	31.2%	10.1%	2.3%	0.7%	1.4%	17.1%	557
	2017	9.7%	14.6%	38.8%	18.1%	4.2%	1.0%	0.7%	13.0%	566
Habersham	2010	10.3%	21.8%	28.8%	18.0%	6.5%	0.8%	1.1%	12.8%	714
	2017	5.5%	9.2%	43.8%	16.5%	14.7%	1.7%	0.0%	8.6%	673
Hall	2010	2.9%	6.1%	34.7%	27.9%	18.1%	1.4%	1.3%	7.7%	1,150
	2017	1.5%	5.2%	26.7%	27.0%	26.3%	4.3%	2.8%	6.2%	992
Hart	2010	12.2%	19.6%	31.8%	16.9%	4.7%	0.4%	0.0%	14.5%	568
	2017	7.6%	20.0%	37.4%	14.1%	9.2%	0.0%	0.0%	11.8%	593
Lumpkin	2010	5.0%	8.5%	33.1%	15.4%	24.3%	3.4%	0.0%	10.4%	958
	2017	1.6%	6.6%	30.3%	25.1%	18.7%	2.4%	1.5%	13.9%	833
Rabun	2010	4.7%	10.6%	42.5%	12.0%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%	20.8%	564
	2017	6.5%	14.9%	37.4%	14.9%	5.4%	1.0%	0.2%	19.7%	576
Stephens	2010	9.8%	18.8%	40.0%	12.7%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	643
	2017	3.7%	19.6%	38.4%	16.8%	11.5%	0.9%	0.0%	9.2%	644
Townsend	2010	3.6%	5.0%	39.6%	10.8%	3.3%	3.1%	1.6%	33.1%	550
	2017	1.5%	4.8%	42.6%	11.9%	14.4%	2.8%	1.6%	20.3%	686
Union	2010	9.0%	12.3%	43.7%	14.5%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	19.5%	701
	2017	7.8%	13.4%	30.0%	11.7%	12.5%	1.9%	1.2%	21.5%	545
White	2010	4.0%	11.1%	42.5%	16.9%	10.8%	1.9%	0.6%	12.4%	786
	2017	1.8%	5.7%	43.3%	17.4%	19.5%	0.0%	0.3%	12.1%	689

Source: US Bureau of the Census



Cost-Burdened Households

A prime indicator of housing affordability concerns the number of households paying a significant portion of their income toward housing. Financial institutions recommend no more than 30-35% of household income be directed toward housing, so households paying above that mark are considered at risk if their income stream is interrupted or lost. This is especially so for renters, who don't have equity in their properties and typically are already at lower income levels.

Renters Paying 35% + of HH Income, 2014-2018

	%
Banks	40.4
Dawson	28.8
Forsyth	33.9
Franklin	35.8
Habersham	32.3
Hall	37.7
Hart	43.8
Lumpkin	49.5
Rabun	49.3
Stephens	44.6
Towns	48.7
Union	39.2
White	37.6
Georgia	40.8

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Within the Georgia Mountains Region, the communities featuring the most households with housing costs above the target threshold are rural communities either deeper into the mountains (Towns, Rabun, Lumpkin) or along the I-85 corridor (Banks, Franklin, Hart, Stephens). Each of them meets or exceeds the State average for cost-burdened rental households, suggesting local economic conditions that leaves a significant portion of the population at risk.

Most of those communities (if not all) are known for having a minimal amount of multi-family housing units, suggesting the bulk of rental properties comes from older single-family detached units or, most likely, mobile homes and trailers. For these economies to grow, there will need to be either an influx of new workforce housing options or significant increases in income levels that enables renters to become home owners, capable of investing in their properties and building wealth.

Special Housing Needs

In addition to considerations for various income levels, housing assessments must also consider those persons and households with special needs such as the disabled, elderly, victims of domestic violence, those suffering with HIV or from substance abuse. This segment of the population not only requires basic housing, but also housing that matches affordability with functionality due to their limited abilities or need for access to medical care and human services.

Since 2013, with the exception of calls for more quality senior housing, which is considered universal, only a few local comprehensive plans within the region reference needs for special housing. The need for housing for the elderly is largely driven by the desire to find affordable group home or other units accessible to amenities and medical care, as many elderly residents in the region currently reside in older, rural homes in need of repair but are the only units within their price range. Some of this is being addressed through the private sector, while other communities like Gainesville and Forsyth County explore new options with possible public-private partnerships. Some more rural communities such as Hiawassee are discussing options with private developers about introducing more mixed-use options into the community to provide options for the elderly. Market strategists and realtors are suspecting more and more existing homes will be remodeled to sustain older residents for as long as possible, and that there will be a slight decrease in demands for retirement communities, but this will be assessed over the next few years.

Share of Total Population with a Disability, 2018

	%
Banks	16.3
Dawson	14.8
Forsyth	7.2
Franklin	19.5
Habersham	16.5
Hall	11.0
Hart	20.2
Lumpkin	15.8
Rabun	20.0
Stephens	19.5
Towns	18.6
Union	18.1
White	16.4
Georgia	14.2

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Statistics on special needs units is rare at the sub-state level, but there is a regular element of Census Bureau data that estimates the number of disabled persons by county. This is the foremost population group in need of specialty housing to accommodate their physical handicap or mental disability.

For the 2018 year, the share of persons with some type of disability averaged between 15-20% for the Georgia Mountain counties. This is a substantial amount, and it is presumed most of these are elderly persons living with others or in senior housing. This cohort is a significant part of the region population due to the many retirees in the area, the long-time residents who can't afford to move, and those looking to find a suburban alternative to Atlanta but staying near a major hospital (of which the region has 3).

Jobs-Housing Balance

Evaluate housing costs compared to wages and household incomes of the resident and nonresident workforce to determine whether sufficient affordable housing is available and appropriately distributed within the region to allow people to live near where they work. Data on the commuting patterns of the resident and nonresident workforce may assist in determining whether there is a jobs-housing balance issue in the region. Also evaluate any barriers that may prevent a significant proportion of the region's nonresident workforce from residing in the jurisdiction, such as a lack of suitable or affordable housing, suitably zoned land, etc.

According to recent market studies from realty firms like Norton and ReMax, and according to comments received through surveys and meeting with regional economic development professionals, there is a shrinking supply of affordable and/or quality work force housing. Many older units may meet viable price ranges, but those units are often remote and in need of repair, while most new construction has aimed at higher price ranges as area builders seek to increase profit margins on the heels of the recession. Some markets, like the rapidly growing I-85 corridor, are suspected of having a less-than 6-month supply of entry-level housing.

Most communities are reviewing their policies to ensure there are no obstacles to the creation of affordable single-family homes, though limited sewer system coverage means only so many parts of the region can handle densities below 1 unit per acre. This dovetails with policies regarding multi-family housing, which is not only confined by utilities but is often programmatically restricted to existing municipalities. More Counties, such as Dawson and Banks, are exploring ways of adapting codes to make multi-family options such as townhome and mixed-use more viable.

Some of this problem is also exacerbated by the volume of economic expansion occurring in some markets. The metro counties of Forsyth and Hall are still rapidly growing in both employment and housing, while select other destinations like I-85, lower Habersham County, and the GA 400 corridor, have seen new and expanding businesses drive the local economies.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development element attempts to define the assets and liabilities of industrial categories, geographical locations, and employment conditions. Economic development analyses inventory a community's functional conditions and achievements to identify the strengths, weaknesses and needs of native businesses. This portrait of a region's economic state is the foundation for assessing the performance of wages and job skills, employment and industry patterns, and efforts designed to improve local economies.

ECONOMIC BASE

Economic base analyses are used to identify the local significance of each industrial sector. Studied are the kinds of industry within a community, the total earnings those industries produce, and the wages distributed the resident population. Economic base studies can direct recruitment toward businesses that complement existing industry or require the skills of residents currently exporting labor to other regions. This information is basic, but vital, for more effective decisions concerning the health of the local economy.

Employment by Economic Sector

The primary measure of an industry's value to a local economy is the number of people it employs. An economy grows stronger as it increases any form of gainful employment in the local population, redistributing wealth and encouraging economic growth.

Average Monthly Employment - 2017

	All Industries		Percent of Total Employment		
	Number of Establishments	Employment	Goods Producing Industries	Government	Service Providing Industries
Banks	272	4,323	21.4	20.4	58.0
Dawson	684	9,035	13.8	13.5	72.5
Forsyth	5,842	72,491	19.6	10.7	69.4
Franklin	459	7,938	20.9	14.1	64.8
Habersham	864	14,328	31.1	20.5	48.3
Hall	4,407	85,524	28.4	12.0	59.4
Hart	420	6,457	33.9	18.0	48.0
Lumpkin	522	7,573	17.4	31.3	51.1
Rabun	473	5,005	17.0	17.0	65.9
Stephens	552	9,109	27.9	18.8	53.0
Towns	286	3,157	8.0	16.8	75.1
Union	562	6,676	11.1	28.4	60.4
White	651	8,498	18.9	13.3	67.6
GMRC	15,994	240,114	269	235	793
Georgia	274,910	4,346,073	14.0	14.9	70.8

