SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

sgrc

REGIONAL PLAN 2023

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Cotton Field in Fitzgerald, GA

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(1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background:

The Southern Georgia Region is a vast, rural region spanning the Upper and Lower Coastal Plains of south-central Georgia. The mostly forested and agricultural region is comprised of approximately 7,810 square miles, with a 2021 Census Bureau population estimate of 418,944 encompassing 18 counties and 45 municipalities. Counties included are Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware. The Region contains one entire metropolitan statistical area (Valdosta), one partial metropolitan statistical area (Brantley County is part of the Brunswick MSA), and four micropolitan statistical areas (Douglas, Fitzgerald, Tifton, and Waycross). The Region contains some unique natural features, including the Okefenokee Swamp, which, at 438,000 acres, is the largest "blackwater" swamp in North America. There are also four state parks. Agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, and retail trade are all essential pillars of the Region's economy. The Region is home to 18 colleges and university campuses, including a major state university in Valdosta. In the western part of the Region, much of the population and economic activity is broadly concentrated around the Interstate 75 corridor.

Purpose:

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission is the state-authorized regional planning agency for the Southern Georgia Region, described above. The goal of the Regional Plan is to develop a multi-faceted and sustainable strategy, developed through a very public process of involving regional leaders and stakeholders to guide decision making which will advance our Region's communities to a thriving future. The SGRC 2023 Regional Plan has been prepared by following the Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, effective October 1, 2017.

At the conclusion of the process, the Plan, along with a set of deliverables, will provide a clear course of action and a roadmap to success for the next five to ten years to grow jobs, support businesses, and build a collaborative network to expand the Region's vitality.

a) Stakeholder Involvement Summary

Several strategies and techniques were utilized to obtain and broaden stakeholder input and keep all participants actively involved throughout the process.

1. Email Notifications: All stakeholders and participants received email updates on any workshops, surveys, feedback, revisions, and links to download the documents. Stakeholders and participants were also able to remit comments and input via email and to submit surveys through Constant Contact.

2. Facebook, Instagram, & Georgia Planning Association (GPA): The link to the Regional Plan survey was posted weekly on the SGRC Facebook page. An Instagram site was established to reach additional demographic groups; a posting was generated to identify the components of a Regional Plan and included the link to the Regional Plan survey. Additionally, a District 8 (GPA) e-newsletter update including details regarding Regional Plan Update progress was provided and distributed on April 3, 2023.

3. Regional Plan Webpage: All dates for Open Houses, Steering Committee updates, Public Hearings, contact information, documents, and revisions were continuously updated on the Regional Plan webpage under the following link: http://www.sgrc.us/regional-plan.html.

4. First public hearing: the initial "kick-off" public hearing was held on August 25, 2022, in Pearson, GA. The location was chosen due to its centrality within the Region.

5. Open Houses: The Regional Commission held three Open Houses throughout the Region where attendees were invited to complete the Regional Plan survey on a laptop, review the previous plan (including maps), and discuss their thoughts about the update to the plan:

    a. Session 1: October 13, 2022, in Valdosta, GA.

    b. Session 2: November 16, 2022, in Waycross, GA.

  c. Session 3: February 2, 2023, in Tifton, GA.

6. Further stakeholder involvement opportunities were provided at the Kick-off Public Meeting at the Regional Commission Board Meeting on August 25, 2022, and monthly updates at each Regional Commission Board meeting as the entire Regional Commission Board also functioned as the steering committee providing feedback and suggestions. Planning & Transportation Director, Elizabeth Backe also gave a presentation on the Regional Plan Update to the Quarterly meeting of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) on February 22, 2023.

A final public hearing to conclude gathering public input was held in Pearson on ==April 25, 2023==.

b) General Vision and Regional Goal Summary

The Regional Vision paints a picture of what the Region desires to become and provides a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged. The Regional Vision, as well as the Regional Plan, are living documents that will need to be continuously reviewed and updated as the Region continues to accomplish goals, evolve, and change.

VISION

The communities of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission will encourage and support quality education and economic development that fosters the growth of local employment and business opportunities, without detracting from the Region's rural lifestyle and small-town character.

Regional Goal Summary:

To implement the above vision, the stakeholders developed goals which reflect their thoughts about the Region's future and their motivation to turn their vision of this future into reality. The goals are as follows:

1. **Economic Development Goal: Enhance economic competitiveness while advancing the Region's workforce, job opportunities, and quality of life for all segments of the community.**

2. **Natural and Cultural Resources Goal: Preserve and grow the Region's cultural and natural resources and protect historically valuable and environmentally sensitive areas from development pressures.**

3. **Community Facilities and Services Goal: Encourage infill development and invest in sufficient facilities and services to support growth.**

4. **Housing Goal: Provide a safe and adequate supply of good quality housing in rural and urban areas for all members of the population.**

5. **Land Use and Transportation Goal: Encourage land development in suitable areas adjacent to existing infrastructure and support the maintenance and expansion of transportation networks consistent with regional goals.**

6. **Intergovernmental Coordination Goal: Unite communities to identify needs and develop strategies to move the entire Region forward, where the unity of support and action across the Region will improve the future for all citizens and businesses.**

7. **Education Goal: Provide the foundation for a highly skilled, thriving and engaged workforce through education and job training opportunities for all residents.**

8. **Senior Services and Aging Goal: Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods and housing, and excellent work opportunities.**

c) Priority Needs & Opportunities

The Regional Needs and Opportunities were developed through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities (SWOT) analysis. This analysis was obtained through virtual engagement, steering committee meetings, and open house sessions in which stakeholders shared their knowledge of the Region, as well as through surveys and interpretation of regional data. The stakeholder group and steering committee then selected priority issues and opportunities for each segment. In the Work Program, these are associated with corresponding concrete work items for implementation. The following are the priority needs and opportunities organized by goal topic.

1. Economic Development
Priority Needs:
- ED-1: Broadband accessibility throughout the Region is not consistent.
- ED-4: The younger population is leaving the Region to find higher paying job opportunities in metropolitan areas which results in "brain drain" for local communities.

Priority Opportunities:
- ED-B: The Region should market its proximity to the coast, its accessibility through the I-75 corridor and other major highways, and its mild climate as contributing to an exceptional quality of life and accessibility opportunities for new residents and businesses.

2. Natural and Cultural Resources
Priority Needs:
- N/C-1: The Region's lakes and rivers lack safe, clean public access points such as boat ramps, landings, and public beaches.
- N/C-2: The Region has a severe lack of funding for preserving historical and cultural resources, which further restricts the marketing of these resources as another part of the Region's high quality of life.

Priority Opportunities:
- N/C-A: A regional eco-tourism marketing program for natural resources (such as the Okefenokee Swamp, Grand Bay, various water bodies, and state parks) could help to increase the utilization and funding of these resources.
- N/C-B: Any possibility that provides the Region with expanded public outdoor recreation—such as greenway trails, canoe trails, and other amenities—should be explored.

3. Community Facilities and Services
Priority Needs:
- CFS-1: Many communities in the Region have aging infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, bridges), but lack funding to address those problems.

Priority Opportunities:
- CFS-E: Cities and towns without adequate funding sources should consider consolidation with counties and/or should consider disincorporation.

4. Housing:
Priority Needs:
- H-1: More housing in downtown areas is needed.
- H-2: There is a loss of historic landmark homes due to lack of investment in renovating historic housing.
- H-17: The Region is vulnerable to natural disasters; public safety must be responsive and well-equipped to ensure safe communities.

Priority Opportunities:
- H-B: Develop programs, and maximize use of existing programs, to assist homeowners in the maintenance and upkeep of homes and properties to avoid/minimize blight.

5. Land Use and Transportation
Priority Needs:
- LUT-1: The Region is experiencing increasing development pressures on environmentally sensitive lands and farmland; new development needs to be steered more into the urban areas.

Priority Opportunities:
- LUT-I: Expand the regional public transportation plan to include incentives for private investment to increase public transportation.

- LUT-J: Location and proximity of significant ports (Savannah, Brunswick, and Jacksonville), interstates (I-75 and I-10), and federal highways (US-82, US-84, and US-1) are vital opportunities to integrate land use planning, transportation, and economic growth.

- LUT-K: Analyze best practices and make recommendations regarding rail safety.

6. Intergovernmental Coordination
Priority Needs:
- IC-1: There is insufficient coordination and information sharing between local governments.

Priority Opportunities:
- IC-A: Provide regional intergovernmental leadership training to provide a consistent knowledge base and forge connections.
- IC-B: Take advantage of the resources available through the Regional Commission for joint regional projects.

7. Education
Priority Needs:

- EDU-3: There is insufficient coordination between the education sector and other local governments and agencies.

Priority Opportunities:
- EDU-A: Increase accessibility to schools.
- EDU-B: More workforce training programs could be established through coordination with businesses and industries.

8. Senior Services & Aging
Priority Needs:
- SA-1: The senior population continues to grow rapidly, which produces a greater demand for services. The housing, transportation, recreation, and health needs of this population are not adequately addressed.

Priority Opportunities:
- SA-A: Participate in the AARP Livable Communities initiative to support the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities and rural areas to be great places for people of all ages by working toward providing safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.

- SA-B: Health transportation providers could provide greater access to services.

d) Specific Actions to Be Pursued

The Regional Work Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Regional Goals and addressing the Priority Needs and Opportunities. It identifies specific action items to be undertaken by the Regional Commission in order to implement the Regional Plan, in partnership with local governments, state and federal agencies, economic development organizations, private companies, and other organizations as appropriate. These action items are organized by category (Economic Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, Community Facilities and Services, Housing, Land Use and Transportation, Intergovernmental Coordination, Education, and Senior Services and Aging) and further by Priority Need/Opportunity. The Regional Work Program is in Section 6(ii) of this Regional Plan.

e) Other Plans Consulted

The following relevant planning documents were reviewed and taken into consideration in the development of this Regional Plan Update:

- Georgia's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- 2017 Suwanee-Satilla Regional Water Plan and Draft March 2023 Update
- 2022 – 2026 Southern Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

- Valdosta-Lowndes MPO Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Readiness Strategy for Small Cities and Rural Areas in Southern Georgia
- Valdosta-Lowndes MPO 2045 Transportation Plan
- Area Agency on Aging Area Plan
- Regional Plan of Coastal Georgia

- Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional Plan 2040
- River Valley Regional Plan
- Southwest Georgia Regional Plan

f) Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

All of the jurisdictions within the Southern Georgia Region are within the area of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, which was adopted in September 2017. An update to this plan is currently underway.

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan Area Map
Source: Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan
https://waterplanning.georgia.gov/suwannee-satilla-water-planning-region

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan Goals:

1) Manage and develop water resources to sustainably and reliably meet domestic, commercial, industrial, and agricultural water needs, including all agricultural sectors (this includes the agro-forestry economy of the region).
2) Manage groundwater and surface water to encourage sustainable economic and population growth in the region.
3) Manage the region's and state's water resources in a manner that preserves and protects private property rights.
4) Ensure an adequate water supply of suitable quality to meet current and future human needs, while protecting environmental resources.
5) Identify opportunities to optimize existing and future supplies and water and wastewater infrastructure.
6) Promote efficient use and management of surface and groundwater resources to allow for sufficient supplies for current and future generations.
7) Protect and manage surface and groundwater recharge areas to ensure sufficient long term water

supplies for the region.
8) Protect, maintain, and, where appropriate and practicable, identify opportunities to enhance water quality and river base flows.
9) Protect and maintain regional water-dependent recreational opportunities.
10) Identify opportunities to manage stormwater to improve water quantity and quality.
11) Identify and implement cost-effective water management strategies.
12) Seek to provide economically affordable power and water resource service to all citizens of the region.
13) Identify and implement actions to better measure and share water use data and information.

In addition, the Regional Water Plan has adopted several Short-Term Water Quantity and Water Quality Management Practices, which the local comprehensive plans should include in order to manage water resources in a sustainable manner through the planning period and beyond. The most significant issues in the Suwannee-Satilla Region are surface water availability gaps driven by agricultural usage. As such, the majority of water supply management practices are intended to address agricultural surface water use.

Short Term Water Quantity Management Practices (0-10 Years)

1) Utilize surface water and groundwater sources within the available resource capacities
2) Water conservation.
3) Data collection and research to confirm the frequency, duration, severity, and drivers of surface water gaps (forecast methodology assumptions and Resource Assessment modeling).
4) Evaluate and ensure that current and future surface water permit conditions do not contribute to 7Q10 low flow concerns.
5) Encourage sustainable groundwater use as a preferred supply in regions with surface water 7Q10 low flow concerns and adequate groundwater supply.
6) Identify incentives and a process to sustainably replace a portion of existing agricultural surface water use with groundwater use to address 7Q10 low flow concerns.
7) Evaluate the potential to use existing storage to address 7Q10 low flow concerns.
8) Education to reduce surficial aquifer groundwater use impacts to 7Q10 low flow Concerns.

Short-Term Water Quality Management Practices (0 – 10 Years):

a) Point Sources:
   a. Support and fund current permitting and waste load allocation process to improve the treatment of wastewater and increase treatment capacity.
   b. Data collection and research to confirm discharge volumes and waste concentrations as well as receiving stream flows and chemistry

b) Non-Point Sources:
   a. Data collection to confirm the source of pollutants and causes; encourage stormwater ordinances, septic system maintenance, and coordinated planning
   b. Ensure funding and support for local and state Best Management Practices programs, including urban/suburban, rural, forestry, and agricultural Best Management Practices

c) Non-point Source Existing Impairments:
   a. Total maximum daily load listed streams: Improve data on the source of pollutant and length of impairment; identify opportunities to leverage funds, and implement non-point source Best Management Practices

Longer-term (20- to 40-year) water quantity and quality management practices include:
- Improve the infiltration and management of wetlands
- Evaluate incentive-based programs to manage, increase, and restore wastewater and stormwater returns
- Identify potential/feasibility of a multi-purpose reservoir
- Identify the feasibility of regional inter-basin transfer
- Continue wastewater and stormwater master planning

Chapter 391-3-16, Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria

The Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria deal specifically with the protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains, the last of which is not applicable in this region. These criteria were developed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as mandated in Part V of the Georgia Planning Act and in the Mountains and River Corridor Protection Act.

The criteria require that local governments shall identify existing and future water supply watersheds and adopt a water supply watershed protection plan for their jurisdiction. Some uses may be grandfathered, such as land uses existing prior to the adoption of a watershed plan, mining activities permitted by DNR, certain utility placements, special forestry, or agricultural services.

The environmental guidelines also spell out criteria for the delineation of small and large water supply watersheds, for the protection of groundwater recharge areas, for the protection of wetlands, and for the protection of river corridors. These criteria shall be incorporated into comprehensive plans and addressed specifically and in more detail through local ordinances and land development regulations.