Total Employment by Industry

Industry	Average Monthly Employment			Share of Total Employment			Δ 2000 - 2018	
	2000	2010	2018	2000	2010	2018	#	%
GOODS-PRODUCING	59,453	44,483	58,033	34.7	23.0	23.5	-1,420	-11.2
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	1,994	1,366	1,750	1.2	0.7	0.7	-244	-0.5
Mining	306	174	190	0.2	0.1	0.1	-116	-0.1
Construction	11,910	10,022	14,019	7.0	5.2	5.7	2,109	-1.3
Manufacturing	45,244	32,920	42,074	26.4	17.0	17.0	-3,170	-9.4
SERVICE-PROVIDING	87,283	116,014	154,363	51.0	60.1	62.5	67,080	11.5
Utilities	1,076	1,082	1,154	0.6	0.6	0.5	78	-0.1
Wholesale Trade	7,135	9,820	11,563	4.2	5.1	4.7	4,428	0.5
Retail Trade	20,481	25,104	31,870	12.0	13.0	12.9	11,389	0.9
Transportation and Warehousing	3,574	3,722	5,441	2.1	1.9	2.2	1,867	0.1
Information	2,222	2,075	2,355	1.3	1.1	1.0	133	-0.3
Finance and Insurance	4,857	5,036	5,653	2.8	2.6	2.3	796	-0.5
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,265	1,525	1,972	0.7	0.8	0.8	707	0.1
Professional Scientific & Technical Svc	4,405	6,614	10,143	2.6	3.4	4.1	5,738	1.5
Mgmt. of Companies and Enterprises	1,720	1,995	2,612	1.0	1.0	1.1	892	0.1
Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt, ...	7,369	12,577	15,098	4.3	6.5	6.1	7,729	1.8
Education Services	2,752	3,535	4,512	1.6	1.8	1.8	1,760	0.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	12,712	20,614	29,106	7.4	10.7	11.8	16,394	4.4
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,448	2,035	3,030	0.8	1.1	1.2	1,582	0.4
Accommodation and Food Services	12,907	16,238	24,666	7.5	8.4	10.0	11,759	2.5
Other Services (except Public Admin.)	3,362	4,042	5,191	2.0	2.1	2.1	1,829	0.1
UNCLASSIFIED	33	450	577	0.0	0.2	0.2	544	0.2
TOTAL - PRIVATE SECTOR	146,769	160,947	212,973	85.8	83.3	86.1	66,204	0.3
TOTAL - GOVERNMENT	24,362	32,201	34,200	14.2	16.7	13.8	9,838	-0.4
Federal Government	1,523	1,513	1,284	0.9	0.8	0.5	-239	-0.4
State Government	4,696	5,219	5,909	2.7	2.7	2.4	1,213	-0.3
Local Government	18,143	25,469	27,007	10.6	13.2	10.9	8,864	0.3
ALL INDUSTRIES	171,130	193,148	247,174	100.0	100.0	100.0	76,044	

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Total Earnings by Industry (Historical)

	1970	1980	1990	2000
United States	1,825 M	2,355 M	2,928 M	3,465 M
Georgia	35,556,751	49,794,520	73,638,399	91,571,279
ARC	16,336,517	24,620,428	39,903,089	51,526,014
NWGRC	2,476,218	3,174,821	4,425,281	5,592,054
GMRC	1,140,629	1,530,281	2,513,014	3,212,609
NEGRC	1,298,662	1,786,710	2,565,670	3,030,928
Manufacturing	460,322	570,393	754,774	947,692
Services	154,304	218,228	431,465	636,725
Local & State Government	113,767	192,882	292,532	355,736
Retail	139,655	186,154	283,529	333,377
Construction	70,660	94,416	178,221	227,226
Agriculture	55,395	120,587	176,987	190,518
Wholesale	32,584	69,354	119,215	157,161
Transportation/ Public Utilities	43,270	76,638	107,938	144,631
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	30,025	55,530	97,526	146,807
Federal Government	22,002	24,862	31,090	32,833
Fisheries & Forestry	10,188	7,752	19,292	21,731
Military	5,971	6,455	11,735	11,564
Mining	2,486	6430	8,710	9,558

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

After a decrease in Goods Manufacturing during the early 2000's, growth in the sector has restored employment levels across the region, buoyed by surging growth in the Service industries. This shift has not been balanced across the region, as select isolated production facilities (particularly legacy textile manufacturers) closed in rural areas, while newer businesses are congregating in select corridors. Most rural cities are working to restore older industrial sites, but the targeted industries are no longer the same as businesses adapt to changing production and shipping demands, as well as diverging labor skills, between a workforce capable of high-tech occupations and those less equipped.

Economic Development leaders in the region know also that broadband technology and housing will be critical factors going forward. In order to attract and sustain economic growth, employers are looking for work environments that enables their business to be accessible to markets via the internet, and that employees want to be in places where they can afford decent housing. While this means some industries can locate anywhere, it also means communities are now in wider competition in attracting business.

Labor Force

Information concerning the skills and abilities of the labor force provides a strong indication of the economic potential of a region. Occupational characteristics highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the available labor pool, offering guidance as to the employment needs and limitations. An analysis of occupational employment, balanced by information concerning work location and commuting patterns, can be used to determine the assets of the existing labor force as well as to highlight which skills should be brought into the area. This analysis can then be used with economic base studies to direct activities for improving the local economic conditions.

Occupations

The occupational information reveals the kinds of skills & experience present in the local labor force, and provides an indication of how successfully that force can fill the labor needs of particular industrial sectors. Such information can also help explain commuting patterns, education needs, and possible changes in demands for consumer goods and services.

Employment by Occupation - 2013-2017 (Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over)

COUNTY	Total Persons	Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations	Service Occupations	Sales and Office Occupations	Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations	Production, Transportation, and Material Moving
BANKS	7,796	24.8	17.0	22.4	16.4	19.5
DAWSON	10,665	37.1	12.6	25.0	12.3	12.9
FORSYTH	103,649	51.1	11.3	24.8	6.1	6.7
FRANKLIN	8,353	29.8	15.6	18.3	14.4	21.9
HABERSHAM	17,338	27.3	16.4	22.9	12.4	21.0
HALL	90,062	28.5	14.4	24.1	10.9	22.1
HART	9,989	26.8	15.8	23.2	12.4	21.8
LUMPKIN	14,549	28.8	20.8	24.1	11.0	15.3
RABUN	6,259	33.4	19.3	20.9	16.5	9.8
STEPHENS	10,114	28.4	20.4	20.9	9.8	20.4
TOWNS	3,955	30.3	24.8	26.5	9.2	9.2
UNION	7,998	31.5	18.4	23.2	17.4	9.6
WHITE	11,802	30.5	19.1	25.9	9.9	14.7
GEORGIA	4,606,329	36.6	16.7	24.3	9.1	13.3

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Wages by Economic Sector

As the employment of each economic sector represents the value of each industry to the community's overall economic productivity, the wages provided by those sectors indicate the standard of living each industry will produce. Industries that can support higher wages yield more disposable income that can be reinvested elsewhere in the local economy. By contrast, industries with lower wages can become liabilities by leaving households dependent on additional sources of income.

Average Weekly Wages - 2017

	All Industries		Average Weekly Wage		
	Number of Establishments	Avg. Weekly Wage	Goods Producing Industries	Government	Service Providing Industries
Banks	272	\$618	\$1,009	\$606	\$479
Dawson	684	\$565	\$808	\$681	\$495
Forsyth	5,842	\$950	\$1,088	\$881	\$919
Franklin	459	\$671	\$811	\$649	\$631
Habersham	864	\$691	\$823	\$705	\$600
Hall	4,407	\$892	\$873	\$778	\$923
Hart	420	\$700	\$839	\$680	\$609
Lumpkin	522	\$650	\$774	\$806	\$510
Rabun	473	\$589	\$650	\$703	\$544
Stephens	552	\$732	\$834	\$684	\$696
Towns	286	\$596	\$735	\$592	\$582
Union	562	\$689	\$738	\$666	\$691
White	651	\$605	\$895	\$737	\$497
Georgia	274,910	\$1,003	\$1,099	\$927	\$999

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

The labor force within the Georgia Mountains Region is transitioning from one of a homogenous goods production legacy to one with more modern and diverse skill sets. As older generations retire from the work force, the newest employees come with more education and improving adaptability to high-tech occupations. This shift isn't happening expeditiously, and there remains a need for more vocational training, especially in select goods production fields. The region's economic development leaders have been working with area Technical Colleges to address this gap, and programs are available for a generation now to assist employers and employees in getting educational services in place as needed.

Where additional work may be needed lies within the healthcare fields (to serve an aging and growing population within the region) and in technical support services which can provide repair and maintenance to the myriad of industries that are now applying more advanced technology in their production settings. These fields are expected to see high demand in the planning time frame, with many of the related jobs not requiring a conventional 4-year degree.

Sources of Personal Income

While wage rates represent one gauge of a population's wealth, wages constitute only a portion of each household's net income. Additional sources of revenue include earned interest, dividends, proprietor's income and financial assistance. These sources must be evaluated to levy a true measure of local economic health.

Sources of Personal Income by Type

	Wage or Salary	Other Income	Self Employment	Interest, Dividends, or Net Rental	Social Security	Public Assistance	Retirement
2000							
Banks	71.4%	1.9%	12.0%	3.7%	5.5%	0.7%	4.8%
Dawson	74.1%	0.9%	9.1%	7.0%	4.1%	0.3%	4.6%
Forsyth	82.8%	1.0%	6.0%	4.7%	2.3%	0.2%	3.0%
Franklin	69.6%	2.4%	7.4%	5.1%	9.0%	1.0%	5.4%
Habersham	71.1%	2.1%	5.5%	7.4%	7.0%	0.6%	6.3%
Hall	76.9%	1.7%	6.5%	6.0%	4.4%	0.5%	4.2%
Hart	66.7%	2.6%	6.8%	6.6%	8.1%	0.8%	8.4%
Lumpkin	73.6%	1.8%	7.3%	7.4%	4.8%	0.7%	4.5%
Rabun	60.4%	2.9%	10.1%	9.6%	8.4%	0.7%	7.8%
Stephens	74.3%	1.6%	4.8%	3.9%	8.3%	0.8%	6.3%
Towns	58.3%	1.8%	4.6%	8.9%	13.1%	0.9%	12.5%
Union	55.2%	2.7%	11.8%	8.5%	10.1%	1.0%	10.7%
White	68.8%	2.0%	9.3%	5.1%	7.4%	0.9%	6.4%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Unemployment Levels

Another lead indicator of an economy's strength is the measure of its unemployment levels. Trends in this area reflect the stability and prosperity of local industries, as well as the results of past economic development strategies. Unemployment levels also represent a measure of the poverty level within the area and potential deficiencies in the redistribution of wealth.

Unemployment (As of March for each year)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Change '10-'19
Georgia	10.4	10.0	9.3	8.2	7.3	6.0	5.3	4.8	4.1	3.7	-6.7
Banks	9.7	9.2	8.5	7.7	6.7	5.8	4.7	4.1	3.3	3.0	-6.7
Dawson	10.9	10.0	8.7	7.5	6.4	5.1	4.7	3.9	3.4	3.2	-7.7
Forsyth	8.1	7.3	6.8	5.8	5.3	4.4	4.1	3.8	3.2	3.0	-5.1
Franklin	14.0	11.7	10.7	9.7	7.9	6.1	5.1	4.8	4.0	3.8	-10.2
Habersham	11.0	10.4	9.7	8.0	7.0	5.9	5.1	4.8	3.8	3.8	-7.2
Hall	9.6	9.1	8.1	7.0	5.9	4.8	4.5	4.0	3.2	3.0	-6.6
Hart	12.4	10.8	10.0	9.1	7.3	6.0	5.4	4.5	3.6	3.4	-9.0
Lumpkin	10.5	9.8	8.6	7.4	6.3	5.2	4.7	4.1	3.5	3.4	-7.1
Rabun	12.7	14.4	11.7	10.6	9.3	7.3	6.3	5.5	4.4	3.9	-8.8
Stephens	12.4	11.3	10.9	9.3	7.6	6.9	5.6	5.1	4.6	4.0	-8.4
Towns	13.8	12.5	11.6	11.1	9.6	7.8	6.3	6.5	5.7	5.0	-8.8
Union	12.0	10.4	9.1	7.9	6.9	5.8	4.9	4.9	3.8	3.5	-8.5
White	10.8	10.3	9.2	7.8	6.5	5.4	4.9	4.0	3.1	3.0	-7.8

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Overall, the region has recovered well from the Recession and is positioned for further growth in the planning time frame. The same factors that buoyed the region's expansion for the past 20 years – affordability, proximity to Atlanta, tourism, and quality of life setting – remain strong draws today. The region's leaders have also galvanized their economic development efforts in response to the Recession, becoming more aware and active in developing resiliency and diversity into their economies. The effort to upgrade and involve the Universities, Colleges, and medical centers in this recruitment strategy has helped immensely.



Economic Resources

Many communities employ a number of methods to encourage and strengthen local business and economic conditions. Economic development resources can take the form of development agencies, government programs, or special features within an education system that foster desired business environments. These resources are a means of supporting the local economy, and as such become strong factors in the analysis of regional economic development patterns.

Agencies

Local, State and Federal assistance is provided to the local government by the following:

- *Local Chambers of Commerce* – A Chamber of Commerce is the organizational force behind the local business community's efforts to support community development. Every County in the region has some form of Chamber to assist with business development and retention, and local governments are encouraged to maintain quality, regular communication and interaction with these organizations.
- *Local Development Authorities* – Development authorities are designed to support local business recruitment or retention through specific actions not available to the local governments directly. These authorities can pursue grants and loans and facilitate the actual development of land and interaction with private industry in ways that cities and counties are forbidden, making them a powerful resource for economic development. As of 2010 every county within the region has some form of development authority, and in some cases access to multiple such organizations. Sub-specialty authorities concentrate on downtown areas, others are joint authorities assisting more than one county.
- *Georgia Mountains Regional Commission* – This is the RC serving the 13 counties in the northeastern corner of Georgia, including Hall County and neighboring Forsyth, Dawson, Lumpkin, White, Habersham and Banks Counties. The GMRC has departments for Planning and Economic Development, each available to provide a full array of services to assist the City with plans, grant writing and other community development efforts.
- *Federal EDA Appalachian Regional Commission, USDA Rural Development* – All communities within the Georgia Mountains Region remain eligible for assistance from these Federal Agencies for projects that directly translate into new employment opportunities. This includes funding loans and matching grants for capital improvement and downtown development projects that attract new businesses or facilitate business expansion.
- *Georgia Departments of Labor, Community Affairs and Economic Development* – The State of Georgia assists local economic development through the provision of training programs, expert recruitment resources and financial assistance. Staff from all three Departments regularly communicate with the local governments regarding programs and resources for which they are eligible.

Programs and Tools

Local governments sometimes participate in several programs designed to assist business initiatives and improve the quality of the local labor force.



Local governments in Georgia are, depending on their classification and status, eligible for both the *OneGeorgia* and *BEST* programs that are designed specifically to support economic development in rural communities. Depending on the specific program, this support can include tax credits for new employment, assistance with job skills training and assistance with capital improvement projects.

Local governments are also eligible to apply for assistance through programs such as the *Transportation Enhancement* (TE) Grant, *Employment Incentive Program* (EIP) Grant and *Community Development Block Grant* (CDBG) programs. Funds awarded as part of these programs can assist with a select range of projects such as small loans for infrastructure improvements and facility developments that support job growth. These programs can also provide loans directly to businesses for utility improvements and training programs that support economic development.

Georgia communities can also utilize the *QuickStart* program provided in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Department of Adult and technical Education. This program provides resources for area technical colleges to develop and provide specific job training programs at the request of businesses seeking new/more employees. This service is provided at no or defrayed cost to the employees that enroll for the one-time training.

Education and Training Facilities

Post-secondary education is the foundation for developing a highly skilled work force. The accessibility and quality of colleges and universities enables a community to produce a labor pool with a wider variety of skill sets and with a deeper set of skills for the jobs in greater demand. Such facilities also support specific job-skills training for local industry expansion. Thus it is crucial for any community to include in their plans for economic development an understanding of the education resources available for building and sustaining the type of labor force needed to prosper.

Post Secondary Education Facilities in the Georgia Mountains Region

<u><i>Public Institutions</i></u>	<u><i>Private Institutions</i></u>
Gainesville State College	Brenau University
North Georgia College and State Univ.	Piedmont College
North Georgia Technical College (2 campuses)	Emmanuel College
Lanier Technical College (3 campuses)	Young Harris College
	Southern College
	Toccoa Falls College

Additional access to more than 20 prominent private and public universities and colleges, including the University of Georgia and the Georgia Institute of Technology, is available for more than 60% of regional residents through commuting approximately 1 hour to Atlanta or Athens.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Public facilities and services are those elements vital to a population's health, safety, and welfare that are most effectively provided by the public sector, such as sewerage, law enforcement and school services. The Public Facilities and Services element examines the community's ability to adequately serve the present and projected demands for such services, identifying concerns with the spatial distribution and conditions affecting service delivery. These assessments can then assist in projecting future demands and in planning future capital improvement projects.



Water Supply and Treatment

Water is among the foremost utilities provided by local governments and is generally considered the primary benchmark of progressive modern communities. A stable, healthy water supply is considered critical for attracting industrial growth, and the scope and quality of the distribution system will play a significant role in shaping how a community grows over time.

The region is home to 39 surface water intakes, serving communities within and outside the 13 counties. Most of these are managed by municipal or county governments, with two managed by independent authorities, and all are subject to the rules and permitting of the State of Georgia Environmental Protection Division. According to EPD, all of the systems within the region currently meet the requirements to retain their permits and/or are in the process of updating their permits. It is also understood that there are no major violations of water quality standards for public water systems and that each system is currently, or is planning to update, the projected levels of service for the next 20-40 years as part of the State's efforts to manage future water resources.

As a result of this information and other planning efforts, first priority of issues and opportunities has been pulled from four other completed documents. First is the GMRC Regional Resource Plan, which provides a regional overview of resource management for the drinking water supply sources within the region. This document identifies the reservoirs, rivers and recharge aquifers used to supply local utilities with their water supplies and will be the primary guide for coordinating resource protection. The other three documents referenced will be the watershed management plans for the three Watershed Management Districts (WMDs) within the Georgia Mountains region:

WM District

North Georgia Metropolitan

Coosa – North Georgia

Savannah – Upper Ogeechee

GMRC counties

Hall

Dawson, Lumpkin, Habersham, Towns, Union, White
Banks, Franklin, Hart, Rabun, Stephens

Each of the WMDs has an organizing committee responsible for the development and oversight of a district management plan. This plan will be used to coordinate State support and planning for resource management and reservoir/intake permitting and will be used by the local governments to coordinate their overall system management. The North Georgia Metro district has had their plans in place since 2003 and has since updated most of the elements and information. All three *Regional Water Plans* have been updated since 2014. The GMRC will defer to these documents for guidance and reference on regional water planning issues.

Sewerage System and Wastewater Treatment

Identify both collection and treatment systems, whether publicly or privately operated. Also evaluate the use of onsite septic systems within the region, especially where their widespread use may have adverse environmental impacts; and

As with water supply and treatment, these utilities are regulated and permitted through the State and critical issues are addressed within the Regional Resource Plan and the WMD management plans. As such, the GMRC will defer to these documents for guidance and reference on these issues.



Public Safety Facilities and Services

Among the most basic of services provided by local governments are those related to maintaining public health and safety. These include such things as fire protection, law enforcement, medical care and more. These are the elements of direct public service that not only protects lives and basic rights but also enhances a community's quality of life: Often communities with high quality services are deemed more attractive to residents and businesses, provided the right balance is struck between the benefits and costs for these services.