(2) REGIONAL GOALS AND POLICIES

The following Regional Plan Goals, along with a set of policies and deliverables, will provide a clear course of action and a roadmap to success for the next five to ten years to grow jobs, support businesses, and build a collaborative network to expand the Region's vitality.

The Policies are intended to provide ongoing guidance and direction to regional leaders for making decisions consistent with achieving the Regional Vision and Regional Goals, addressing Regional Needs, and taking advantage of Regional Opportunities.

1. Economic Development

Goal:
Enhance economic competitiveness while advancing the Region's workforce, job opportunities, and quality of life for all segments of the community.

(It is essential for the Region to create and maintain job opportunities and increase job skills that meet the needs of diverse industry and population.)

Economic Development Policies

1.1.   Encourage and support local economic and workforce development entities. Include a focus on teaching workforce skills at educational institutions throughout the Region, in cooperation with the private sector; and developing programs for "soft skills."

1.2.   Promote and encourage regional marketing projects to recruit business and industry. Such projects include video promotion of the Region and its communities, development of a specific target industry list for the overall Region, a regional advertising program, and inter-community technical assistance to attract and retain industry and business. Consider developing a regional export data study to identify new exporting opportunities within the Region.

1.3.   Consider and plan for Region-wide infrastructure, transportation, and natural resource protection during economic development decision-making, especially in the development of industrial mega-sites. This holistic development approach will foster a sustainable quality of life.

1.4.   Promote the importance of agriculture to the local economy.

1.5.   Encourage and assist local entrepreneurs and small businesses through programs such as businesses incubators and through tax incentives such as Enterprise Zones and Opportunity Zones.

1.6.   Collaborate on the creation of Digital Economy Incubators.

2. Natural and Cultural Resources

Goal:
Preserve and grow the Region's cultural and natural resources and protect historically valuable and environmentally sensitive areas from development pressures.

(It is essential for the Region to stay in step with technological and scientific progress to utilize renewable energy resources and to conserve existing resources to continue to provide a high and sustainable quality of life.)

Natural and Cultural Resource Policies

2.1.   Strongly encourage historical and cultural site preservation programs in rural, urban, and downtown areas.

2.2.   Promote appropriate access to natural, cultural, and historic resources for recreation, education, and tourism purposes.

2.3.   Strongly support the continual protection and enhancement of the Region's water quality and quantity, including streams, lakes, ponds, and groundwater (i.e., the Floridan Aquifer). This would include supporting incentives and programs to encourage the agricultural industry to follow Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect streams and lakes from run-off.

2.4.   Promote and encourage new low-impact developments that incorporate parks, trails, waterways, and open space, while preserving the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites.

2.5.   Advocate and educate on development practices that do not negatively impact natural, cultural, or historic resources. This would include support for programs that ensure control of soil erosion and sedimentation, as well as other pollution control measures and practices which conform to the minimum requirements outlined by the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

2.6.   Promote enhanced solid waste reduction and recycling initiatives, including tire disposal programs, to minimize adverse impacts on the environment through littering and illegal dumping. Clean-up programs for specific natural and cultural resources can be used as education tools for schools. Targeted anti-littering and unlawful dumping campaigns could help with increasing the Region's attractiveness and suitability for tourism. In turn, they could lead to tourism income which could be used to further protect and enhance natural and cultural resources.

2.7.   Promote and encourage solar and wind energy and other sustainable energy sources in a responsible manner while preserving valuable agricultural land and supporting the

agricultural industry. City- or county-sponsored solar projects would help provide sustainable energy for residents and decrease dependence on fossil fuels. Increased integration of alternative, more sustainable energy sources could also be used in marketing efforts to any industries that are interested in a cleaner, healthier quality of life for their employees.

2.8. Promote regional cultural and arts outlets, such as the local Arts Experiment Station and the addition of a regional children's museum, expanded to a regional level. Such support would enable and promote joint partnerships for the promotion of the arts, enable increased education, and raise regional awareness of resources.

2.9. Make efforts to preserve the urban tree canopy, including the preservation of champion trees during the development, redevelopment, and road widening processes.

2.10. Participate in Arbor Day events and make efforts to attain Tree City status.

3. Community Facilities and Services

Goal:
Encourage infill development and invest in sufficient facilities and services to support growth.

(It is essential for the Region to provide and connect facilities that will further economic development, education, and mobility for all generations.)

Community Facilities and Services Policies

3.1. Promote programs to maintain adequate police forces in urban and rural areas for the safety of the residents and businesses. Exploring and pursuing funding sources for additional police, fire, and EMS personnel, operations, facilities, and equipment is paramount to being able to provide adequate safety and security for the Region. Perceived safety and security are usually correlated with quality of life, and therefore, will also bring further economic development opportunities in the Region.

3.2. Encourage maintenance, upgrade, and expansion of existing utility facilities to support contiguous, sustainable infill growth where current facilities exist.

3.3. Encourage the placement of new schools near or within residential neighborhoods. Schools that are in or near the communities they serve are more accessible for students and staff, resulting in shorter journeys to school, less traffic congestion, and the option of walking or biking to school.

3.4. Promote active family-oriented recreation programs and facilities, including after-school youth programs.

3.5.   Encourage the development of joint recreation plans by multiple jurisdictions.

3.6.   Encourage the construction or expansion of local medical facilities. Quality of medical care is usually correlated with quality of life, and therefore also with economic development opportunities. Programs or activities could include technical assistance, incentives, pro-active land use planning, and coordination between communities for co-location of facilities.

3.7.   Support the implementation of a newcomer education program with a specific focus on the special needs population to inform them of the full range of services, treatments, and resources available.

3.8.   Promote the use of innovative technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and data processing in the provision of local, regional, and state-provided services.

4. Housing

Goal:

Provide a safe and adequate supply of good quality housing in rural and urban areas for all members of the population.

(It is important for the Region to provide safe and affordable housing and coordinate land use, transportation, and housing to ensure access to employment, education, shopping, and medical care for all generations.)

Housing Policies

4.1.   Seek to eliminate substandard and/or dilapidated housing in all communities throughout the Region.

4.2.   Promote and encourage acceptance of affordable and alternative housing opportunities for a variety of residential options, such as townhouses, tiny houses, accessory dwelling units, and higher-density housing.

4.3.   Promote updates to zoning ordinances to allow mixed uses where appropriate to increase connectivity and access.

4.4.   Encourage and educate on the creation of land banks to assist with housing.

4.5.   Advocate development in areas already served by municipal or regional infrastructure to help minimize housing construction costs.

4.6.   Promote and encourage housing which minimizes energy consumption and utilizes alternative energy sources.

5. Land Use and Transportation

Goal:
Encourage land development in suitable areas adjacent to existing infrastructure and support the maintenance and expansion of transportation networks consistent with regional goals.

(It is essential for the Region to utilize sustainable land use and transportation development to grow technology jobs, housing, healthcare, social activities, education opportunities, and affordable living which are necessary to provide quality of life for commerce and residents and to help minimize the cost of living by decreasing taxes and fees.)

Land Use and Transportation Policies

5.1.   Encourage and promote development that is compatible with, and enhances the character of, each of the Region's communities. Not every development style is consistent in all areas of the Region. Some areas may be better suited to urban style higher-density development, whereas other areas might be better suited to traditional single-family development.

5.2.   Encourage the creation of attractive gateways into the Region's various communities, to promote and brand communities and foster a sense of community pride and identity.

5.3.   Promote growth in areas that can be efficiently served by infrastructure, along with productive land uses such as mixed-use development; promote redevelopment of existing sites over new "greenfield" development.

5.4.   Support preservation of the rural character of the Region by providing the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community. Support will ensure sustainable development for rural areas.

5.5.   Encourage the development of communities to attract and retain younger generations with a mix of housing, shops, recreation, and connectivity.

5.6.   Promote alternative transportation choices (e.g., walking, biking, car-pooling, etc.) and public transportation in a safe environment. Include providing support for complete streets programs, safe routes to school projects, and innovative bicycle route planning.

5.7.   Encourage the coordination of transportation network improvements and land use planning which will promote connectivity of the Region's road network.

5.8.   Encourage the sharing of parking spaces between similar uses to address parking needs, especially in downtown areas. Activities for this policy could include the development of parking plans for downtowns, on-street parking, or pedestrian-oriented developments.

5.9.   Support traffic calming and other measures that lower automobile speeds to reduce crashes and improve conditions for walking, bicycling, and transit.

6. Intergovernmental Coordination

Goal:

Unite communities to identify needs and develop strategies to move the entire Region forward, where the unity of support and action across the Region will improve the future for all citizens and businesses.

(It is essential for the Region to encourage its leaders to work together to build a robust, inclusive foundation for a vibrant, sustainable and visionary future.)

Intergovernmental Coordination Policies

6.1.   Encourage coordination between communities and stakeholders on decisions likely to impact them. Quarterly roundtables are an excellent vehicle to promote cooperation and transparency.

6.2.   Promote and encourage cooperation and collaboration between jurisdictions in developing solutions for shared regional needs. A regional development board or authority could be a partner for economic development activities.

6.3.   Encourage sharing of services and facilities between jurisdictions for mutual benefit, in order to provide broader coverage, share costs, and increase efficiency.

7. Education

Goal:

Provide the foundation for a highly skilled, thriving and engaged workforce through education and job training opportunities for all residents.

(It is important for the Region to grow its skilled workforce to be an asset to the Region and its communities. A skilled workforce is a significant tool in growing existing and future businesses for a thriving Region with a high quality of life.)

Education Policies

7.1.   Encourage the expansion and development of pathway programs to provide opportunities for skilled technical job pathways. Examples include public-private partnerships and existing programs in high schools leading to enrollment in Technical Colleges. Developing degree programs in sustainability and broadband technologies would be excellent examples. Another project could be to increase "Partners in Education" programs where businesses/religious institutions can "adopt" schools to help meet needs.

7.2. Promote educational programs to raise awareness of natural and cultural preservation. This may be achieved through river clean-up activities, recycling education programs, historical event re-enactments, water quality monitoring classes, tours of wastewater treatment plants, and other natural and cultural programs designed to preserve, maintain, and teach the value of these resources.

7.3. Encourage communication and coordination between educational institutions, local governments, and local businesses to improve housing and access to needed services.

7.4. Promote internship programs for students in public service areas.

7.5. Encourage local governments and boards of education to work together to expand safe transportation options for getting to schools.

8. Senior Services and Aging

<u>**Goal:**</u>

Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods and housing, and excellent work opportunities.

(It is essential for the Region that all sections of the community be considered when creating strategies to address needs which stand in the way of thriving, inclusive, and sustainable growth of the Region.)

<u>**Senior Services and Aging Policies**</u>

8.1. Encourage coordination between local private and non-profit agencies to enable greater access to services. Such coordination could create additional funding streams through the development of private pay options, for example in the medical field, and could lead to expanded outreach for the "meals on wheels" program.

8.2. Encourage developers and construction companies to provide more senior-friendly housing in order to promote "lifelong communities."

8.3. Encourage the expansion of evidence-based programs to help seniors to live more healthy and independent lives in the community. These are programs that have been developed and tested by a university or credible research organization to determine their efficacy. They must be taught by staff or volunteers who have been trained to follow the protocol. The development of assistive technology tools would be one example of such a project.

8.4. Promote increasing coordination with and between health transportation providers to provide better access to shopping, medical services, recreation, and other community needs for seniors.

8.5. Encourage efforts by local law enforcement take advantage of ACT (At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics) training, and encourage local banks and healthcare professionals to become aware of abuse, exploitation, and neglect of senior citizens.

8.6. Partner with area hospitals with high readmission rates to provide evidence-based care transition programs

(3) REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MAPS

I. Regional Land Use Map

The Regional Land Use Map consists of three distinct general land use categories:

1) **Developed:** Areas that exhibit urban-type development patterns (i.e., medium to high-density residential, commercial development and industrial development, etc.) and where urban services (i.e., public services of water, sewer, etc.) are provided at the time of plan preparation.

2) **Developing**: Areas that are expected to become urbanized and will require the provision of new urban services (i.e., public services of water, sewer, etc.) during the planning period.

3) **Rural**: Areas not expected to become urbanized or require the provision of urban services during the planning period (i.e., public services of water and sewer), during the planning period. These areas are characterized by sparsely developed nonurban areas where the land is primarily used for farming, forestry, very low-density residential or open space uses.

The pattern for this Regional Development Map has been defined by analyzing past and existing land use data provided by local Tax Assessors; by reviewing the history of local rezoning applications and annexations; by reviewing local comprehensive plan future land use and character areas; and by analyzing past and future population growth and commuting patterns to determine growth trends and future land use patterns. Other information collected and reviewed included data and maps of utility service areas as well as broadband coverage. Understanding and anticipating the development patterns and their impacts helps local governments and residents to determine what type and quantity of development to encourage within their jurisdiction and to efficiently and effectively plan for future public service demands, assess conservation needs of natural and cultural resources, and coordinate with other local governments.

1. Developed
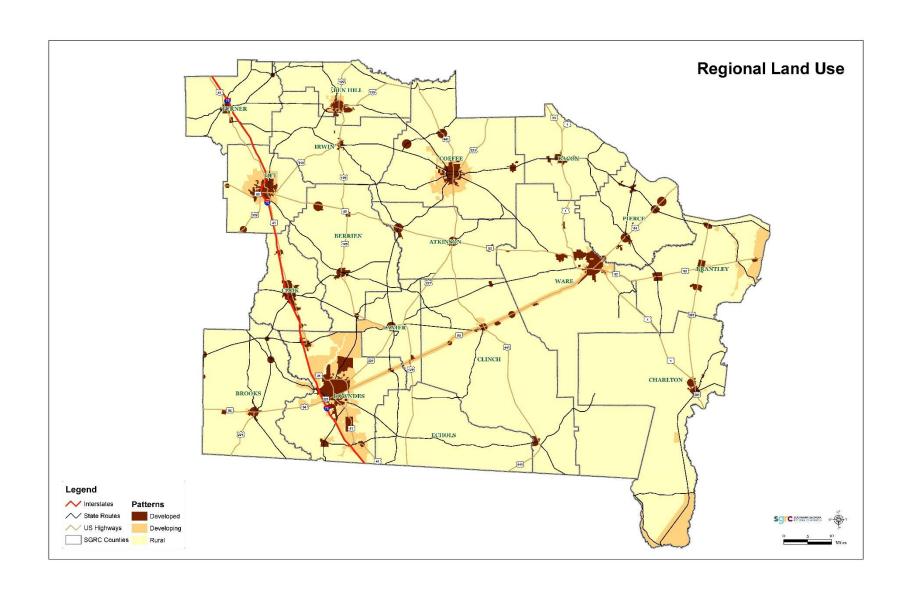
As can be seen on the following map, the developed areas tend to follow major highway corridors, such as Interstate 75 and US Highway 84. I-75 is six lanes wide throughout the Region; US-84 is four lanes through most of the Region. Both I-75 and US-84 carry significant volumes of commercial traffic and pass-through traffic; the latter includes a substantial amount of tourist traffic. Outside of these major transportation corridors, there are three other major nodes in the Region that show evidence of urbanization and higher density (Fitzgerald, Folkston, and Douglas). In addition, some smaller nodes have also been included in this category due to their function as minor regional economic hubs: Blackshear, Pearson, Lakeland, Nashville, Homerville and Alma. The developed areas are largely coterminous with incorporated boundaries, except for areas along the two federal highway corridors of I-75 and US Hwy 84. Development along US Hwy 1 is projected to be less rapid than along the other federal highway corridors in the Region because development in that area tends to be concentrated along the I-95 corridor.