Fire and Hazard Protection

Fire protection services provide not only the direct benefit of safety against hazards, but the ability to provide such services traditionally ensure a higher quality of life for urbanized communities by permitting greater numbers of residents and activities at lower insurance costs. Half of this is dependent on the distribution of the public water system, the other half is the make-up of the personnel, facilities and equipment needed to perform the actual protection services.

All 13 counties have some measure of fire protection service and a Local Emergency Response Plan in accordance with State law. More populated areas have higher volumes of facilities and numbers of response units and vehicles, with urbanized areas like Hall and Forsyth County employing full-time firefighting staff. According to local comprehensive plans all 13 counties have an acceptable level of fire protection within existing budget parameters. All 13 counties also have current Hazard Mitigation Plan in accordance with GEMA. All County HMPs have been updated in accordance with their 5-year due dates and are considered up to date.

The most pressing need among most communities is upgrading or maintaining the capacity and scope of public water systems to assist fighting fires. Several communities, like Hiawassee and Clayton, are striving to upgrade older water lines both to provide commercial service and improve the integrity of the lines in case of firefighting emergencies. These projects are directly tied to utility improvement programs and will be pursued as funding is available.

The other major firefighting issue within the region concerns wildfires within the abundance of forests and park land. Properties owned and managed by the US Forest Service or the State of Georgia feature their own wildfire management plans which are developed in coordination with the appropriate local authorities. As each Hazard Mitigation Plan is updated, any need for updated measures regarding wildfire protection will be noted and then a regional review will identify any common issues or opportunities that might suggest a multi-jurisdictional action.

Law Enforcement

Police protection, or law enforcement, is the public service designed to safeguard community residents and businesses from acts of theft, personal violence and other crimes. Such protection builds community character and support and can serve as a tool for attracting tourism and growth. Preventative protection also can lower costs of living and contribute to an overall higher standard of living within the community.

All 13 counties feature a sheriff's division for both general law enforcement and to assist with local courts and detention services. Smaller towns and cities also rely on contractual arrangements with the county to provide police protection through the sheriff. Larger cities like Gainesville, Cumming and others feature their own police department, as well, to provide more effective protection in urbanized areas. While not all law enforcement divisions are certified or affiliated with professional associations, each complies with



the State requirements regarding staff training and qualifications, departmental management and recording. According to local plans there is no significant need among any local police department other than aspirations for additional personnel and equipment pending available funding.

Health Care Facilities and Services

The remaining aspect addressed within the Public Safety element is the availability of hospitals and healthcare facilities to treat the ill and infirmed. Access to such facilities is required in order for a community to sustain its level of function and prosperity.

The primary medical facility within the region is the main campus for the Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS), a regional not-for-profit community health system serving approximately 700,000 residents in northeast Georgia. NGHS offers a full range of healthcare services through its Joint Commission accredited hospital in Gainesville, Northeast Georgia Medical Center, which was named one of the country's 100 Top Hospitals for 2009 by Thomson Reuters. The system features a capacity for 557 inpatients, including 261-skilled nursing beds and a medical staff of more than 500 physicians. Additional facilities in Hall County include: three urgent care centers; a mental health and substance abuse treatment center; two outpatient imaging centers; two long-term care centers; and outpatient physical, occupational and speech therapy clinics.

The second primary care facility in the region is Northside Hospital – Forsyth, based in Cumming. This facility features over 160 in-patient beds and nine different specialty departments. The recently completed Women's Center is considered among the premier locations for births and newborn care in the region. The Forsyth campus is staffed by more than 450 doctors and 1,400 health care professionals overall as part of the acclaimed Northside system. Opened in 2002, this facility has permitted Forsyth County to provide residents local access to some of the best comprehensive care in the state.

The third primary hospital in the region is the St. Mary's Health System based in Lavonia, providing a total of 71 beds and employs 36 registered nurses with 2 pharmacists. The system also serves as a hub for human services in Franklin and Hart Counties with a Clinic and Urgent Care unit, the Women's Wellness Center, and Med Link. St. Mary's Health System has committed to investing an additional \$2.4 million in St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital to improve patient safety and upgrade technology and services in areas ranging from the mother/baby unit to the operating rooms.

Additional medical facilities providing basic emergency care are located in Clarkesville, Clayton, Toccoa and Dahlonega. While facilities do not have the trauma or specialty care provided through NGHS or Cobb Healthcare but can provide some advanced treatment for urgent care and better immediate response for those communities.

Each County also provides a Health Department to serve its citizens, addressing basic needs for immunizations and assistance with MediCare and Medicaid services. Each local plan addresses any particular needs of each facility and program.

As of this planning period, no regional trends or significant issues or opportunities have been identified in this element. No additional need has been identified here that can be addressed through the RC.



General Government Services

Parks and Recreation

Recreational facilities provide communities with a quality that is difficult to measure but considered vital to its social well-being. By offering a variety of recreational activities a region can strengthen the residents' quality of life and stimulate facets of the local economy.

Local governments manage their own parks for both passive and active recreation. Several communities, such as Gainesville and Habersham County, have facilities and programs that have received recent acclaim throughout the state. Overall more communities have also looked to build upon the appeal of park space as both a quality of life amenity to spur economic development and resource conservation, but also to reinforce the rural, mountain character of the region that many communities wish to preserve. As the population and numbers of tourists to the area grows so has the demand for outdoor destinations for sport, public gatherings and to enjoy the beautiful scenery.

Many communities are doing what they can to provide a variety of parks and an overall volume to meet demand. This can be costly and at times difficult depending on the availability of land and growing financial pressures of local governments. Manpower to maintain or improve park space has been a premium for the past several years. State programs to support and enhance park space has been shrinking, and this is an area of public service often regarded more expendable than health and safety or education, causing a cut back in the parks available to area residents and visitors. Most communities intend to restore the amount of resources dedicated to parks as their means allow, but for now this is one aspect of local government that is operating at a minimal level.

As discussed in the Regional Resource Plan, the management of State parks and federal lands is both established and beyond the scope of the GMRC. Both the State and the involved federal agencies coordinate their own management plans with the affected local governments and there is a concerted effort to make sure these lands are both accessible to, and respected by, the various communities and their residents.

"Due to the State ownership and oversight by the DNR, vulnerability factors for the State Parks is considered low with regard to immediate loss or degradation of environment and habitat. Remaining concerns lie within the realm of management of surrounding properties, or the loss of funding to properly manage the Parks. As the region grows in population and in terms of tourist appeal, it is a near certainty the demand for these lands and facilities will remain high, which should permit DNR greater opportunity to secure funding but it may yet need to require continued outside support to sustain the level of service desired."

The general amount and status of park land within the region is considered very good for current demands, with only select issues at various locations being raised by various stakeholders (accessibility and parking at some parks, cleanliness and tourist management at others). Provided scheduled and planned improvements are implemented these facilities should meet the projected demand for the region during the planning timeframe. However, as State and local parks have received a large amount of cutbacks during the recession, not only are these improvements no longer guaranteed but existing levels of service and access to parks may be curtailed.



Solid Waste Management

As communities grow they also incur more garbage, necessitating proper management of the collection and disposal of various forms of solid waste. Some items can be recycled, some require special measures for disposal. All forms of waste management should be considered so as to ensure the continued health and safety of local residents.

As of 2011 local governments are no longer required to maintain a solid waste management in accordance with the standards of the past 20 years. Some level of annual reporting, maintenance of capacity assurance and the adoption of a plan of some sort is still required, but the format and rules otherwise are left open.

In the potential absence of these future plans, however, and given the growing pressure on land within the region, it has been suggested the GMRC pursue a regional scale solid waste plan. This would largely be done to accomplish two things:

- 1) Identify the total volume of waste to be generated by the region and ensure the overall capacity for disposal is being met, as a counter assessment to the many local plans that may not be evaluated concurrently, and;
- 2) To identify any and all potential sites for future waste disposal facilities.

The latter issue above is of critical importance to the region both as a means of preparing for all future disposal needs but also to ensure the protection of area resources. Natural resources and scenic beauty are vital to the region's culture and economy, so there is a vested interest in making sure any possible large-scale use that could adversely impact these resources is considered wisely. A regional-scale assessment might also review matters with a more neutral perspective, as most local plans often begin from the stand point that landfills are undesirable. This is an effort the GMRC could pursue as a follow up to the Regional Resource Plan and to ensure the future sustainability of the regions' waste management.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation concerns the accessibility to sites and land uses. The demands for transportation facilities and services vary by land use, demographics and other factors. The dynamic nature of accessibility and the various factors that combine to determine functional performance in infrastructure suggest transportation for larger or rapidly growing communities requires special attention outside of the traditional public facilities and services. Because transportation plays such a large part in shaping development patterns, and because transportation systems can be assessed as all together a utility, a set of facilities and a service, transportation must often be assessed as its own element.

Road Network

State roads are classified as interstates, arterials, collectors, or local roads based on average trip lengths, trip destinations, traffic density and speeds. Each classification represents the relative weight, or value, of a roadway, which helps govern the types of service and development conditions permitted. In this modern era characterized by the automobile, a community's accessibility is largely defined by the quality and quantity of its street network, particularly its access to major arterials. As a result, business and land development is often dictated by the conditions of the local roads and related capital improvements.

Road planning and management is handled at the local level for County and City roads and by GDOT for State and federal roads. Local planning and management typically involves funding from general



government for basic road repair and some improvements, with major work funded through annual stipends from GDOT, grants or loans, or through Local Option Sales Tax referendums. To date all 13 counties and their cities have at least a basic level of road planning through their comprehensive plans and access to some local public works department or operation to handle the actual construction. Forsyth and Hall Counties, as metropolitan communities, have the added benefit of formal transportation planning provided through a Metropolitan Planning Organization

Based upon discussions and analyses, the following issues were cited for regional significance:

- North – South corridors are of critical importance for both local and through traffic. Often these roads provide commuting access, commercial transport, tourism access and local service traffic. Particularly existing State arterials including Ga 400, SR 129 and SR 17, which serve deep into the region. Maintaining their functional levels was considered a top priority during TIA discussions.
- Relieving congestion on collectors was another priority, namely around the rapidly growing areas of Forsyth and Hall Counties as well as around select cities like Lavonia and Dahlonega. Places where there is interest in new development on top of high existing population counts means there is a great need for roadway expansions along service routes connecting arterials in these areas.
- Support for burgeoning industrial corridors was also key, including SR 17 and surrounding Ga 400. Even where some projects didn't make the final draft investment list proposed for the region, a number of projects cited by local officials and stakeholders touted the need for economic development and how such improvements are in demand from prospective employers.

Alternative Modes

Pedestrian

A number of these short trips may be accomplished by pedestrian or bicycle rather than vehicular travel. The opening of additional roads and addition of sidewalks between the central part of town and redevelopment areas would increase the ability and safety of pedestrian travel. The pedestrian experience may be improved with the addition of streetscaping, lighting and crosswalks, particularly in the areas near existing and future public buildings and facilities.

The Georgia Mountains Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is a first step in the integration of bicycle and pedestrian facilities into the infrastructure and land development process in the region. Geographic, economic, land use and population characteristics of the region are identified along with possible funding sources, to increase project development. Connection of existing multiuse facilities to commercial centers and popular tourist destinations has been identified as a short term priority for the region. Integration of bicycles and pedestrian into land use planning and development is a long term priority for the region. These priorities were identified to address environmental, economic, transportation, and public health issues throughout the region. The top three areas in the region with the most potential for long term benefits from bicycle and pedestrian improvements were: Helen, GA; the Tallulah Falls Railroad Trail & Greenway Corridor (from Cornelia to the Georgia/North Carolina border); and Gainesville, GA. Local governments can use this document to assist and supplement efforts in their communities to develop bicycle and pedestrian projects. Having a project identified in this document can assist communities with funding and other implementation measures unavailable to them at the local level.

The GMRC will be working with GDOT to produce an update of the Regional Bike/Ped Plan in 2020, as well as updating progress with the development of Route 15 for the US Bike Route System that will travel from the NC state line near Dillard down through Rabun, Habersham and Banks Counties on its way to Athens.



Transit

Public transportation allows people otherwise unable to travel greater access to the community, and can support a community's health and vitality by providing a functional alternative to private automobile ownership. Public transportation is also a means of diffusing traffic pressures, alleviating the environmental concerns stemming from roadside development, and for stimulating residential and commercial activity.

Forsyth and Hall Counties are the only metropolitan communities with urbanized transit programs. Hall Area Transit provides both fixed route and on demand transit services throughout Hall County, primarily serving the Gainesville and Oakwood areas for access to medical facilities, education facilities, employment and commercial centers. Hall Area Transit also provides connecting service to park and ride lots for residents commuting into metropolitan Atlanta. Forsyth County provides access to Georgia Regional Transit Authority buses that commute into Atlanta, as well as an on-demand service throughout the county.

Of the remaining 11 counties in the region, 6 provide a level of rural transit programs providing on demand service. Support through State and federal programs helps the services attend the needs of the elderly, handicapped and low-income households, particularly in accessing medical care, education or employment. Funding for these programs has been static, however, even as real costs and demands increase during the recession. Some programs have been harder hit and are dropping some service, cutting vehicles or other costs. There have been early assessments about possibilities for regional cooperation with these services, and a recent report to be completed by the GMRC in 2011 should identify opportunities to help sustain and possibly expand these services within the planning timeframe. There is a level of need for these services at every county, though some remain small enough that such need is not as critical. Ideally, though, there remains ambition at every county to provide a degree of public transit services to ensure all residents have the mobility and accessibility needed to prosper.

Railroads, Trucking, Port Facilities and Airports

While personal automobiles are the most common form of transportation, rail and air travel remain critical to the efficient movement of people and goods. More importantly, these facilities require specialized planning and development to ensure efficient operation and not adversely impact surrounding land uses.

Railroads

Railroad service has declined in priority in the US since the 1950's but is still crucial to several industries. Heavy rail is an integral part of modern industrial freight movement as well as growing plans for increased passenger travel. Transportation planning must address available rail options and conditions not only for the benefit of the rail system but also for points where rail service interacts (or intersects) other transportation systems.

Two major active freight rail lines run in eastern half of the region. The CSX line runs south from Gainesville to Athens, while the Norfolk Southern Atlanta/Greenville line parallels US 23 and passes through Hall, Habersham and Stephens Counties. AMTRAK provides daily passenger service along this line with a Gainesville station stop in each direction. The Georgia Rail Passenger Program (GRPP) envisions future commuter rail service between Atlanta and Gainesville, as well as intercity service to Greenville, South Carolina. Commuter rail between Atlanta and Gainesville is a second phase development of the Commuter Rail Program. The line would have seven stations beginning at Lenox and going to Norcross, Duluth,



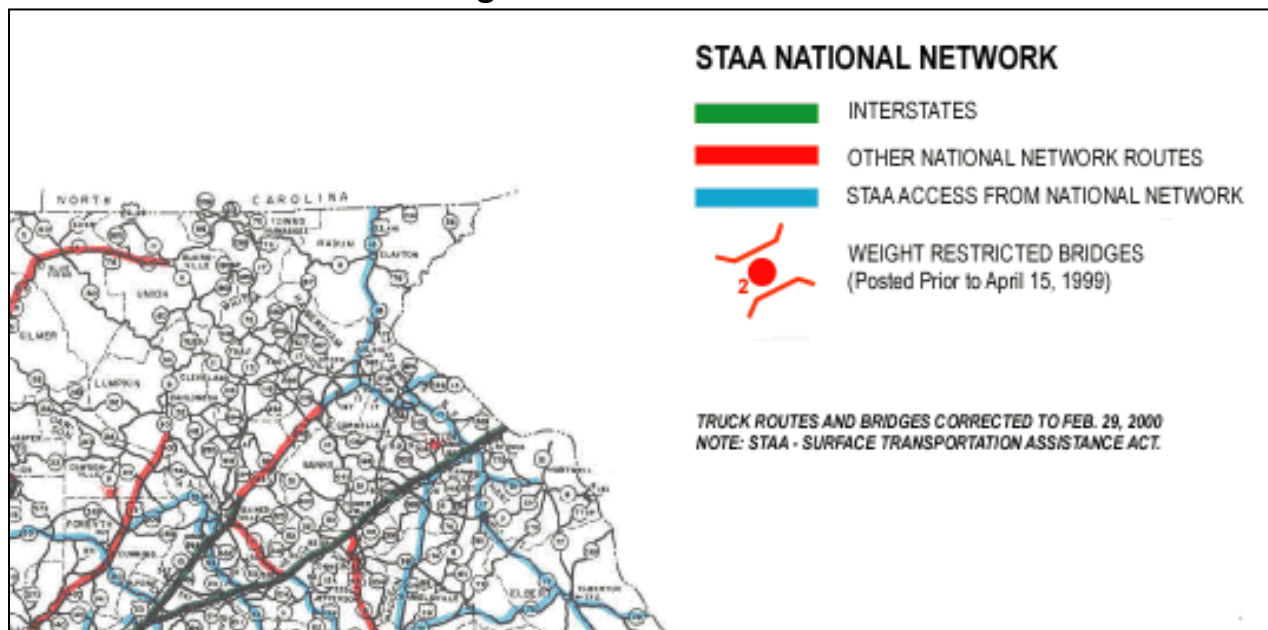
Suwannee, Sugar Hill, Oakwood and Gainesville. The GDOT study projects that there would be more than 7,000 daily passenger trips and a substantial part of the operating costs could potentially be recovered from the farebox (estimated recovery about 60 percent).

The same line would serve as part of an intercity rail program also envisioned by GDOT. The Intercity Rail Passenger Plan explores the possibility of intercity rail passenger services between Atlanta and Greenville, South Carolina, going through Gainesville. The service is projected to attract 128,000 passengers annually by 2020. Implementation of the service is expected to cost approximately \$104 million.

The freight lines remain very active and much of the local industry along this corridor is dependent on the access. Several other communities and industries have inquired about possible spurs to increase accessibility. As this demand for freight service increases the ability to also serve passenger trains will become more costly and difficult. For the immediate future sustaining the freight service is considered vital to local economies, especially as metro Gainesville features a high degree of goods distribution from these lines. To date local governments are doing what they can to maintain the integrity of the rail corridors, however there may need to be increased cooperation between the governments, GDOT and the railroad companies to explore future maintenance of the at-grade railroad crossings in the region. This would help the train traffic continue to flow at optimal levels without interfering with auto traffic or posing greater risks for accidents amidst increasing traffic on both sides.

Trucking and On-Road Freight

Georgia Oversize Truck Route



While the southern half of the region is ably served by freight-worthy arterials, this level of infrastructure does not push as deeply into the mountains. East/west connectivity is also limited based on terrain and Lake Lanier. For this reason, most tourist and freight traffic is restricted to the north/south flow into metro Atlanta or along the I-85 corridor, and industrial growth has mirrored this pattern of development. In the absence of major ports, this network works with the generalized distribution of economic activity centers across the region, particularly the GA 400 corridor, metro Gainesville, Banks

Crossing and Lavonia. For now the network supports traffic patterns to move goods into and out of these business nodes and coordinate commuting traffic with adjoining metropolitan centers.