2. Developing

The developing areas, as depicted on the map, are typically areas that are adjacent to the developed areas, have been subject to annexations from the developed areas, and have access to, or are within, the expansion areas of utility services including water, sewer, and broadband. Many of these areas also face development for residential uses due to the nearby location of major destinations. These destinations may include major employers, schools, or areas of rapid growth. Northeastern Lowndes County, for example, is a developing area driven primarily by Moody Air Force Base. Development around the southern edges of the City of Douglas is driven by the construction and expansion of a perimeter road around the City.

3. Rural

The remainder of the Region falls into the "Rural" category due to mainly agricultural/silviculture uses and properties holding agricultural property tax conservation designations, the absence of central utilities including broadband, and relatively low-density residential and farming uses. Very little development in these areas is expected to occur within the next 20 years. In addition, many of the Region's rural areas are designated as conservation areas (see the Conservation and Development Map), in which development is unlikely due to the associated costs and environmental factors.

Regional Land Use

Legend
Interstates
State Routes
US Highways
SGRC Counties

Patterns
Developed
Developing
Rural

26

II. Conservation and Development Map

Using the categories from the Regional Land Use map as a base, the Conservation and Development map displays conservation areas as an overlay. Conservation areas are defined as the green infrastructure network on the Regionally Important Resources Map as well as critical environmentally sensitive areas such as groundwater recharge areas, priority forest, prime farmland, and wetlands.

The SGRC area is part of 4 river basins: the St. Mary's in the south-east (mainly Charlton County), the Satilla River Basin in the eastern half of the Region, the Suwannee River Basin in the western half of the Region, and a small portion of the Ocmulgee River Basin for parts of Ben Hill and Coffee Counties. The Floridan aquifer supplies groundwater throughout the entire Region. The river basins contain vast wetland areas, groundwater recharge areas for the Floridan aquifer, and river corridors. There are also numerous state and local parks.
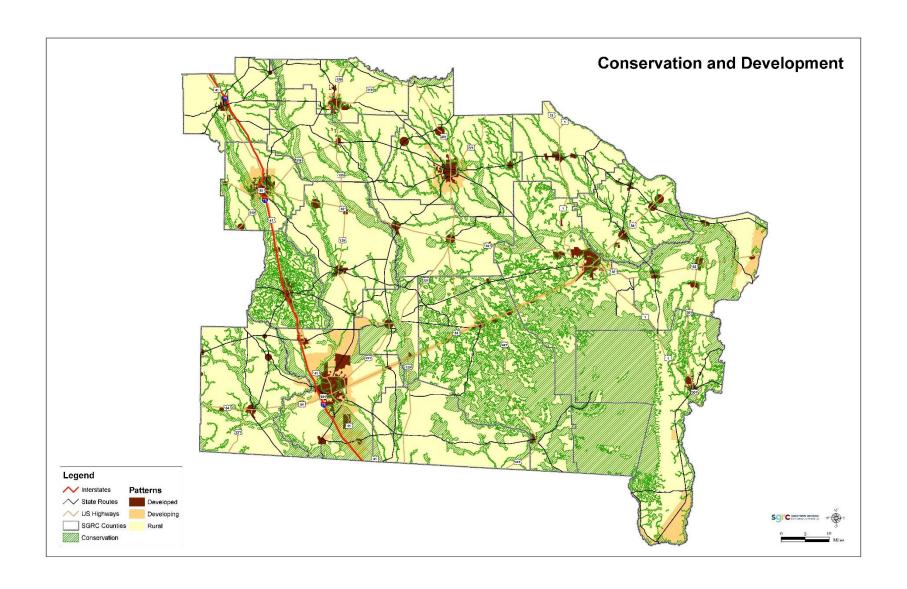
One of the Region's most rapidly developing areas, the Troupville area in eastern Brooks County, is near to two of the Region's most vulnerable natural resources: the Withlacoochee River and the second magnitude springs in Brooks County. In recent years, heavy rains have caused the City of Valdosta's sewage system to overflow, causing frequent spills of raw sewage into the Withlacoochee (spills include 12.9 million gallons in March 2013, 1.5 million gallons in April 2016, 2.2 million gallons in January 2017, 300,000 gallons in June 2018, and three separate spills in February 2023 resulting in approximately 963,000 gallons). The population of the City of Valdosta is projected to continue growing and to continue producing sewage. Also in recent years, State Highway 133 in the Troupville area has been widened from 2 lanes to 4, and the area has seen rapid development and several rezonings from agricultural to commercial. This area is near to the second-magnitude springs in Brooks County (see Chapter 4, Section I). Consequently, water resources such as the Withlacoochee and the second-magnitude springs in the area are considered to be threatened Regionally Important Resources.

Another threatened Regionally Important Resource is the Floridan Aquifer. The aquifer covers the entire Southern Georgia region and many areas far beyond it, including almost all of Florida, approximately half of Georgia, and a portion of southern Alabama. Due to increasing water consumption, the aquifer as a whole is being depleted. As the Southern Georgia Region continues to develop and grow, it is predicted that water consumption will also continue to increase, and therefore aquifer depletion will continue to increase.

An additional threatened Regionally Important Resource is the Satilla River along the Pierce/Ware county line, due to development in southern Pierce County. The Satilla River is protected by River Corridor Protection ordinances, and the Satilla Riverkeeper works to monitor, protect, and restore the river and surrounding watershed. However, due to the large area of potentially rapid development nearby, this section of the river is considered a threatened RIR.

There are other areas where conservation lands and areas of rapid development overlap or are near to each other; however, these environmental resources are protected from development by federal, state, and local regulations and ordinances. For example, Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge in

Lanier County, which is near an area of rapid development, is protected not only by federal law but by local ordinances limiting the intensity of development. All counties in the Southern Georgia Region have adopted Water Resource District ordinances as required by the State of Georgia. These ordinances limit development and include the designation of River Corridor Protection Districts, Groundwater Recharge Area Districts, and Wetlands Districts. These ordinances restrict development in other conservation areas, such as the rapid development areas in southern Lowndes County and around the Douglas perimeter. Consequently, no other Threatened Regionally Important Resources have been identified at this time.

Conservation and Development

Legend

Interstates
State Routes
US Highways
SGRC Counties
Conservation

Patterns
Developed
Developing
Rural

III. Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map

The Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map shows Threatened Regionally Important Resources (for an explanation of these, see p. 29), Areas of Redevelopment, and Areas of Rapid development.

Areas of Redevelopment include all areas designated as Opportunity Zones, Enterprise Zones, and Urban Redevelopment Areas. These are areas where levels of poverty and/or unemployment are higher than the Region as a whole, and where significant conditions of blight and/or disinvestment have been observed. Urban Redevelopment Plans, identifying conditions of blight and disinvestment and providing a timeline for the redevelopment of the area and mitigation of blighted properties, have been adopted for all or part of the following jurisdictions:

- City of Ashburn
- City of Homerville
- City of Quitman
- City of Tifton
- City of Valdosta
- City of Waycross
- City of Adel
- City of Douglas/Coffee County
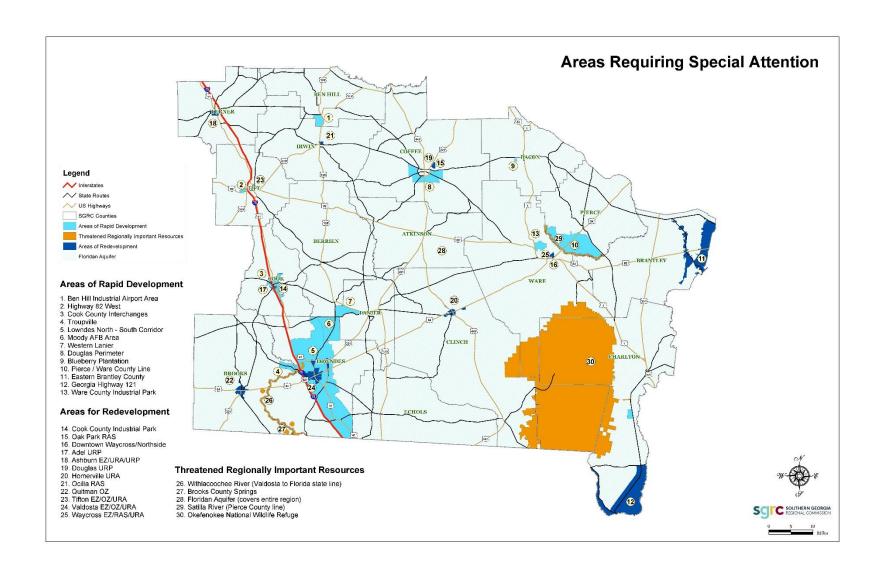
Enterprise Zones have been adopted for the following jurisdictions:

- City of Alma
- City of Ashburn
- Charlton County
- City of Quitman
- City of Tifton
- City of Valdosta
- City of Waycross

Opportunity Zones have been adopted for the following jurisdictions:

- City of Quitman
- City of Tifton
- City of Valdosta

Areas of Rapid Development are areas where population growth, new construction, or other types of development are occurring at a fast pace relative to the rest of the Region. These areas are described in detail in Chapter 4, Section II.

Areas Requiring Special Attention

Legend

- ⌇ Interstates
- ⌇ State Routes
- ⌇ US Highways
- ☐ SGRC Counties
- ▨ Areas of Rapid Development
- ▨ Threatened Regionally Important Resources
- ▨ Areas of Redevelopment
- Floridan Aquifer

Areas of Rapid Development

1. Ben Hill Industrial Airport Area
2. Highway 82 West
3. Cook County Interchanges
4. Troupville
5. Lowndes North - South Corridor
6. Moody AFB Area
7. Western Lanier
8. Douglas Perimeter
9. Blueberry Plantation
10. Pierce / Ware County Line
11. Eastern Brantley County
12. Georgia Highway 121
13. Ware County Industrial Park

Areas for Redevelopment

14. Cook County Industrial Park
15. Oak Park RAS
16. Downtown Waycross/Northside
17. Adel URP
18. Ashburn EZ/URA/URP
19. Douglas URP
20. Homerville URA
21. Ocilla RAS
22. Quitman OZ
23. Tifton EZ/OZ/URA
24. Valdosta EZ/OZ/URA
25. Waycross EZ/RAS/URA

Threatened Regionally Important Resources

26. Withlacoochee River (Valdosta to Florida state line)
27. Brooks County Springs
28. Floridan Aquifer (covers entire region)
29. Satilla River (Pierce County line)
30. Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

sgrc SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

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(4) AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION (ARSA) NARRATIVES

I. Threatened Regionally Important Resources

In October 2011, the Southern Georgia Regional Commission completed and adopted a Regional Resource Plan and Map. The Regional Resources Plan furthers the work being done on the local, regional, and state levels to preserve environmental resources, historical sites, and unique cultural landscapes such as the Okefenokee Swamp, Grand Bay, Banks Lake, and the many State Parks in the Region. The Plan promoted balanced growth and sustainable development practices to enhance the quality of life in communities throughout the Region and used as a base for defining threatened regionally important resources along with additional recent input from the stakeholders.

Desired Development Patterns
Rural, passive recreation, conservation, very low to low density development, public parks, greenbelts,

Specific Types of Land Uses
Greenways
Bicycle/pedestrian trail
Passive recreation
Woodland preserve, game preserve, wildlife sanctuary, or other similar conservation uses

Implementation Measures
- Enhance the focus on protection and management of valuable natural and cultural resources in the Southern Georgia Region.
- Provide for careful consideration of, and planning for, impacts of new development on these essential resources.
- Improve local, regional, and state level coordination in the protection and management of identified resources.
- Evaluate new tools for conserving land and promoting existing methods already in place (e.g., reduced taxes for agricultural property via Conservation).
- Establish specific buffer zone near conservation/preservation areas and existing hunting preserves.
- Conduct education workshops
- Provide for signage
- Plan events for encouraging and improving bikeability and walkability.
- Protect the pristine natural and scenic environment of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, while at the same time enhancing the recreational opportunities that this outstanding resource provides.
- Protect, preserve, and enhance the natural and recreational qualities of the Region's scenic river corridors.
- Protect, preserve, and enhance the historic qualities of the scenic corridor that include: historic resources (structures, districts, and communities); Native American heritage; railroad history; and Civil War history.

The following sections contain details on specific Threatened Regionally Important Resources.

Second Magnitude Springs in Brooks County, Georgia

Photo by John Quarterman, WWALS Coalition

Brooks County has three springs typically thought to be found only in Florida which provide a favorite stop for paddlers along the river. These three springs which are three of the six-second magnitude springs found in Georgia, are located downstream from US Hwy 84: **Wade or Blue Springs**, now closed to visitors and paddlers; **McIntyre Spring**, large and easily accessible in the right bank emerging from Brooks County; and **Arnold Springs**, which are actually three small springs located on the left bank.

McIntyre Spring is the largest spring in Brooks County which is privately owned and closed for access from land. The spring is easily accessed from the river.

Arnold Springs is a cluster of three small springs on the northern bank of the Withlacoochee River and is also privately owned.

Wade or Blue Springs was once the most famous of the springs, but due to attempts to improve the spring by digging it out for development, it was destroyed. A combination of two springs, one inland and one located closer to the river, is a perfect example of why these springs and others need to be included as Regionally Threatened Resources.

Desired Implementation Measures
- Enhance the focus on protection and management of the springs.
- Improve local, regional, and state level coordination in the protection and management of the springs.
- Conduct education workshops
- Provide for signage
- Provide tax or other financial incentives to assist property owners to restore/preserve the springs such as conservation easements etc.

Withlacoochee River from Valdosta to Florida State Line

Photo by Michael Rivera
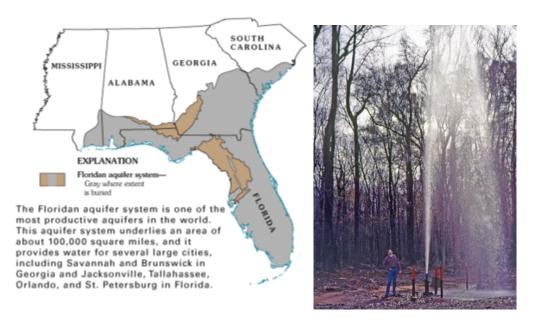
The **Withlacoochee River** originates in Georgia, northwest of Nashville and flows south through Berrien County where it joins the New River to form part of the boundary between Berrien and Cook counties. It then flows south into Lowndes County where the confluence of the Little River and Withlacoochee River continues south to form part of the boundary between Lowndes and Brooks County. The river then flows into Florida for 1.34 miles before returning into Georgia for an additional 2.44 miles. Finally, the river returns south crossing the Florida state line forming the northeast boundary of Madison County, Florida and the western boundary of Hamilton County, Florida and eventually merges with the Suwannee River at Suwannee River State Park west of Live Oak.