To date the existing corridors are considered satisfactory provided currently proposed improvements are fulfilled so as to maintain system efficiency and capacity. Part of this will require the passage of the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) sales and use tax to generate revenue for targeted projects along the 17, 441 and 129 corridors. This would support local plan objectives for most communities and be in line with major concerns from local business leaders. Once these corridors have been built up to their projected design, then the region and GDOT can examine new route improvements to enhance east/west traffic flow and localized distribution around select nodes.

Airports

All public use airports in Georgia are assigned one of three functional levels as the facility relates to the state's transportation and economic needs, as discussed in the current Georgia Aviation System Plan, a 20-year plan for the state's public use airports. These functional levels are generally described as:

- Level I-Minimum Standard General Aviation Airport
- Level II- Business Airports of Local Impact
- Level III- Business Airports of Regional Impact

Georgia Mountains Region Public Airport Facilities

<u>County</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>ID</u>	<u>Runway Length (ft.)</u>	<u>Runway Width (ft.)</u>	<u>Functional Level</u>
Hall	Gainesville	GVL	5,500	100	III
			4,001	100	
Union	Blairsville	DZJ	5,006	100	III
Habersham	Cornelia	AJR	5,506	100	III
Stephens	Toccoa	TOC	5,008	100	III
			2,951	50	
Lumpkin	Dahlonega	NA	3,090	50	NA

With the exception of the facility in Dahlonega, each of the region's public airports provides at least one commercial grade runway of 5,000 feet or longer as well as Level III hangars and support facilities. Lee Gilmer Airport in Gainesville and RG LeTourneau Field in Toccoa feature secondary runways and are the most advanced of the region's airports. Every facility has recorded some level of commercial flight traffic within the past year, provides a minimum level of maintenance and service bays and is expected to see increasing demands for use and airplane storage in the future.

In accordance with federal law every public airport maintains a Master Plan for coordinating safety compliance and improvement plans. These documents must be updated every 5 years and ensures that the airport is readily assessing future needs. As of 2019, all 5 airports will have a current plan updated within the past 3 years. No other regional need has been identified in this area to date, however the GMRC will continue to communicate with each airport and their respective communities in case new opportunities or issues arise.

Transportation and Land Use Connection



Identify areas of the region experiencing significant traffic congestion or having significantly underutilized transportation facilities. Evaluate the role of land use (e.g., scale of development, inefficient development patterns) in this mismatch of facility capacity and demand.

To date the transportation system has grown organically around the general topography and patterns for connecting cities with common roadways. Population centers have some traditional neighborhood street connectivity and some sidewalks, while most of the remaining roads are 2 lane arterials and collectors responding to the region's rural character. Only the southern part of the region is experiencing notable suburban forms and pressures, and introducing a new level of automotive dependency. Hall and Forsyth Counties have responded to this with efforts to foster more sustainable development and measures to introduce more alternative transportation, namely via transit and bike paths. Those counties also have the benefit of some devoted transportation planning through designated metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). Some efforts have been successful but more can be done, particularly in coordinating with adjoining communities in visions for multi-jurisdictional transit. Ultimately this assessment will be done from the ground level up by first pursuing the objectives of the local plans and then using existing planning procedures (STIP process, TIA forums) to coordinate projects for maximum regional benefit.

Notable issues for regional consideration include the need to preserve the flow of major freight and tourist arterials, the truck route around Cleveland to relieve congestion moving to/from the mountains, and efforts to establish more land use management policies to preserve rural character and transportation efficiency.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Modern communities are more intertwined than at any time in history, with neighboring jurisdictions sharing environmental features, coordinated transportation systems and other socio-economic ties. In order to provide the efficient and effective delivery of governance, such relationships require coordinated planning between counties, cities and across all public sector organizations.

The Intergovernmental Coordination chapter provides local governments an opportunity to inventory existing intergovernmental coordination mechanisms and processes with other local governments and governmental entities that can have profound impacts on the success of implementing the local government's comprehensive plan. The purpose of this element is to assess the adequacy and suitability of existing coordination mechanisms to serve the current and future needs of the community and articulate goals and formulate a strategy for effective implementation of community policies and objectives that, in many cases, involve multiple governmental entities.

The intergovernmental coordination element requires an inventory and assessment of the relationships between the local government and the various entities assisting in the provision of public sector services and facilities. This can include other units of local government providing services but not having regulatory authority over the use of land, such as constitutional officers. The inventory of each item must address the nature of the entity's relationship to the local government comprehensive plan, the structure of existing coordination mechanisms or agreements, and the parties responsible for coordination.

Local Governments

The GMRC relationship with local governments involves three layers. At the foremost level the GMRC exists to serve and assist the local governments directly as requested and able. This includes a variety of economic and community development services and is where the GMRC provides the local governments with a level of manpower, expertise or other resources not available to the community at that time. Often



this assistance is cyclical and relates to an area of specialty not readily found at the local government offices, especially for smaller governments.

The second layer is via State directed assistance and review. In this capacity the GMRC is responsible for making sure the local governments are consistent with State policy or standards in the areas of economic and community development, and to perform regional reviews of select products such as comprehensive plans, solid waste plans and developments of regional impact (DRIs). The GMRC will help the local governments in the development of these products and strives to bring every community into State compliance and, more importantly, produce plans and products that benefit the local community.

Lastly the GMRC performs regional projects that compliment local objectives, often done in collaboration with the local governments. This includes a variety of multi-jurisdictional topics such as transportation corridor studies, natural resource assessments and tourism studies, all of which typically feature study areas larger than one county. These efforts allow an issue to be addressed at the appropriate scale, and the GMRC facilitates the coordination of planning and remediation between local governments where needed.

Progress with service and products at all three levels is communicated regularly to the local governments via monthly Staff Project Reports updated for every GMRC Council meeting. The Council itself is made up of local government elected and appointed officials (2 from each county) who shape GMRC actions and policy. There are also regular reporting mechanisms provided through contractual requirements to DCA, DOT and other partners that allow local governments to track GMRC progress, as well as an annual report provided directly to every local government summarizing GMRC work throughout the year.

No particular needs have been identified at this time, and the GMRC will continue to try and improve communication and outreach to ensure all local governments are given proper attention and accessibility to GMRC services.

State and Federal Government

The GMRC maintains working relationships with several branches of the State of Georgia and federal departments or agencies. In most instances the GMRC has a defined, fixed role in working with these organizations on behalf of the region and its member governments or in an effort to assist with State or federal objectives in the region. The GMRC maintains required levels of communication, reporting and auditing to ensure these relationships are managed accordingly and as efficient as possible. Among the most common State and federal government offices with which the GMRC conducts business:

Georgia State Government

Department of Community Affairs
Department of Transportation
Department of Natural Resources
Department of Economic Development
Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority
Georgia Emergency Management Agency
OneGeorgia Authority

US Government

Economic Development Administration
US Bureau of the Census
Federal Emergency Management Agency



Independent Special Authorities and Districts

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)

Every county within the Georgia Mountains Region is included within the service area for the ARC, a regional economic development agency under the federal Economic Development Administration that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government. Established by an act of Congress in 1965, ARC is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states and a federal co-chair, who is appointed by the president. Local participation is provided through multi-county local development districts. ARC funds projects that address the four goals identified in the Commission's strategic plan:

1. Increase job opportunities and per capita income in Appalachia to reach parity with the nation.
2. Strengthen the capacity of the people of Appalachia to compete in the global economy.
3. Develop and improve Appalachia's infrastructure to make the Region economically competitive.
4. Build the Appalachian Development Highway System to reduce Appalachia's isolation.

Each year ARC provides funding for several hundred projects in the Appalachian Region, in areas such as business development, education and job training, telecommunications, infrastructure, community development, housing, and transportation. These projects create thousands of new jobs; improve local water and sewer systems; increase school readiness; expand access to health care; assist local communities with strategic planning; and provide technical and managerial assistance to emerging businesses.

The GMRC maintains regular communication with the ARC by participating in ARC meetings and reports as well as maintaining the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which is provided to the ARC in accordance with federal requirements for regional economic development districts. This ensures the GMRC is in compliance with ARC requirements and that objectives for both organizations are in synch with each other.

Water Planning Districts

As discussed in the Natural Resources element, the Georgia Mountains region is served by three different State-designated Water Management Districts (WMD). Each of the WMDs has an organizing committee responsible for the development and oversight of a district management plan. This plan will be used to coordinate State support and planning for resource management and reservoir/intake permitting, and will be used by the local governments to coordinate their overall system management. The North Georgia Metro district has had their plans in place since 2003 and has since updated most of the elements and information. The other two districts recently adopted their management plans in 2011. As these documents address the key regional level issues and opportunities for water supply and treatment, the GMRC will defer to these documents for guidance and reference on these issues.

The GMRC will continue to provide assistance and information to the managing councils of all three districts, and will be working with the State in promulgating and implementing the management plan for the Coosa-North Georgia and Savannah-Upper Oconee WMDs. Through these efforts and eventual cross-pollination of planning efforts the GMRC will assist in developing consistency among all stakeholders.

Coordination with Other Programs

GMRC compliance or coordination with any State, federal or other comparable community development program for the region is implied in the discussion about relations with the applicable government,



department or organization. Most programs in which the GMRC is participating are managed through the Georgia DCA or the Appalachian Regional Commission, and relations with these organizations are managed through contractual terms and mandated standards.