The concerns about this section of the river stem from the location of the wastewater treatment plant for Valdosta where previous spills into the river impacted water quality both in Georgia and Florida. Other factors affecting the quality of this river are the paper mill in Clyattville, agricultural run-off, and location of septic tanks within the river corridor.

Desired Implementation Measures
- Provide for careful consideration of, and planning for, impacts of new development on the river.
- Improve local, regional, and state level coordination in the protection and management of the River.
- Establish specific buffer zones along the river corridor.
- Conduct education workshops.
- Provide for signage.
- Plan events for hiking and canoeing/kayaking use.
- Protect, preserve, and enhance the natural and recreational qualities of the Region's scenic river corridors.

Floridan Aquifer

EXPLANATION

Floridan aquifer system—
Gray where extent
is buried

The Floridan aquifer system is one of the most productive aquifers in the world. This aquifer system underlies an area of about 100,000 square miles, and it provides water for several large cities, including Savannah and Brunswick in Georgia and Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Orlando, and St. Petersburg in Florida.

The **Floridan Aquifer** is one of the highest producing aquifers in the world. It is found throughout Florida and extends into the southern portions of Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. In south Georgia, this aquifer system is comprised of a sequence of limestone and dolomite about 250 feet thick. The Floridan aquifer system is divided into an upper and lower aquifer separated by a unit of lower permeability. The upper Floridan aquifer is the principal source of water supply in most of Southern Georgia and north and central Florida. The Floridan aquifer is the source of many springs.

The reason for inclusion as a threatened regional resource is that stakeholders have voiced repeated concerns over the increasing withdrawal amounts of groundwater as a result of growth in both industry and population, not only from areas in south Georgia but also from areas located in the middle of the State. The long-term ability of the Upper Floridan Aquifer to meet the demands of residents, farms, forests, and industry is in doubt. The threats not only exist to water quantity but also water quality; and extensive monitoring, management and permitting systems need to be in place to ensure adequate water levels of the Floridan aquifer for at least 20 years.

Desired Implementation Measures
- Enhance the focus on protection and management of the Floridan Aquifer through active participation in the Georgia Water Council for the Southern Georgia Region.
- Provide for careful consideration of, and planning for, impacts of new development on Floridan Aquifer.
- Improve local, regional, and state level coordination in the protection and management of the Aquifer.
- Evaluate new tools for conserving water and promoting existing methods already in place
- Conduct education workshops.

Satilla River on Pierce County Line

Photo by Satilla Riverkeeper

The Satilla River begins in Ben Hill County, near Fitzgerald, and flows in a mostly easterly direction to the Atlantic Ocean. Along its approximately 235-mile course are the cities of Waycross, Waynesville, and Woodbine. The Satilla drains almost 4,000 square miles of land, all of it in the coastal plain of southeastern Georgia. It has white sandbars and is the largest blackwater river situated entirely within

Georgia. The section of the Satilla along the southern boundary of Pierce County has been identified as a Threatened Regionally Important Resource.

The concerns about this section of the river stem from the rapid population growth and development seen in southern Pierce County in recent years, as the Waycross area continues to grow. Trash and illegal dumping have been observed along the river in Ware, Pierce, and Brantley County.

Desired Implementation Measures
- Provide for careful consideration of, and planning for, impacts of new development on the river.
- Improve local, regional, and state level coordination in the protection and management of the River.
- Conduct education workshops.
- Provide for signage.
- Plan events for hiking and canoeing/kayaking uses.
- Protect, preserve, and enhance the natural and recreational qualities of the Region's scenic river corridors.

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR)

Photo by Explore Georgia

The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR) is a Wetland of International Importance and is home to North America's largest "blackwater" swamp. The headwaters for the Suwanee and St. Marys Rivers are located within the ONWR. The ONWR is identified as a Threatened Regionally Important Resource. Trail Ridge is a relic beach ridge running essentially parallel to the present-day Atlantic coastline of Georgia, located in Charlton County and in counties to the north and south of Charlton. The Trail Ridge serves as the eastern hydrologic barrier for the Okefenokee Swamp. The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR) has 353,981 acres of National Wilderness Area within refuge boundaries. In addition, the refuge is a Wetland of International Importance as it is one of the world's largest intact freshwater ecosystems. Visitor activities include wilderness canoeing, wildlife viewing, hunting, boat tours, fishing, and environmental education. The

Stephen C. Foster State Park is located within the ONWR and is designated as an International Dark Sky Park. The Okefenokee Swamp has been on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List since 2008. A regional partnership led by the Okefenokee Swamp Park (located along the northern portion of the ONWR) is investigating and has plans to move the nomination process forward for the Okefenokee Swamp to be placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. There are 19 sites presently on the Tentative List located within the United States of America.

The concerns about the ONWR stem from the ongoing interest in mining for heavy mineral deposits in the Trail Ridge adjacent to the refuge. The facilities that have been proposed on the Trail Ridge include those that would process sands to produce titanium, zircon, and staurolite products.

Desired Implementation Measures
- Provide for careful consideration of, and planning for, impacts of new development adjacent to the ONWR. The addition of protection zones similar to those developed for areas adjacent to Moody Air Force Base should be considered to limit land uses of potential concern to the integrity of the refuge.
- Improve local, regional, and state level coordination in the protection and management of the ONWR.
- Conduct education workshops.
- Provide for signage.

II. Areas of Rapid Development

Areas of rapid development, or rapid growth, typically include areas where one or several factors including nearby commercial or government centers, low housing prices, low taxes, and presence of active lifestyle opportunities or easy access combine to result in higher-than-average growth in select areas. The following areas have been included as stakeholders have voiced continued concerns about the ability to create equity between growth and efficient land use and achievability of sustainable land use in the planning period. The following are areas which have been determined that the likely growth may outpace the availability of services and infrastructure including water, sewer, roads and broadband.

General Desired Development Patterns

- Developments that have easy access to nearby transit, shopping, schools, and other areas where residents travel daily where location of higher density attached housing would be near commercial centers or along arterial roads, and single-family detached housing elsewhere in the neighborhood.
- Homes, shops, small business, and institutions grouped together in villages or attractive mixed-use centers that serve adjacent neighborhoods. Centers are very pedestrian friendly, and include pleasant community gathering spaces. Residences bring round-the-clock activity to the area.
- Redevelopment of older strip commercial centers in lieu of new construction further outside of urbanized areas and revitalization of existing neighborhood commercial centers to capture more market activity and serve as community focal points.

- Infill development on vacant sites closer in to the center of the community. These sites, with existing infrastructure in place, are used for new development, matching character of surrounding neighborhood in lieu of more development on greenfield sites.
- New development that reflects traditional neighborhood design (TND) principles, such as smaller lots, orientation to street, mix of housing types, pedestrian access to neighborhood commercial center.
- Residential development that offers a mix of housing types (single family homes, town homes, live/work units, lofts, over-the-shop, and apartments), density, and prices in the same neighborhood.
- New developments that contain a mix of residential and commercial uses and community facilities at small enough scale and close enough proximity to encourage walking between destinations.

Desired Types of Land Uses
- Institutional
- Commercial
- Industrial (light)
- Service and Office
- High-density residential
- Suburban residential
- Conservation
- Entertainment venues

The following sections contain details on specific areas of rapid development. Each section includes specific implementation measures along with pictures to illustrate the styles, types, forms, and/or patterns of development are to be encouraged in each ARSA.

Ben Hill Industrial Airport Area

The new industrial park, the local airport with its 5,000 feet of paved and lighted runway capable of handling corporate aircraft, and recent commercial development along Business Route 107 have created a development-friendly environment, where future growth is encouraged. The County is actively promoting the airport and industrial park. This area will likely continue to develop over the planning period, and concerns center around the provision of adequate broadband, transportation, water and sewer facilities to maintain sustainable and economic growth. *(Map Key 1)*

Implementation Measures

- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.

- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Upgrade the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvements, new architectural elements, or awnings.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Continued cooperation between the Airport, the City of Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County.
- Provide landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes.
- Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.
- Encourage and develop broadband connectivity.

Example of preferred development type

Highway 82 West

This area in Tift County near the western end of the City of Tifton has seen significant development, specifically, the area along Highway 82 west of I-75 to Carpenter Road. Concerns are that any development strategies, reviews, and approvals will need to include the provision of infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, and broadband) concurrent with development and buffers between incompatible uses, sidewalks, landscaping, and protection of groundwater recharge areas. Infill development and gateway design are vital in increasing the attractiveness of the corridor to visitors and residents. *(Map Key 2)*

Implementation Measures
- Strong connectivity and continuity between each planned development.
- Good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail, commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street, to ensure that the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.

- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Upgrade the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvements, new architectural elements, or awnings.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Driveway consolidation from inter-parcel connections between parking lots.
- Provide landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes.
- Draft and implement restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.
- Explore shared parking arrangements that reduce overall parking needs.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.

Example of preferred development type

Cook County Interchanges

Photo by Michael Rivera

The proximity of three Interstate interchanges, a large industrial park, a modern airport, a new Wal-Mart, and a languishing outlet mall have created opportunities for any number of developments or redevelopments in the area. The nearby racetrack has been growing and is becoming a far-reaching tourist and recreation venue. Concerns are that attention should be given in the area to ensure such future development or redevelopment does not overburden or otherwise negatively impact the community. *(Map Key 3)*

Implementation Measures
- Strong connectivity and continuity between each development with the provision of infrastructure including broadband concurrent with developments.
- Good vehicular and connections to retail, commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street, to ensure that

the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Upgrade the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvements, new architectural elements, or awnings.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Continued cooperation between the Regional Airport, City of Adel, and Cook County and the Racetrack on a variety of levels to address needs and opportunities that face the surrounding area.
- Landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes.
- Draft and implement restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.
- Shared parking arrangements that reduce overall parking are needed.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.

Example of preferred development type

Troupville

Photo by Michael Rivera

This area in eastern Brooks County, adjacent to Lowndes County, has a direct connection to one of the major commercial corridors of the City of Valdosta. Subsequently, new business activity and residential growth have continued in this portion of Brooks County in spite of the County's overall population decline. This is an area where typical types of suburban residential subdivision developments have occurred in addition to several commercial developments. Concerns are sustainable development, timely provision of infrastructure, increased traffic especially during rush hour, and lot sizes. Home addressing in this area of Brooks County is also a major concern due to the prevalence of Valdosta addresses for this area which results in safety concerns and confusion for emergency services. (*Map Key 4*)

Implementation Measures
- Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.

- Provide strong connectivity and continuity between each master-planned development.
- Good vehicular connections to retail commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street, to ensure that the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Provide landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes to increase traffic safety.
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.

Example of preferred development type

Lowndes North-South Corridor

Photo by Michael Rivera

Growth within Lowndes County and around the City of Valdosta has tended to go either north towards Moody AFB, or south towards the community of Lake Park and the Florida state line. Notably, the corridors of US 41 North, Bemiss Road, North Valdosta Road, and Inner Perimeter Road continue to experience substantial new growth and development. These corridors need to be encouraged to grow appropriately given the local services available and the surrounding land uses. Concerns are to ensure the viability of Moody Air Force Base, manage traffic, improve aesthetics of the corridors, and provide sufficient infrastructure within urban areas, rather than encouraging sprawling growth. *(Map Key 5)*

Implementation Measures
- Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.
- Strong connectivity and continuity between each development.
- Good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/ subdivisions, and multiple site access points.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback

requirements from the street, to ensure that the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Upgrade the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvements, new architectural elements, or awnings.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Continued cooperation between the Valdosta Regional Airport, City of Valdosta, and Lowndes County on a variety of levels to address needs and opportunities that face the Base and surrounding area.
- Continuous review and update of current building codes height restriction ordinances, and zoning ordinances to ensure all AICUZ guidelines are met and the operations of MAFB are protected.
- Undertake economic development initiatives that support the continued vitality of MAFB; such as seeking complimentary, supporting industries in locations in close proximity to the Base.
- Driveway consolidation from inter-parcel connections between parking lots.
- Provide landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes.
- Draft and implement restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.
- Explore shared parking arrangements that reduce overall parking needs.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.

Examples of preferred development type

Military Installation – Moody Air Force Base (MAFB) Area

Located in northeastern Lowndes County near the borders with Lanier and Berrien counties, Moody Air Force Base (MAFB) is home to the Air Force's 23rd Wing, and trains and employs over 5,500 military and civilian personnel. The presence of MAFB within the area has led to ongoing growth and development and has resulted in nearly $450 million in local economic impact. As a result, it is anticipated the area surrounding the base will continue to grow and develop, presenting planning and growth management challenges to each of the local communities. A Joint Land Use Study has been completed which identifies local needs and impacts, recommends new policies, projects, and management techniques, and provides model ordinances and agreements to address these needs. A Sentinel Landscapes program has been established in Georgia, of which MAFB is a participant, the boundaries of this program can be seen in Figure 1 on page 44. The Sentinel Landscapes program seeks to preserve native habitat for gopher tortoises and to enhance ecosystems by supporting longleaf pine forests through activities such as prescribed burns and landowner education efforts. *(Map Key 6)*

Implementation Measures
- Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.
- Strong connectivity and continuity between each master planned development.
- Good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail, commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.
- Wherever possible, connect to the regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes.
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street, to ensure that the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Upgrade the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvements, new architectural elements, or awnings.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Continued cooperation between the Valdosta Regional Airport, City of Valdosta, and Lowndes County on a variety of levels to address needs and opportunities that face the Base and surrounding area.
- Continuous review and update of current building codes and height restriction ordinances, and zoning ordinances to ensure all AICUZ guidelines are met, and the operations of MAFB are protected.
- Undertake economic development initiatives that support the continued vitality of MAFB; such as seeking complimentary, supporting industries in locations close to the Base.
- Continue to monitor properties that may be considered incompatible under the AICUZ guidelines and coordinate with Moody AFB on the proper mitigation strategy/technique.

- Driveway consolidation from inter-parcel connections between parking lots.
- Provide landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes.
- Draft and implement restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Provide landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.

- Explore shared parking arrangements that reduce overall parking needs.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.
- Install traffic calming devices, such as raised pedestrian crossings, on-street parking, or landscaped medians.
- Work towards improvement of sidewalk and street appearance and amenities of commercial centers.