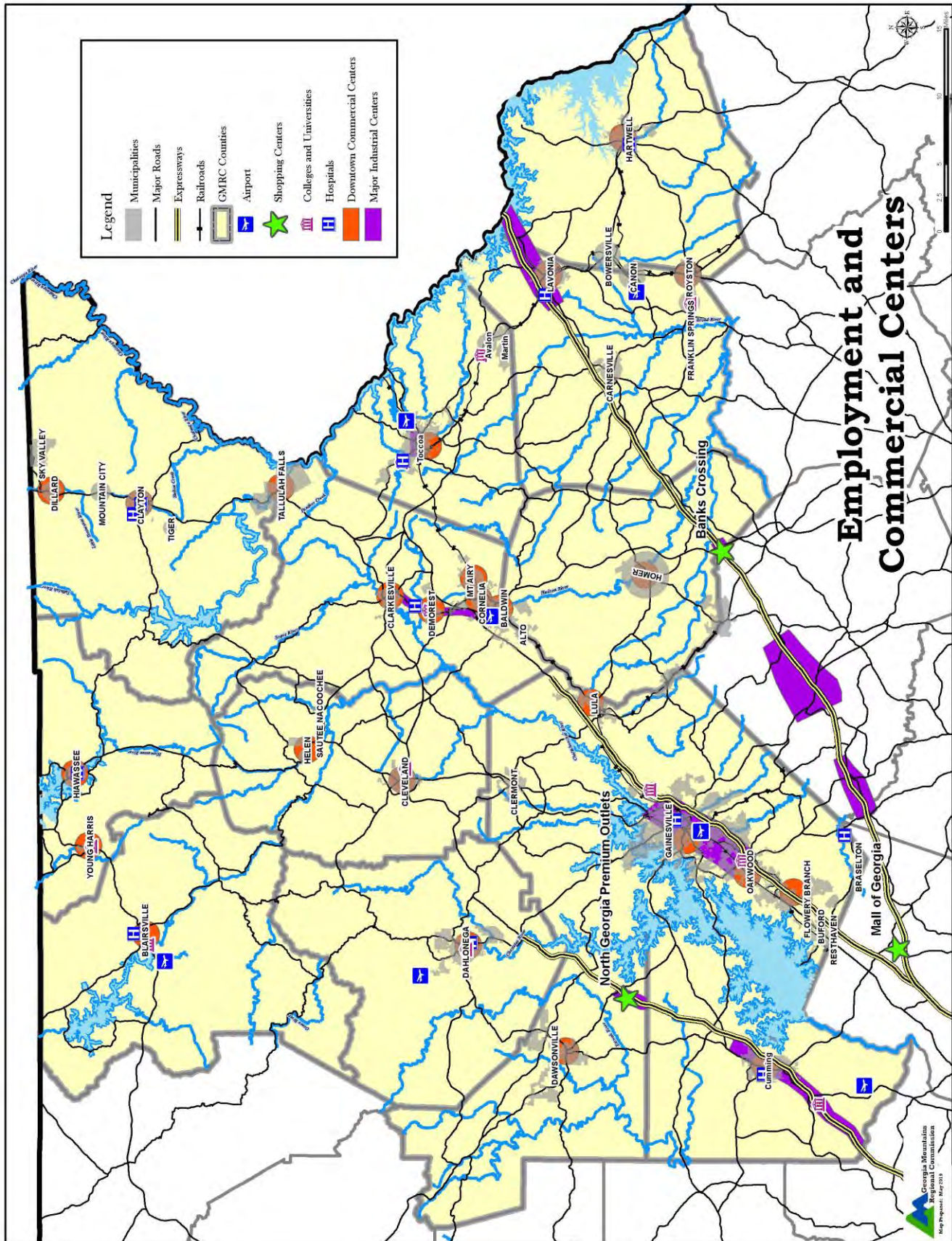
Not defined but implied as part of these measures is the need to foster consistency across the other regional planning measures performed by the GMRC. As each successive document or planning process is produced, it has been/will be cross-referenced with the Regional Plan to ensure consistency. As a rule the Regional Plan will defer to other documents as the planning assessment and guide for their respective specialty, and objectives and implementation measures will be brought over directly from those documents into the Regional Agenda.

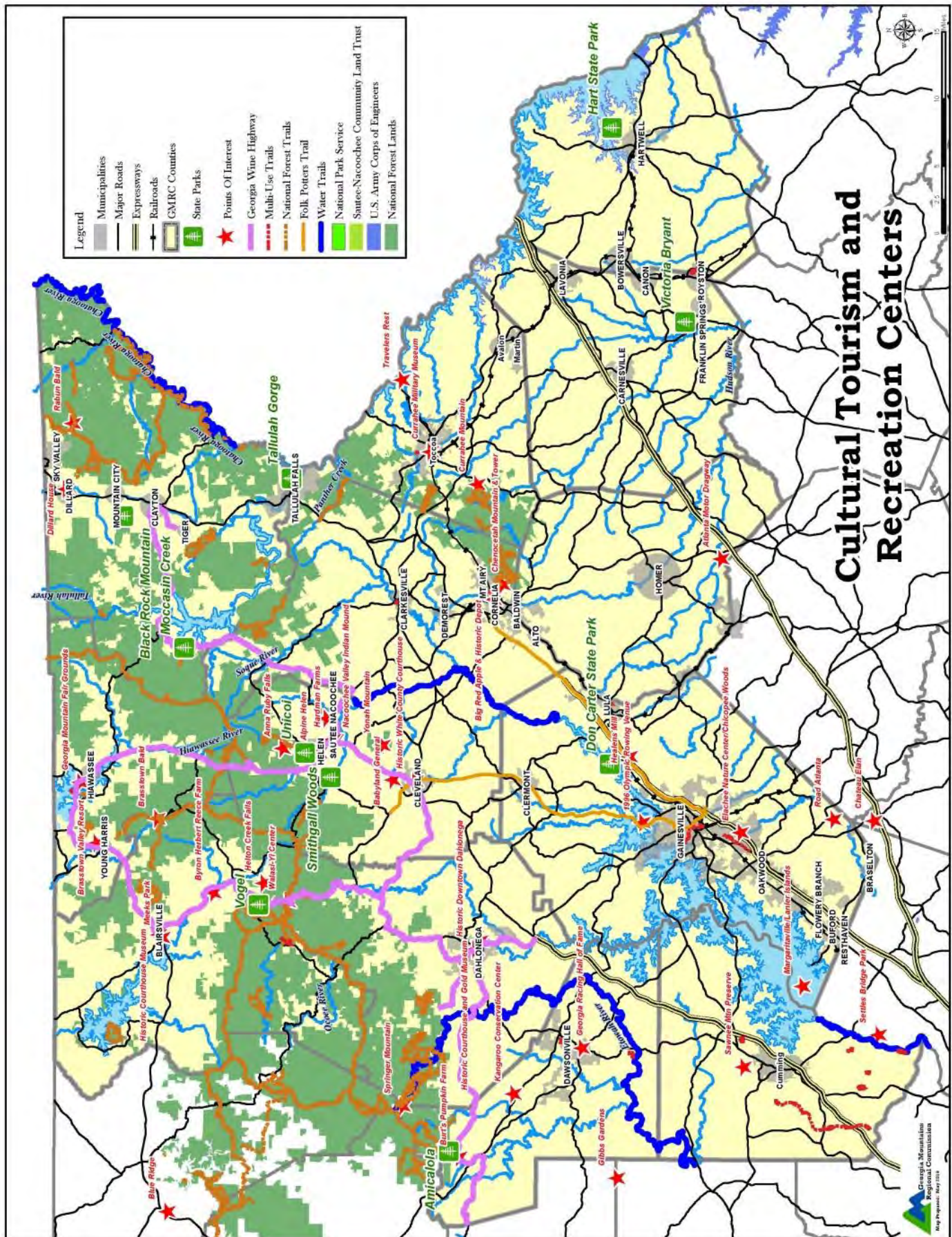
Other GMRC Regional Planning Documents	Completed/ Last Update
Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan	2013
Regional Resource Plan	2010
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	2018
Rural Transit Study	2011