Examples of preferred development type

Table 1: Georgia Sentinel Landscape Footprint Details
(from year established through fiscal year 2021)

- o Total Protected Acres 199,939
- o Total Enrolled Acres 551,371
- o Active Base Area 615,290
- o Total Sentinel Landscape Area 6,318,263

Western Lanier

Photo by Michael Rivera

Lanier County experienced a population increase between the 2000 and 2010 Census, however that growth has since cooled some between the 2010 and 2020 Census. The vast majority of this growth during the early part of the century occurred in Western Lanier County and along the north shore of the Banks Lake NWR. It is expected that this area will continue to flourish with residential development in the next five years, as property values, good schools, and close to Moody AFB draw more and more people. Concerns are sustainable development with timely provision of broadband, infrastructure (roads, water, and sewer), and sprawling development outside of urban boundaries and connectivity. *(Map Key 7)*

Example of preferred development type

Implementation Measures

- Strong connectivity and continuity between developments and Moody AFB.
- Good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail, commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.

- Provide a variety of housing choices with incentives to move into already developed areas.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Continuous review and update of current building codes and height restriction ordinances, and zoning ordinances to ensure all AICUZ guidelines are met, and the operations of MAFB are protected.
- Undertake economic development initiatives that support the continued vitality of MAFB; such as seeking complimentary, supporting industries in locations near the Base.
- Identify and prioritize properties that are considered incompatible under Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) guidelines; establish a method to monitor and purchase "for sale" properties designated incompatible uses; identify funding mechanisms; and program funds for acquisition of designated property.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.

Douglas Perimeter

Photos submitted by City of Douglas staff

Through planning efforts, the City of Douglas is surrounded by a Perimeter Road locally known as **Bowens Mill Road**. The area within the city, along with the southwestern portion of Bowens Mill Road, has seen rapid development over the past several years. Currently, the southeast part of the road, from SR 31/US 441 to SR 32, is being five-laned with a railroad overpass. The city has prepared and planned for the anticipated increased development/growth in this area by enlarging existing water and sewer lines and installing new water, and sewer services that were nonexistent before the widening project. Due to this construction, developers have purchased land and are planning a significant retail development at the intersection of 441/SR31 & SR 135. Future commercial development is anticipated in this area, so continued attention to this area is necessary so that the city is prepared. *(Map Key 8)*

Implementation Measures
- Reliable connectivity and continuity between each development.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street, to ensure that the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Driveway consolidation from inter-parcel connections between parking lots.
- Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.
- Shared parking arrangements that reduce overall parking needs.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.
- Improvements of sidewalk and street appearance and amenities of commercial centers are needed.
- Improvements of sidewalk and street appearance and amenities of commercial centers are needed.
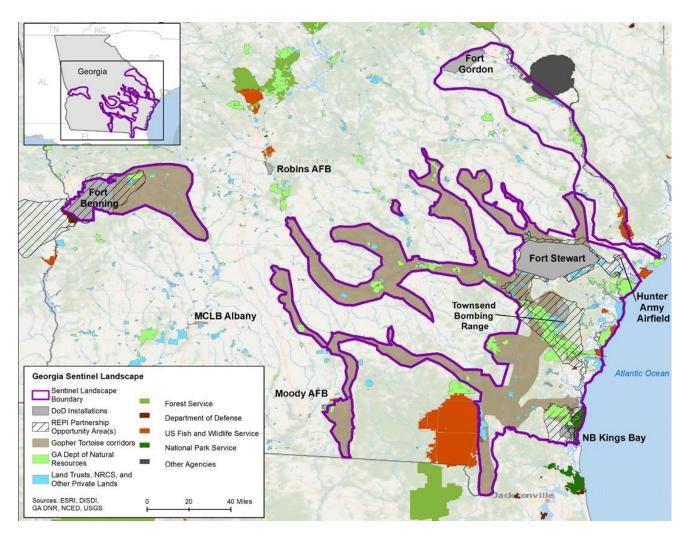

Example of preferred development type

Blueberry Plantation

This area west of Alma is a multifaceted character area, which includes an adjoining airport, 18-hole golf course, a fast-growing residential area, and the home of the new Blueberry Plantation. While not widely known yet, this inn has had many visitors and very positive reviews with the potential to become a first-class visitor designation. Therefore, this development will likely continue to grow, and concerns are the timely provision of broadband, transportation, water and sewer infrastructure for development. Concerns are also lacking land development regulations to ensure consistent and balanced growth. *(Map Key 9)*

Implementation Measures

- Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.
- Strong connectivity and continuity between each master-planned development.
- Good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail, commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.
- Wherever possible, connect to the regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes.
- New signage for corridor appearance with appropriate landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Provide for a comprehensive tourism marketing program.
- Recent upgrade of broadband coverage for the area.

Example of preferred development type

Pierce/Ware County Line

Currently, the area close to the Pierce/Ware County line is developing rapidly. Much of this area was at one time agriculture/forestry land, but with the rapid development that has occurred, the land use will continue to change over the next 20 years. Continued growth is expected throughout the planning period, and concerns are the timely and adequate provision of infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, and broadband) concurrent with development, the attractiveness of corridor development, prevention of sprawl, and protection of encroachment by incompatible uses. *(Map Key 10)*

Implementation Measures
- Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.
- Strong connectivity and continuity between each planned development.
- Good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail, commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/ subdivisions, and multiple site access points.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street, to ensure that the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.

- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Upgrade the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvements, new architectural elements, or awnings.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Driveway consolidation from inter-parcel connections between parking lots.
- Landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes.
- Draft and implement restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Provide landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.
- Explore shared parking arrangements that reduce overall parking needs.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.
- Install traffic calming devices, such as raised pedestrian crossings, on-street parking, or landscaped medians.
- Work towards improving sidewalk and street appearance and amenities of commercial centers.

Example of preferred development type

Eastern Brantley County

Eastern Brantley County has seen rapid development and construction of numerous subdivisions in recent years, driven by proximity to Interstate 95 and coastal areas. Before, Brantley County did not have any land use or zoning ordinances. This led to haphazard development that was not coordinated with the provision of necessary infrastructure and services (such as roads, water, sewer, and schools), which further led to conditions of rural blight and substandard housing in some areas. Unless measures are taken to control development, more residences will be built wherever developers buy land rather than being planned rationally. The County hopes to address this problem with development codes, ordinances, and planning strategies. *(Map Key 11)*

Implementation Measures
- Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.
- Strong connectivity and continuity between each master planned development.
- Good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail, commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.
- Wherever possible, connect to the regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes.
- Promote street design that fosters traffic calming such as narrower residential streets, on-street parking and the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street, to ensure that the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Upgrade the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvements, new architectural elements, or awnings.
- Promote infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Driveway consolidation from inter-parcel connections between parking lots.
- Construct landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes.
- Draft and enact restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.

- Explore shared parking arrangements that reduce overall parking needs.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.

- Install traffic calming devices, such as raised pedestrian crossings, on-street parking, or landscaped medians.
- Work towards improvement of sidewalk and street appearance and amenities of commercial centers.

Examples of preferred development type

Georgia Highway 121
Southern Charlton County/Florida State Line

Photo by Michael Rivera

In recent years, southern Charlton County has experienced increasing growth and growth pressure northward. Growth occurred in the metropolitan Jacksonville area with its large international airport, international headquarters, urban industry, commerce and military presence as clearly demonstrated in the data analysis in Appendix C. Southern Charlton County is within 20 -30 minutes commuting distance of the Jacksonville metro area and features open space, lower taxes, availability of land, and lower housing prices. Concerns include the preservation of environmentally sensitive land along the St. Marys River, the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, and the myriad of wetlands and groundwater recharge areas. Incompatible uses are encroaching due to the lack of code enforcement and regulation on the Georgia side; and development is occurring without the concurrent provision of sustainable and efficient infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, and broadband). *(Map Key 12)*

Implementation Measures
- Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.
- Strong connectivity and continuity between each master planned development.
- Wherever possible, connect to the regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street, to ensure that the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Continued cooperation between the Florida and Georgia State and Federal agencies with jurisdiction over the environmental areas to address the needs and opportunities that face this unique area in Charlton County.
- Enact land development regulations that will provide for sound and sustainable economic development.
- Construct landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes.
- Draft and implement restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.

Example of preferred development type

Ware County Industrial Park

Photo by Waycross-Ware County Development Authority

In recent years, Ware County has experienced increasing growth and growth pressure north of Waycross. Ware County is well connected to the entirety of southern Georgia through intersecting roadways and rail. With the widening of US Hwy 84, the capacity to handle truck traffic has been increased which makes the area more attractive to industrial growth. Concerns include the compatibility with agricultural and low-density residential development and conservation of farmland. *(Map Key 13)*

Implementation Measures
- Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.
- Strong connectivity and continuity between each master planned development.
- Wherever possible, connect to the regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street, to ensure that the corridors become more attractive as properties develop or redevelop.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; use directory signage to clustered developments.
- Provide paved shoulders that can be used by bicycles or as emergency breakdown lanes.
- Enact land development regulations that will provide for sound and sustainable economic development.
- Construct landscaped raised medians separating traffic lanes.
- Draft and implement restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses.
- Relocate utilities off the street frontage or underground.
- Driveway consolidation from inter-parcel connections between parking lots.
- Provide buffering and screening of industrial uses from streetscape and adjacent non-industrial land uses.

III. Areas for Redevelopment

Included in this section, as the stakeholders have assessed, are areas targeted for redevelopment/ rehabilitation as requiring continued substantial investment in redevelopment and rehabilitation to increase attractiveness/aesthetics, to provide adequate infrastructure and housing, to encourage infill development, and to decrease poverty levels and unemployment in areas of significant disinvestment.

General Desired Development Patterns

- Infill development on vacant sites closer to the center of the community.
- Infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites.
- Brownfield redevelopment that converts formerly industrial/commercial sites to mixed -use developments.
- Draft and implement restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- Revitalization of existing neighborhood commercial centers to capture more market activity and serve as community focal points.
- Explore shared parking arrangements that reduce overall parking needs.
- Homes, shops, small businesses, and institutions grouped in villages or attractive mixed -use centers that serve adjacent neighborhoods. Centers are very pedestrian-friendly and include inviting community gathering spaces. Residences bring round-the-clock activity to the area.
- Residential Development that offers a mix of housing types and combination of uses such as grocery stores, drug stores, and corner stores.
- A new development that maximizes the use of existing public facilities and infrastructure.
- Infill development that blends into the character of the neighborhood.
- Improvement of sidewalks to encourage walkability and improve the appearance of the street.
- New significant employers within the neighborhood that make jobs available/accessible to all residents by transit, walking or bicycling.

Desired Types of Land Uses

- Large and Mid-Sized Commercial (office and retail)
- Residential
- Hotels
- Mixed-use
- Town Centers
- Institutional
- Parks and Open Space

General Implementation Measures

- Establish traffic-calming mechanisms where appropriate.
- Establish linkages between existing offices/commercial uses and residential neighborhoods where none exist.
- Reliable connectivity and continuity between each master planned development.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street
- Encourage low-density, low-impact, a compatible development that uses context-sensitive design practices
- Utilize infill development programs to determine a comprehensive strategy for encouraging infill growth in particular areas of the community, while also regulating development to ensure the protection of the quality of life in affected neighborhoods.
- Provide incentives and public improvements to encourage infill development.
- Allow a mix of housing sizes, types, and income levels within neighborhoods.
- Apply for applicable grants such as CDBG, GICH, and EDA for the sustainable and sound provision of infrastructure, housing, and employment in areas of disinvestment.

The following sections contain details on specific areas for redevelopment.

Cook County Industrial Park

In this area, along the I-75 corridor, the old Del-Cook sawmill provided economic opportunities to over 250 people for 40+ years. The old Del-Cook sawmill site, consisting of 155 acres, is now a potential Brownfield site that has undergone environmental remediation. The property is located in the Adel Industrial Park and is a prime heavy industrial use area. *(Map Key 14)*

General Implementation Measures
- Establish traffic-calming mechanisms where appropriate.
- Establish linkages between existing offices/commercial uses and residential neighborhoods where none exist.

- Ensure reliable connectivity and continuity between each master planned development.
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street.
- Encourage low-density, low-impact, and compatible development that uses context-sensitive design practices.
- Utilize infill development programs to determine a comprehensive strategy for encouraging infill development in particular areas of the community, while also regulating growth to ensure the protection of the quality of life in affected neighborhoods.
- Provide incentives and public improvements to encourage infill development.
- Allow a mix of housing sizes, types, and income levels within neighborhoods.
- Apply for applicable grants such as CDBG, GICH, and EDA for the sustainable and sound provision of infrastructure, housing, and employment in areas of disinvestment.

Oak Park RAS & Ocilla RAS

Oak Park

The Oak Park area of unincorporated Coffee County houses a large stock of mobile homes. This area is noted for its high concentration of poverty and substandard housing. The County completed phase two of the development of a public water system for Oak Park, as part of a series of recommendations established in the 2004 Oak Park Redevelopment Plan. Despite these significant improvements, the area continues to lack storm water management, sewer service, and a paved road system. Health and environmental concerns are rampant in the area due to flooding and unsafe housing.

Ocilla

The Ocilla RAS area is located within the Urban Redevelopment Area, the Ocilla Enterprise Zone, and is within the area of a new Land Bank. Parts of the area are also located within the Ocilla Downtown Development Authority (DDA) area and the proposed Downtown Local Historic District. The City completed a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) project in 2020 which improved sanitary sewer, water, street, and flood & drainage improvements within the target area of Fifth St, Sixth St, Seventh St, Oak St, Pine St, Lincoln St, McKinley St, and

Roosevelt St. An additional CDBG project was completed in late 2020 to improve sanitary sewer, water, street, and flood & drainage improvements within the target area of a portion of N. Elm St, N. Maple St, E. Fifth St, E. Sixth St, E. Seventh St, E. Valdosta Ave, and N. Carver St. The City received Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) funds to rehabilitate six houses in the extreme northwest section of the RAS area in FY2020. Additionally, the City has participated in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH). *(Map Keys 15 & 21)*

Implementation Measures
- Provide incentives and public improvements to encourage infill development.
- Provide incentives to construct smaller, but higher quality affordable housing.
- Allow a mix of housing sizes, types, and income levels within neighborhoods.
- Apply for applicable grants such as CDBG, GICH, and EDA for the sustainable and sound provision of infrastructure, housing, and employment in areas of disinvestment.
- Invest in public/private partnerships to increase investment in the area.

Downtown Waycross/Northside

Within the downtown area of the City of Waycross, many historic buildings are slowly deteriorating, and are in desperate need of redevelopment and rehabilitation. The City is focusing on continuing the renovation and restoration of these historic buildings and is looking into creating new uses and mixed uses that will include residential, commercial, and office uses in the area to encourage a vibrant, livable, and walkable downtown. Concerns about the economic viability of any existing downtown businesses and the attraction of new companies as well as the continuing lack of sufficient funds to achieve significant restorations and rehabilitation and infill development have been the leading factors to list this area as an area requiring particular attention. *(Map Keys 16)*

Implementation Measures
- Enact guidelines for new development, including minimal building setback requirements from the street
- Utilize infill development programs to determine a comprehensive strategy for encouraging infill development in particular areas of the community, while also regulating growth to ensure the protection of the quality of life in affected neighborhoods.
- Provide incentives and public improvements to encourage infill development.
- Allow a mix of housing sizes, types, and income levels within neighborhoods.
- Apply for applicable grants such as CDBG, GICH, and EDA for the sustainable and sound provision of infrastructure, housing, and employment in areas of disinvestment.
- Provide for events to attract people downtown.
- Improve connectivity and visibility towards surrounding areas.

(5) REGIONAL NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Essential needs and opportunities facing the Region and ways to address them are identified through extensive statistical data collection as well as stakeholder public participation in several publicized listening sessions across the Region.

To ensure the most diverse buy-in and reach for input into the Regional Plan update, all participants are included in the stakeholder group. Outreach to the public, local governments, chambers of commerce, economic development authorities, the health and education sectors and other stakeholders and interested parties was accomplished utilizing e-mail correspondence, direct communication, phone calls, social media postings, the project webpage, and notifications provided at open house sessions and other group meetings including the Regional Commission Council meetings.

The Regional Commission held a series of three open house sessions around the Region. The open houses were held at public libraries in Valdosta, Waycross, and Tifton. A survey distributed via Constant Contact was used to gain public input into the plan development. As of March 20, 2023, 212 responses had been submitted for the survey. The surveys responses and feedback received during open houses and stakeholder meetings formed the basis for the amending of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis from the previous plan update. Copies of the sign-in sheets are provided in the appendix along with public hearing notices.

The following pages list all identified needs and opportunities and those which were identified as priorities and need to be addressed, are marked with an asterisk.

The following identified needs and opportunities are divided into the Regional Plan elements/segments:

1. Economic Development
2. Natural & Cultural Resources
3. Community Facilities & Services
4. Housing
5. Land Use & Transportation
6. Intergovernmental Coordination
7. Education
8. Senior Services/Aging

1. Economic Development (ED)

Photo by Valdosta Lowndes Industrial Authority

A healthy and growing and diverse economy for the Region is the number one concern voiced by all stakeholders and participants in the Region. Workforce, education, transportation, land use, funding for projects and infrastructure, all are interrelated closely with and influenced by economic development. The Region's east and west section must pursue separate paths for growth due to their distinct characteristics, but the following needs and opportunities as supported by the poverty indicators and income indicators in Appendix C support the great importance of economic development to the Region overall. Information technology and healthcare technology are still two of the smallest sectors in the Region as shown in Appendix C, and the growth of these industries addressed is voiced as a priority for the growth of the Region.

Priority Needs

ED-1: Broadband accessibility throughout the Region is not consistent.

ED-4: The younger population is leaving the Region to find higher paying job opportunities in metropolitan areas which results in "brain drain" for local communities. Appendix C, the age distribution table, clearly shows the out-migration of the younger generation.

Needs

ED-2: The Region needs to continue to grow and attract a qualified workforce with sufficient education and work ethic to meet the needs of existing and future industry and business.

ED-3: The strengths of the Region as a whole are not sufficiently marketed, and the Region is perceived as rural without a skilled workforce and little technological capabilities.

ED-5: Vacant commercial/industrial facilities throughout the Region are not marketed adequately and utilized to attract new industry and generate tax revenue for the communities in the Region.

ED-6: Some of the communities in the Region lack a politically-coordinated vision and action.

ED-7: The Region lacks a large scale Regional Revolving Loan Fund.

ED-8: A large scale entertainment district has not been created in the Region. This has the potential to attract visitors from outside of the region and to provide a destination for residents in the Region. This concept could be combined with a new or expanded conference center to provide a mixture of uses including entertainment, conference use, hotel, restaurant & retail, and parks & recreation.

Priority Opportunities

ED-B: The Region should market its proximity to the coast, its accessibility through the I-75 corridor and other major highways, and its mild climate as contributing to an exceptional quality of life and accessibility opportunities for new residents and businesses.

Opportunities

ED-A: More regional education and training programs would encourage high-tech and agricultural research and would support businesses and industries to locate in the Region.

ED-C: The Region should market its forestry and clean water resources as a business resource and for Agri-tourism.

ED-D: The Region should market its proximity to ports and airports.

ED-E: The Region should take advantage of its business leaders' knowledge and experience to assist start-up businesses and local entrepreneurs.

ED-F: The Region has available land and buildings within the urban areas which could be used to retain existing industries and businesses or attract new ones.

2. Natural and Cultural Resources (N/C)

Photo by Explore Georgia

Availability of a clean and sound environment and a rich tradition of historic preservation is a prerequisite for a healthy economy, attracting sound businesses as well as residents and a workforce that appreciates the quality of life from a healthy environment. Natural and cultural resources needs and opportunities, while diverse from each other, have a vast influence on quality of life, pleasant perceived surroundings, and play a role in attracting and retaining businesses and residents through active and passive recreation opportunities.

Priority Needs

N/C-1: The Region's lakes and rivers have a lack of safe, clean public access points such as boat ramps, landings, and public beaches.

N/C-2: The Region has a severe lack of funding for preserving historical and cultural resources, which further restricts the marketing of these resources as another part of the Region's high quality of life.

Needs

N/C-3: The Region is experiencing increasing development pressures on groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, and river corridors, especially as water resources are depleted in the metro Atlanta region to the north.

N/C-4: The Region needs to explore, encourage and promote the use of alternative energy technologies such as wind and solar to reduce energy prices and dependency on traditional energy resources such as oil, gas, and coal.

N/C-5: The Region does not have a regional historical or cultural resources guide.

N/C-6: Many downtown areas in the Region have valuable historic landmarks but lack the funds and expertise to preserve and restore the historic landmarks.

Priority Opportunities

N/C-A: A regional eco-tourism marketing program for natural resources (such as the Okefenokee Swamp, Grand Bay, various water bodies, and state parks) could help to increase the utilization and funding of these resources.

N/C-B: Any possibility that provides the Region with expanded public outdoor recreation—such as greenway trails, canoe trails, and other amenities—should be explored.

Opportunities

N/C-C: The development of a regional purchase of development rights program should be explored, to encourage preservation and conservation on a connected and consistent scale.

N/C-D: A narrated Tourism Video could help to market the Region's tourism resources.

N/C-E: Public education on the many positives of placing historic places, buildings, and homes on the National Register could help to build support for historic preservation.

N/C-F: Agri-tourism could support education programs in the farming industry.

N/C-G: More community-wide clean-up events and programs for streams and rivers could help to improve the quality of those areas.

N/C-H: Regional community strengths should be marketed, such as the Peachtree State Summer Theater, Valdosta Symphony Orchestra, and the Turner Arts Center.

N/C-I: Actively pursue State and federal designations for wild and scenic rivers.

3. Community Facilities & Services (CFS)

Many stakeholders voiced concerns about needs with community facilities and services. As community facilities and services are typically provided by the local communities, the lack of funding to correct any problems is far-reaching. As community facilities and services include infrastructure, recreation, and emergency response, among others, the impacts of unresolved needs affect safety and health of residents, quality of life, and, of course, economic development due to the lack of ability to offer needed infrastructure or amenities to attract or retain a workforce or industry and business.

Priority Needs

CFS-1: Many communities in the Region have aging infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, bridges), but lack funding to address those problems.

Needs

CFS-2: There is a lack of access to youth facilities and programs, such as centrally located computer labs and libraries.

CFS-3: There is a lack of rural healthcare and facilities, including the closure of existing facilities.

CFS-4: Broadband connectivity and coverage is inconsistent and unreliable in unserved areas.

CFS-5: There is a lack of funding to update water and sewer infrastructure in many parts of the region.

CFS-6: There are limited resources for water quantity and quality improvement planning.

Priority Opportunities

CFS-D: Cities and towns without adequate funding sources should consider consolidation with counties and/or should consider disincorporation.

Opportunities

CFS-A: Public/private partnerships could be developed to provide comprehensive regional broadband coverage that is consistent, reliable, and equitable.

CFS-B: Strategies should be developed to locate a regional trauma center near a population center such as Douglas.

CFS-C: Expand the Community Health Program through EMS to a regional basis.

4. Housing (H)

Smart housing planning is increasingly essential for healthy growth, regardless of a metro, suburban or rural environment. The housing stock must include affordable and accessible for-sale and rental units, not only to meet social equity goals, but to ensure community health as well as economic vitality and economic health. Housing and transportation are most households' two largest expenditure categories and are a significant financial burden for many lower-income families. As a result, increasing housing and transportation affordability is a vital planning objective and must be included in every comprehensive plan along with jobs, education, opportunities for recreation and transportation, and essential services like water, electricity, broadband, clean air, and health care.

Priority Needs

H-1: More housing in downtown areas is needed.

H-2: There is a loss of historic landmark homes due to lack of investment in renovating landmark housing.

H-6: The Region is vulnerable to natural disasters; public safety must be responsive and well-equipped to ensure safe communities.

Needs

H-3: There is a lack of quality affordable housing.

H-4: There is a lack of enforcement for blighted areas in certain areas of the Region.

H-5: There are too many dilapidated mobile homes in certain areas of the Region.

Priority Opportunities

H-B: Develop programs, and maximize use of existing programs, to assist homeowners in the maintenance and upkeep of homes and properties to avoid/minimize blight.

Opportunities

H-A: Regional public and public/private agreements and funding sources could be drafted and utilized to address specific housing challenges.

H-C: Public/private sponsored educational workshops, seminars, and other programs including a revolving loan program for potential homeowners could help increase homeownership rates in the community.

H-D: Develop and maintain a current housing inventory to promote existing housing within the Region.

H-E: Develop a demolition program to remove condemned houses.

H-F: Update, maintain and enforce zoning regulations.

H-G: Develop after-school programs or afternoon programs within housing developments.

H-H: Pursue grants to fund senior living opportunities.

H-I: Seek partnership and collaboration with Habitat for Humanity.

5. Land Use (LU) & Transportation (T)

A critical issue for sustainable development is the relationship between transportation and land use. Often, some of the more obvious land use needs result from a lack of integrating land use and transportation planning and objectives. Land use decisions made in a vacuum can add time and money to any transportation project, or can change the volume of automobiles using a road. Smart integration of land use and transportation will result in more accessible transportation modes as well as enhance regional mobility. The design of transportation facilities such as roads, driveway access points, sidewalks, and bike routes also have a significant impact on the Region's community's character and economic health.

Priority Needs

LUT-1: The Region is experiencing increasing development pressures on environmentally sensitive lands and farmland; new development needs to be steered more into the urban areas.

Needs

LUT-2: There is a lack of sufficient protection for environmentally sensitive lands.

LUT-3: The Region lacks a sense of regional identity.

LUT-4: There is a lack of cooperation between rail companies and communities.

LUT-5: Railroad overpasses increase traffic safety, but can negatively impact small businesses by detouring traffic. Overpasses can also divide neighborhoods.

LUT-6: There is a lack of adequate and consistent land use regulation across the Region.

LUT-7: Much of the Region's aging transportation infrastructure (especially bridges) needs improvement.

LUT-8: The Region lacks trails and large-scale recreational opportunities closer to living centers.

LUT-9: Aesthetic considerations vary amongst communities – there is not a prioritization of scenic views and a welcoming atmosphere in all communities in the Region.

Priority Opportunities

LUT-I: Expand the Regional Public Transit Plan to include incentives for private investment to increase public transit.

LUT-J: Location and proximity of significant ports (Savannah, Brunswick, and Jacksonville), interstates (I-75 and I-10), and federal highways (US-82, US-84, and US-1) are vital opportunities to integrate land use planning, transportation, and economic growth.

LUT-K: Analyze best practices and make recommendations regarding rail safety.

Opportunities

LUT-A: Encourage and support agricultural industry within the Region to support economic vitality.

LUT-B: Preserve and enhance the strong railroad network and airports with complementary land uses to encourage growth and connectivity.

LUT-C: Coordinate infill planning efforts across the Region.

LUT-D: Invest in bicycle and pedestrian plans across the Region.

LUT-E: Develop consistent and adequate land development regulations encouraging urban infill development versus greenfield development throughout the Region.

LUT-F: Develop a right-of-way plan to improve future road construction planning.

LUT-G: Continue the regional transportation priorities list for projects in the Region.

6. Intergovernmental Coordination (IC)

Well-functioning intergovernmental coordination shows a commitment to significant and ongoing coordination, the sharing of resources, and creative thinking without restriction necessarily to jurisdictional boundaries. The Regional Commission seeks to encourage and implement more such inter-local agreements and regional partnerships to support the implementation of projects.

Priority Needs

IC-1: There is insufficient coordination and information sharing between local governments.

Needs

IC-2: Develop greater gender and racial equality in leadership positions in the Region.

IC-3: There is inconsistency of land development/zoning regulations within the Region.

IC-4: There is an insufficient regional tourism effort; local marketing is prevalent above regional marketing.

IC-5: The Region's large geographic area makes for considerable distances to travel and makes effective communication more difficult.

Priority Opportunities

IC-A: Provide regional intergovernmental leadership training to provide a consistent knowledge base and forge connections.

IC-B: Take advantage of the resources available through the Regional Commission for joint regional projects.

Opportunities

IC-C: Develop consistent land development/zoning regulations within the Region.

IC-D: Increase regional and multi-jurisdictional cooperation especially for economic development.

IC-E: Develop a best practices workshop series.

IC-F: Ensure involvement of the medical and educational community in planning and land use.

IC-G: Break down "silos" to work with non-traditional government agencies and areas.

IC-H: Encourage mutual aid agreements for Law Enforcement and Emergency Services.

IC-I: Encourage collaboration for communities in the I-75 corridor.

7. Education (EDU)

Photo by Michael Rivera

Education planning is of critical importance to workforce development and job creation and is a crucial foundation of strong growth in the Region. This Regional Plan seeks to articulate a vision of equity, active use, and collaborative leadership to make lifelong learning possible.

Priority Needs

EDU-3: There is insufficient coordination between the education sector and other local governments and agencies.

Needs

EDU-1: Graduation rates in high schools could be increased by addressing negative influences such as teen pregnancies and lack of mentorship opportunities.

EDU-2: There are insufficient opportunities for technical education and research in the Region.

EDU-4: It is difficult to retain students after graduation due to lack of job opportunities.

EDU-5: There are inadequate Special Needs education opportunities for children.

EDU-6: There is insufficient education about drug use within the school system.

EDU-7: There is a lack of parental involvement in education.

EDU-8: There is a lack of funding for supplies for all grade levels; at times, teachers' pay personally for supplies.

Priority Opportunities

EDU-A: Increase accessibility to schools.