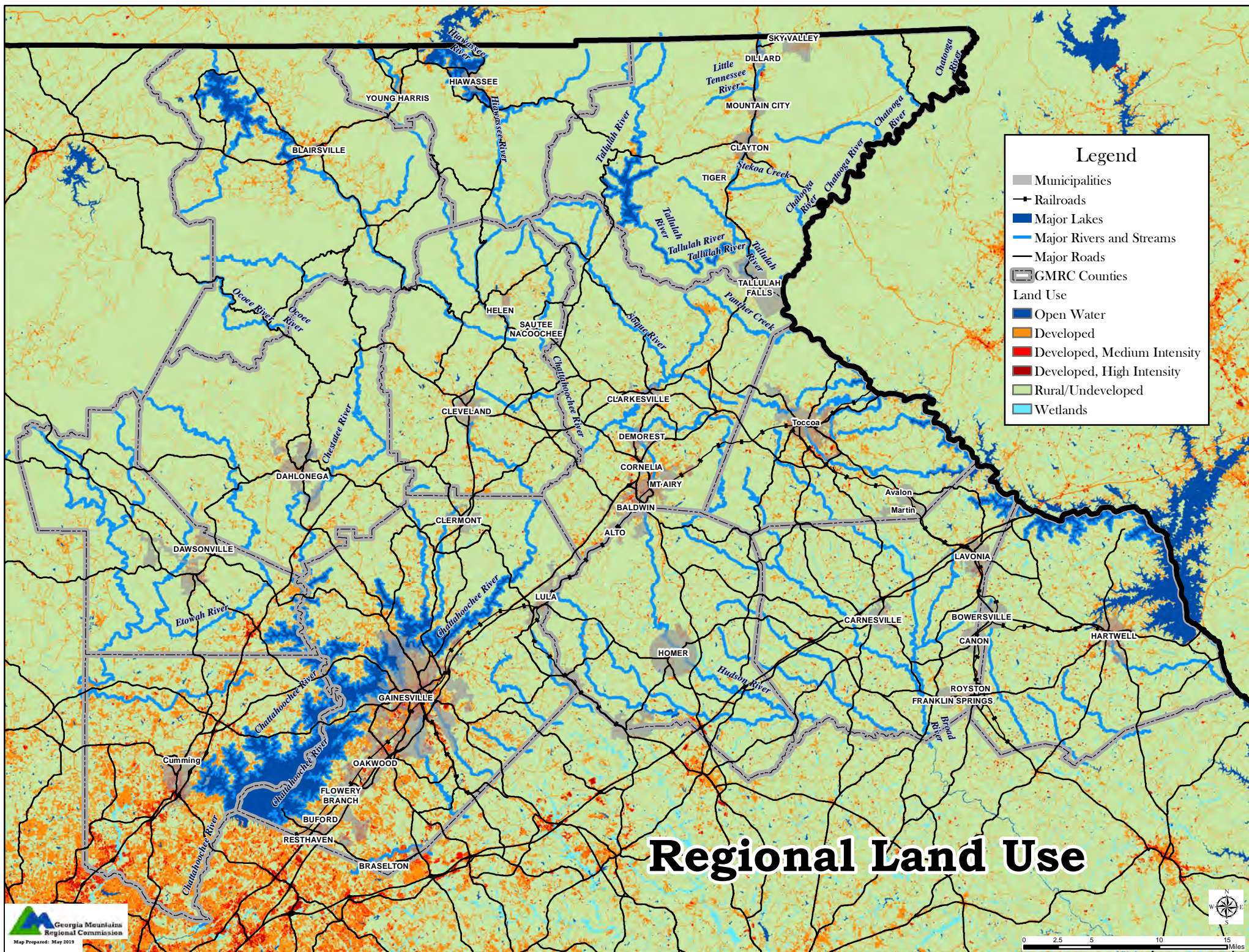
Both the Regional Important Resource Plan and the Regional Transit Plan will be updated beginning in 2020.

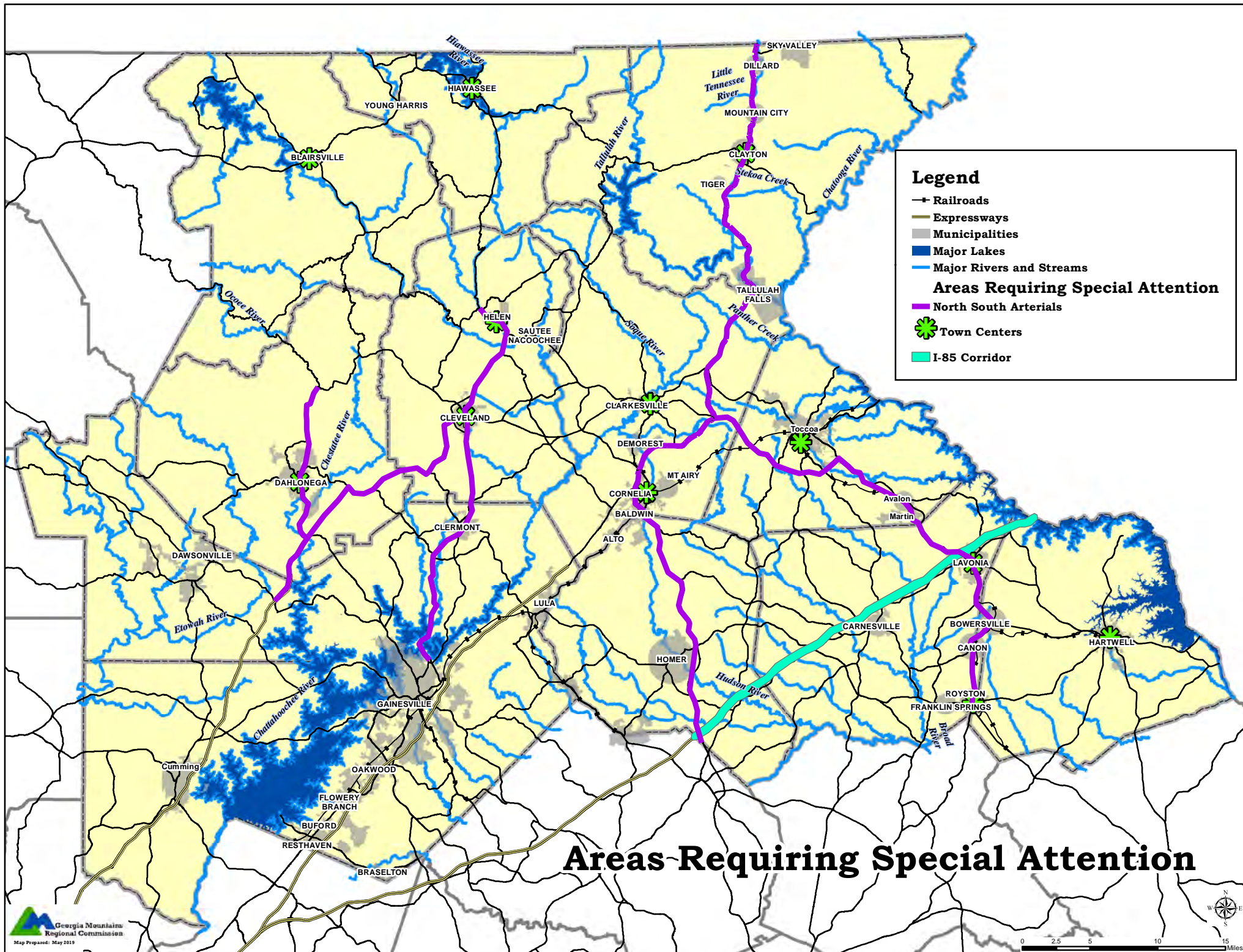


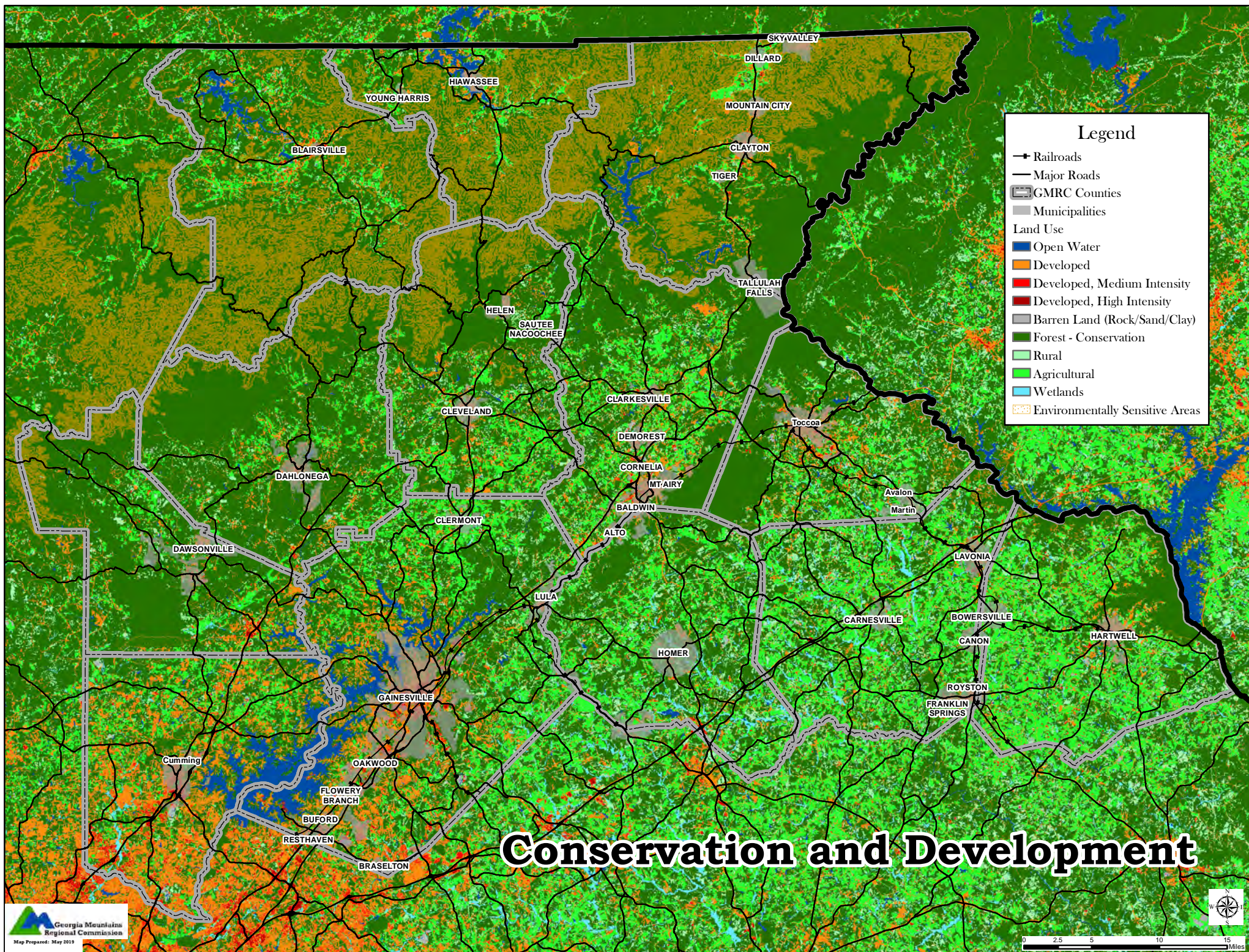
MAPS













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