EDU-B: More workforce training programs could be established through coordination with businesses and industries.

Opportunities

EDU-C: Market the quality of the education system in the Region to attract new residents and businesses.

EDU-D: Support and enhance recreation opportunities and continue to develop after-school coordinated programs.

EDU-E: Promote the Technical College System and continue to integrate technical training in high schools.

EDU-F: Encourage degree programs in Sustainability and Wireless/Broadband Engineering.

EDU-G: Encourage and support South Georgia Consortium for Technical Education and Research.

EDU-H: Develop regional "Partners in Education" programs where businesses/religious institutions can "adopt" schools to help meet needs.

EDU-I: Develop a regional incentive program for partners in education participants (i.e., property tax rebates, credits, deductions, etc.).

EDU-J: Provide region-wide "soft skills" training in high schools.

EDU-K: Develop regional "adopt-a-grandparent" programs to assist with parent involvement and mentor programs.

EDU-L: Promote regional water quality and monitoring education programs and tours of wastewater treatment plants.

EDU-M: Promote regional outdoor education including: wildlife, botany, and geology programs.

8. Senior Services/Aging (SA)

Photo by Michael Rivera

As a result of comments received for the previous update, SGRC has begun to incorporate Senior Services/Aging-related projects tied to needs and opportunities identified within the most recent update of the Regional Area Work Plan by the Regional Area Agency on Aging (AAA), which is housed within the SGRC. Effective Senior Services planning is a comprehensive, ongoing process to ensure that a senior citizen can remain a productive member of the community. This affects all segments of the comprehensive plan. It is also important to utilize the knowledge and experience resources of this population segment for the implementation of opportunities.

Priority Needs

SA-1: The senior population continues to grow rapidly, which produces a greater demand for services. The housing, transportation, recreation, and health needs of this population are not adequately addressed.

Needs

SA-2: Seniors are experiencing hunger or food insecurity in addition to high rates of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

SA-3: Seniors increasingly need access to resources and supports that may assist them in caring for a grandchild.

SA-4: Many seniors need home modifications, especially for bathrooms, that will allow them to live longer and more independently in the community.

SA-5: Some area hospitals have high readmission rates for senior citizens.

SA-6: There is a lack of technical computer training programs geared to senior citizens.

SA-7: There is a lack of continuing education programs for senior citizens.

SA-8: There is a lack of senior mobility options specifically transportation including access to mobile libraries/bookmobiles.

Priority Opportunities

SA-A: **Participate in the AARP Livable Communities initiative to support the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities and rural areas to be great places for people of all ages by working toward providing safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.**

SA-B: Health transportation providers could provide greater access to services.

Opportunities

SA-C: Encourage additional funding streams through the development of private pay options.

SA-D: Expansion of evidence-based programs may help seniors to live more healthy and independent lives in the community.

SA-E: Expand the "meals on wheels" programs regionally with advocacy efforts.

SA-F: Promote assistive technologies for healthcare, shopping, and recreation.

SA-G: Increase housing voucher availability for South Georgia.

SA-H: Encourage regional senior-friendly housing construction to provide and promote lifelong/livable communities.

SA-I: Ensure local law enforcement enroll in ACT (At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics) training and local banks and healthcare professionals become aware of abuse, exploitation, and neglect of senior citizens.

(6) IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

(I) Performance Standards

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission has established two levels of achievement standards to provide benchmarks for local governments with which to assess their consistency with the Regional Plan and their progress towards implementing their local comprehensive plans and addressing their needs and opportunities.

In coordination with the bi-annual assessment meeting, a review will be performed with each local government to determine the progress towards attaining the Minimum and Excellence Standards.

Should a local government or community not achieve their minimum standards, the Southern Georgia Regional Commission will be able to assist the community to address any deficiencies and effect achievement of the standards.

Minimum Standards

Minimum Standards are essential activities local governments must undertake for consistency with the Regional Plan. The intent is to ensure a consistent and predictable basic level of local requirements across the Region.

Minimum Standards encompass specific ordinances, programs, or requirements that may be implemented by local governments to realize the Regional Vision and address the Regional Needs and Opportunities.

Evaluated by SGRC via checklist: yes/no

Minimum Standards to be achieved by All Governments in the Region.

1. All elected City and County Officials must obtain minimum certification by Regional Commission through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or an equivalent Certification Program.
2. All County and City Clerks obtain certification through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or equivalent Certification Program.
3. All Planning Commission Board members must attend planning commission training within one year of appointment.
4. Update and adopt the Hazard Mitigation Plan as required by State guidelines.
5. Develop, update, maintain and implement zoning standards or land development regulations.
6. Develop, update, maintain and implement at a minimum the International Building Code including applicable administrative procedures, and put a program in place that a certified Building Inspector does all inspections.

7. Participate in comprehensive planning efforts including the development of Community Work Programs and the maintenance of the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS).
8. Update the local Community Work Program as necessary for successful implementation of community goals.
9. Foster a sense of community through participation and promotion of activities which support and enrich the community's social capital.*
10. Participate in trainings, conferences, and workshops to maintain knowledge
11. Maintain QLG by submitting all required reports, certifications, and other updates as needed by DCA.

*New for 2023

Excellence Standards

The following Excellent Standards were chosen as part of the regional planning process as recommended 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 activities listed below were chosen as Excellence Standards because they are considered the actions most likely to bring out the strengths of the Region while at the same time addressing the Region's most significant needs (see the Priority Needs and Opportunities listed in Section 5) and achieving the overall goals of the Regional Plan.

For a local government to pursue Excellence Performance Standards, all Minimum Performance Standards must be achieved.

Two or more elements from any of five categories must be implemented for a government to be awarded the Standards of Excellence designation by the Regional Commission.

1. Economic Development Standards of Excellence

1. Become a Camera-Ready Community and support the film industry.
2. Maintain a current inventory of sites and structures suitable for development or redevelopment.
3. Develop a detailed industry recruitment plan including the process for creating a qualified workforce to serve the current and future regional industries.
4. Develop a detailed business/industry retention plan.
5. Be a member and participate in multi-jurisdictional ED initiatives.
6. Incorporate economic recovery actions into local Emergency Recovery or Hazard Mitigation Plans.
7. Develop and implement a Marketing Plan for Economic Development.
8. Incorporate an innovative practice not identified above which could include but is not limited to: a rebranding strategy, a private/public partnership, participation in the Main Street program.

2. Natural and Cultural Resources Standards of Excellence

1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of natural, cultural, and historic resources.
2. Participate in the Georgia Department of Economic Development Tourism Product Development Resource Team Program (TPDRT).
3. Develop and adopt ordinances to require protection of open space, natural resources, and habitat.

4. Adopt and implement a historic preservation ordinance.
5. Implement a Georgia Adopt-A-Stream Program.
6. Adopt and implement a landscaping/tree ordinance.
7. Adopt and implement a Community Awareness Program regarding stream pollution through drains.
8. Support the efforts of local riverkeeper and conservation-minded organizations including GA Soil & Water Conservation Commission, Suwannee-Satilla Water Council, and Georgia River Network.
9. Incorporate an innovative practice not identified above which could include but is not limited to: addition of electric vehicle charging stations to City/County property, community solar program, etc.

3. Community Facilities and Services Standards of Excellence

1. Encourage the provision of broadband to ensure a connected community.
2. Provide educational information to property owners on the value of connecting to a public or community water/wastewater system when available or nearby.
3. Provide incentives for installation and construction of underground utilities.
4. Prohibit the installation of new septic systems within 100 feet of any river and 50 feet of any state water body.
5. Develop policies and guidelines for a water quality monitoring program including a storm water management plan and ordinance.
6. Develop and maintain a community-wide recreation plan.
7. Develop and implement a Recycling Program.
8. Incorporate an innovative practice not identified above which could include but is not limited to: private/public broadband expansion partnership, develop an intergovernmental authority for the provision of services (such as library, parks, water/sewer, etc.).

4. Housing Standards of Excellence

1. Develop a housing program for Veterans.
2. Develop and implement incentives to provide quality housing for various income levels
3. Develop and implement incentives to stimulate infill housing in existing neighborhoods.
4. Participate in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH).
5. Establish recognition programs such as "Home of the Month" or "Yard of the Month" in partnership with local civic groups.
6. Participate in private/public partnerships such as Habitat for Humanity
7. Establish a land bank.
8. Incorporate an innovative practice not identified above which could include but is not limited to: developing a financial fitness for residents program, hosting a transitional housing program in partnership with local non-profits, operating a hoarding task force, etc.

5. Land Use and Transportation Standards of Excellence

Land use
1. Develop an Urban Redevelopment Plan and allow for mixed-use developments in land use regulations.
2. Actively participate in the National Flood Insurance Program by adopting and enforcing a flood management ordinance.
3. Develop and implement design guidelines for essential gateways, corridors and city center areas.
4. Develop, adopt, and implement community appearance ordinances.
5. Provide incentives for new developments to include open/green space, sidewalks/trails, and storm water management friendly design.
6. Provide incentives for developments to pursue "green" site planning or LEED certification.
7. Obtain Plan First and/or Tree City and/or Water First and/or Beautiful City or similar designation.
8. Take an intergenerational approach to land use planning.
9. Incorporate an innovative practice not identified above which could include but is not limited to: adopt ordinances to address new land uses such as cryptocurrency/data mining, solar farms, agrihoods, etc.

Transportation
1. Actively coordinate road construction and utility construction and relocation.
2. Adopt a local Right-of-Way Protection Plan.
3. Adopt land development regulations to build street connectivity.
4. Develop a local bicycle & pedestrian plan.
5. Implement local road improvements consistent with an existing transportation plan.
6. Provide incentives for private roads to be paved and constructed per local road standards and provide for maintenance through homeowner's associations.
7. Prepare a local alternative transportation plan.
8. Actively participate in regional initiatives such as TIA (Transportation Investment Act).
9. Analyze street accessibility to consider the mobility challenges and needs of wheelchair users.
9. Incorporate an innovative practice not identified above which could include but is not limited to: car free days, ciclovias/open streets (either a permanent or temporary closing of certain streets to automobiles for cyclists and pedestrians), build a pedestrian bridge, etc.

6. Intergovernmental Coordination Standards of Excellence

1. Share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions.
2. Provide input and feedback during the review process of Developments of Regional Impact.
3. Upgrade all electronic communication capabilities for effective electronic communication between all local governments and furnish appropriate training in the use.
4. Attend at least 80% of all SGRC Board Council meetings.
5. Incorporate an innovative practice not identified above which could include but is not limited to: participate in state, federal, and regional initiatives and partnerships, develop a shared initiative with either local or regional government partners, etc.

7. Education Standards of Excellence

1. Appoint a Board of Education member to the Planning Commission.
2. Participate in quarterly meetings with the Board of Education and local governments.
3. Develop and implement Active Recreation After-School Programs.
4. Develop and implement incentives to increase graduation rates.
5. Develop and implement a Youth Leadership Program and/or Youth Board.
6. Demonstrate active coordination through meetings and communication between the Board of Education and local government in school facilities planning and location including the provision of services.
7. Become a Partner in the Safe Routes to School Program.
8. Encourage agricultural education through active programs such as Future Farmers of America and/or 4-H, visits to farms, apprenticeship programs, etc.
9. Support the efforts of local technical colleges in providing certification programs, GED courses and apprenticeships with local employers, leadership and on-the-job training, etc.

8. Senior Services and Aging Standards of Excellence

1. Provide coordination with and between health transportation providers.
2. Provide a "meals on wheels" program with advocacy efforts.
3. Provide activities programs geared towards senior citizens including the development of specific programs and plans, including the AARP Age-Friendly Network process.
4. Utilize assistive technologies.
5. Pursue housing voucher availability for South Georgia.
6. Include senior-friendly housing construction in the local land development regulations to promote lifelong/livable communities.
7. Local law enforcement participates in Certified At-Risk Crime Tactics Specialist (CACTS) training and encourages local banks and healthcare professionals to become aware of abuse, exploitation, and neglect of senior citizens.
8. Promote Dementia Friends Georgia communities by becoming and supporting educational efforts in the community.

Local Government Performance Standards Report

This section contains a report of the attainment of Minimum Standards by the local governments within the SGRC Region.

Y = Yes, N = No, na = Not Applicable, IP = In Progress.

Government	Date of most recent assessment	1. All elected City and County Officials must obtain minimum certification by Regional Commission through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or an equivalent Certification Program.	2. All County and City Clerks obtain certification through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or equivalent Certification Program.	3. All Planning Commissioner Board members must attend planning commission training within one year of appointment.	4. Update and adopt the Hazard Mitigation Plan as required by State guidelines.	5. Develop, update, maintain and implement zoning standards or land development regulations.	6. Develop, update, maintain and implement at a minimum the International Building Code including applicable administrative procedures, and put a program in place that a certified Building Inspector does all inspections.	7. Participate in comprehensive planning efforts including the development of Community Work Programs and the maintenance of the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS).	8. Update the local Community Work Programs as necessary for successful implementation of community goals.	9. Foster a sense of community through participation and promotion of activities which support and enrich the community's social capital. *	10. Participate in trainings, conferences, and workshops to maintain knowledge.	11. Maintain QLG by submitting all required reports, certifications, and other updates as needed by DCA.	Achieved Minimum Standards
Atkinson County	June 2021	IP	IP	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Pearson		IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Willacoochee		Y	Y	na	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Bacon County	May 2021	Y	Y	na	Y	na	N	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**N**
Alma		IP	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Ben Hill County	July 2022	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Fitzgerald		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Berrien County	Aug. 2022	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Alapaha		IP	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Enigma		IP	Y	na	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Nashville		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Ray City		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Brantley County	Nov. 2020	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Hoboken		Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Nahunta		Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Brooks County	June 2021	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Barwick		Y	IP	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Morven		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Pavo		IP	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Quitman		IP	N	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Charlton County	Oct. 2021	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**

Government	Date of most recent assessment	1. All elected City and County Officials must obtain minimum certification by Regional Commission through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or an equivalent Certification Program.	2. All County and City Clerks obtain certification through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or equivalent Certification Program.	3. All Planning Commissioner Board members must attend planning commission training within one year of appointment.	4. Update and adopt the Hazard Mitigation Plan as required by State guidelines.	5. Develop, update, maintain and implement zoning standards or land development regulations.	6. Develop, update, maintain and implement at a minimum the International Building Code including applicable administrative procedures, and put a program in place that a certified Building Inspector does all inspections.	7. Participate in comprehensive planning efforts including the development of Community Work Programs and the maintenance of the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS).	8. Update the local Community Work Programs as necessary for successful implementation of community goals.	9. Foster a sense of community through participation and promotion of activities which support and enrich the community's social capital. *	10. Participate in trainings, conferences, and workshops to maintain knowledge.	11. Maintain QLG by submitting all required reports, certifications, and other updates as needed by DCA.	Achieved Minimum Standards
Folkston		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Homeland		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Clinch County		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Argyle	Oct. 2021	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
DuPont		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Fargo		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Homerville		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Coffee County		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Ambrose	June 2021	Y	Y	na	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Broxton		Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Douglas		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Nicholls		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Cook County		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Adel	July 2021	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Cecil		Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Lenox		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Sparks		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Echols County	April 2021	IP	IP	na	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Irwin County	July 2022	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Ocilla		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Lanier County	Mar. 2023	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Lakeland		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Lowndes County		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Dasher	Sept. 2022	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Hahira		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Lake Park		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Remerton		Y	IP	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**IP**
Valdosta		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Pierce County		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Blackshear	May 2021	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Patterson		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**

Government	Date of most recent assess-ment	1. All elected City and County Officials must obtain minimum certification by Regional Commission through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or an equivalent Certification Program.	1. All elected City and County Officials must obtain minimum certification through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or an equivalent Certification Program.	2. All County and City Clerks obtain certification through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or equivalent Certification Program.	3. All Planning Commissioner Board members must attend planning commission training within one year of appointment.	4. Update and adopt the Hazard Mitigation Plan as required by State guidelines.	5. Develop, update, maintain and implement zoning standards or land development regulations.	6. Develop, update, maintain and implement at a minimum the International Building Code including applicable administrative procedures, and put a program in place that a certified Building Inspector does all inspections.	7. Participate in comprehensive planning efforts including the development of Community Work Programs and the maintenance of the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS).	8. Update the local Community Work Programs as necessary for successful implementation of community goals.	9. Foster a sense of community through participation and promotion of activities which support and enrich the community's social capital. *	10. Participate in trainings, conferences, and workshops to maintain knowledge.	11. Maintain QLG by submitting all required reports, certifications, and other updates as needed by DCA.	Achieved Minimum Standards
Offerman		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Tift County		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Omega	Oct. 2021	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Tifton		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Ty Ty		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Turner County		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Ashburn	Oct. 2021	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Rebecca		IP	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Sycamore		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	IP	**IP**
Ware County	Mar. 2022	IP	N	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**
Waycross		Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	**Y**

As this is a new item for 2023, all governments are listed as "In Progress (IP)"

(ii) Strategies and Regional Work Program

The Regional Work Program identifies specific activities the Southern Georgia Regional Commission will undertake over the next five years in its effort to successfully implement the Regional Plan and address the Regional Commission priority Needs and Opportunities. Specific strategies to be taken by actors other than the Regional Commission, designed to assist in the implementation of the Regional Plan, are also included.

In the Report of Accomplishments, "P&C" refers to Planning and Coordination activities. "R" refers to review activities.

Report of Accomplishments (as of FY2023)

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT											
Develop a comprehensive GIS Inventory of infrastructure in the Region, including but not limited to broadband, water, sewer, and natural gas.	P&C	Staff Time $30,000	▪ Local governments ▪ Utility companies ▪ Broadband providers GTA	ED: I-1, I-5, I-6, CFS-4, CFS-5				x	x	x	Postponed due to lack of funding
Develop local model ordinances or policies to encourage and facilitate the installation of broadband infrastructure.	P&C	Staff Time $30,000	Local Governments	ED: I-1, I-5, I-6, CFS-4, CFS-5	x	x	x				Completed by others; The State drafted a model ordinance which the RC promotes
Update the regional comprehensive economic development strategy.	P&C	Staff Time $50,000	DCA, Local Governments, EDA	ED-2, ED-4				x	x		Completed
2. NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES											
Create a GIS inventory of boat ramps, landings, public beaches, and other public water access points.	P&C	Staff Time $20,000	DNR, Local Governments, non-profit organizations	N/C-1	x	x	x	x	x		Completed

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Develop model ordinances that encourage private investment in historic properties.	P&CR	Staff Time $30,000	DCA, Local Governments, EDA	N/C-2	x	x	x	x	x		Postponed, Modified in upcoming Regional Work Program to include an electronic guide/story map on historic resources
Develop an electronic Historic Resources Guide for the Region.	P&C	$30,000	DNR, GSA/NRHP, Local Governments	NC-2	x	x	x	x	x		Postponed, Modified to include a Story Map in upcoming Regional Work Program
Develop an electronic Eco-tourism Guide for the Region.	P&C	$30,000	DNR, non-profit organizations, Local Governments	NC-7	x	x	x	x	x		Guide is complete; maintenance of the guide will continue
Develop a region-wide attractions map (bicycle route map). Each year complete a different segment of the Region.	P&C	$20,000	DNR, GSA/NRHP, Local Governments	NC-7	x	x	x	x	x		Completed
Create and manage a list of funding and opportunities for expanded public outdoor recreation.	P&C	$10,000	DNR, GSA/NRHP, Local Governments	NC-8	x	x	x	x	x		Underway
3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES											

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Create a regional list of priority infrastructure projects to target for funding identification.	P&C	$2,000/yr.	Local Governments	CFS-1	x	x	x	x	x	x	Underway
4. HOUSING											
Develop a model ordinance for downtown housing	P&C	Staff Time $20,000	DCA, Local Governments	H-1			x	x			Underway, Modified to a Fact Sheet as opposed to an ordinance
Develop a priority list of downtowns to be targeted for housing compatibility studies	P&C	Staff time $35,000	DCA, Local Governments	H-1	x	x	x	x	x		Completed
Develop a priority list of historic landmarks to be targeted for funding identification.	P&C	$10,000	Local Governments	H-2	x	x	x	x	x		Completed
Develop a model ordinance to assist homeowners in the maintenance and upkeep of homes and properties to avoid/ minimize blight.	P&C R	$2,500	DCA, Local Governments	H-8				x	x		This has been completed by others
Develop a model demolition template to remove condemned houses in order to improve local housing stock.	P&C R	$20,000	DCA, Local Governments	H-8					x		This has been completed by others
5a. TRANSPORTATION											
Develop a regional public transportation plan including incentives for private investment to increase public transportation.	P&C R	$30,000	GDOT, Local Governments	LUT-9		x	x				Completed

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Perform a study to determine feasibility and strategies of enhancing railroad and airport facilities through complementary surrounding land uses.	P&CR	$40,000	DCA, Local Governments, GDOT, EDA	LUT-10			x	x	x		Postponed, funding source has not been identified for this project
5b. LAND USE											
Develop a GIS application for Land Use, which will provide information such as conservation, affordable housing, lots suitable for development, etc.	P&C	$35,000	DCA, Local Governments	LUT-1	x	x	x				Postponed, looking to identify funding opportunities
Develop and maintain an electronic Agri-tourism Guide for the Region.	P&CR	$20,000	GDA,GDEcD, Nonprofit organizations, Local Governments	LUT-1				x	x	x	Completed
6. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION											
Hold quarterly meetings of City and County Managers and Clerks.	P&CR	$20,000	Local Governments	IC-1	x	x	x	x	x	x	Underway, Modified to include the provision of an SGRC 101 information session
Develop a Post-Disaster Response Plan for Business Communities.	P&C	$50,000	GEMA, FEMA, Businesses, Local Governments	IC-1	x	x					Completed

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ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Provide at least 1 training workshop each year for local leaders on planning, zoning, and intergovernmental coordination. Target attendance: 10 local leaders.	P&C	$20,000	DCA, Local Governments, Carl Vinson Institute	IC-6	x	x	x	x	x	x	Underway, Modified to include the drafting of model ordinances and hosting of training workshops for local leaders and staff
Conduct plan implementation assistance meetings with each local government in the Region no less than once every thirty months.	R	$20,000	Local Governments	IC-7	x	x	x	x	x	x	Underway
Assist local governments with completing required reports and with submittal of applications and certifications.	P&C	$20,000, $50,000	DCA, Local Governments	IC-1, IC-6				x	x	x	Underway, Modified to include item listed just above
7. EDUCATION											
Conduct a study of transportation safety in and around school zones	P&C	$15,000	GDOT, Local Schools, Local Governments	EDU-10	x	x	x	x	x	x	Underway
Provide one workshop a quarter to local School Boards and other community leaders on topics such as Best Management Practices, School Siting, Planning & Zoning, Land Use, and Transportation.	P&C	$10,000	DCA, Local Governments, Local BOE's, GDOT	EDU-10	x	x	x	x	x		Cancelled due to lack of funding and interest

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Hold bi-monthly meetings of the Southern Georgia Workforce Development Board to promote increased coordination of businesses and industries for workforce training programs.	P&C	$10,000	Workforce Development Board, private sector	EDU-11	x	x	x	x	x	x	Underway
8. SENIOR SERVICES / AGING											
Update and distribute regional Senior Walking Route Maps.	P&C	$6,000	GDOT	SA-1	x						Completed
Complete a study to determine the needs of seniors in the Region regarding transportation in coordination with land use (housing, recreation, access to health facilities etc.).	P&C	$25,000	DCA, Local Governments , GDOT	SA-1			x	x			Completed
Develop a regional public transportation plan including incentives for private investment to increase public transportation.	P&C	Staff time	DHS, SGRC	SA-10			x	x			Completed

Regional Work Program 2023 – 2028

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
ED-1: Broadband accessibility throughout the Region is not consistent.	Increase the number of households in the Region with broadband access	Develop a comprehensive GIS Inventory of broadband infrastructure in the Region.	▪ Local governments ▪ Utility companies ▪ Broadband providers ▪ GTA	Yr. 1-5 $30,000		X
ED-4: The younger population is leaving the Region to find higher paying job opportunities in metropolitan areas which results in "brain drain" for the area.	Increase the number of higher paying jobs in the Region	Update the regional comprehensive economic development strategy.	▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ EDA	Yr. 3 $50,000		X
N/C-1: The Region's lakes and rivers have a lack of safe, clean public access points such as boat ramps, landings, and public beaches.	Improve water quality of streams and rivers	Develop a comprehensive GIS inventory of infrastructure in the Region, including but not limited to water, sewer, natural gas, fire stations, landfills, streams, rivers, ramps, landings, public beaches, and water trails.	▪ Local governments ▪ DNR ▪ DCA ▪ EDA ▪ Nonprofit organizations	Yr. 1-5 $30,000		X

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
N/C-2: The Region has a severe lack of funding for preserving historic and cultural resources, which further restricts the marketing of these resources as another part of the Region's high quality of life.	Increase the number of local historic and cultural resource projects	Develop a Children's Museum to serve as a regional hub for arts education, cultural enrichment and entertainment for youth and families.	▪ Local governments ▪ Nonprofit organizations	Yr. 1-5 $2,500,000		
		Develop an electronic Historic Resources Guide/Story Map for the Region.	▪ Local governments ▪ DCA ▪ Nonprofit organizations	Yr. 1-5 $30,000		X
		Host workshops on the acquisition of vacant/underutilized or abandoned property that could be adaptively reused.	▪ Local governments ▪ DCA ▪ Main Streets	Yr. 2 and 4 $5,000		
N/C-A: A regional eco-tourism marketing program for natural resources (such as the Okefenokee Swamp, Grand Bay, various water bodies, and state parks) could help to increase the utilization and funding of these resources.	Increase the utilization and funding of eco-tourism resources in the Region	Promote and maintain the existing Eco and Agri – tourism story maps and brochures to areas beyond this Region through participation and attendance at events such as the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie.	▪ Local governments ▪ DNR ▪ Nonprofit organizations	Yr. 1-5 $15,000		X

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
N/C-B: Any possibility that provides the Region with expanded public outdoor recreation—such as greenway trails, canoe trails, and other amenities—should be explored.	Increase the number of recreational opportunities in the Region	Create and manage a list of funding and opportunities for expanded public outdoor recreation.	▪ Local governments	Yr. 1-5 $10,000		
CFS-1: Many communities in the Region have aging infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, bridges), but lack funding to address those problems.	Increase the number of grant-funded infrastructure projects in the Region	Create a regional list of priority infrastructure projects to target for funding identification.	▪ Local governments ▪ DCA	Yr. 1-5 $2,000	Yr. 6-10 $2,000	
H-1: More housing in downtown areas is needed.	Increase the number of housing units in downtown areas	Develop a fact sheet for downtown housing identifying funding resources, benefits, desired amenities (including walkability and bike/ped safety), and types of downtown housing options.	▪ Local governments ▪ DCA ▪ GDOT	Yr. 2-3 $20,000		
H-2: There is a loss of historic landmark homes due to lack of investment in renovating historic housing.	Increase the number of historic homes preserved and reduce the number of historic homes lost	Assist local governments, upon request to adopt historic preservation ordinances and establish historic preservation commissions.	▪ Local governments ▪ DCA	Yr. 1-5 $25,000		

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
H-B: Develop programs, and maximize use of existing programs, to assist homeowners in the maintenance and upkeep of homes and properties to avoid/minimize blight.	Reduce the number of blighted properties in the Region	Develop a fact sheet for code enforcement staff and jurisdictions to assist homeowners in the maintenance and upkeep of homes and properties to support the quality of housing in downtowns and in areas of neglect.	▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments	Yr. 4 $5,000		
H-6: The Region is vulnerable to natural disasters; public safety must be responsive and well-equipped to ensure safe communities.	Provide the relevant technology and critical information to public safety professionals.	Develop GIS maps to bring first responders into compliance with NexGen 911 criteria.	▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ GTA		Yr. 6-10 $50,000	

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
LUT-1: The Region is experiencing increasing development pressures on environmentally sensitive lands and farmland; new development needs to be steered more into the urban areas.	Reduce the acreage of environmentally sensitive land and farmland that is developed each year	Develop a GIS application for Land Use, which will provide information such as conservation, affordable housing, lots suitable for development, etc.	▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments	Yr. 1-3 $35,000		
LUT-I: Expand the Regional Public Transit Plan to include incentives for private investment to increase public transit.	Increase private investment in public transportation	Seek partnerships with public and private industry/businesses to increase usage of public transit and micro transit.	▪ GDOT ▪ Local Governments	Yr. 2-3 $30,000		

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
LUT-J: Location and proximity of significant ports (Savannah, Brunswick, and Jacksonville), interstates (I-75 and I-10), and federal highways (US-82, US-84, and US-1) are vital opportunities to integrate land use planning, transportation, and economic growth.	Consider transportation projects of regional significance when recommending projects for inclusion in plans, studies, and as part of the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) process.	Evaluate land use planning and economic growth beyond the Region when evaluating regional transportation projects.	▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ GDOT ▪ EDA	Yr. 1-5 $10,000		
LUT-K: Analyze best practices and make recommendations regarding rail safety.	Produce studies and plans to analyze the current situation and recommend best practices to increase rail safety	Complete a report analyzing rail safety in the VLMPO and/or Region and making recommendations to increase rail safety if deficiencies are noted.	▪ GDOT ▪ Local Governments	Yr. 3-4 $40,000		
IC-1: Insufficient coordination and information sharing between local governments	Initiate events that lead to information sharing and coordination between local governments and other relevant stakeholders	Host annual or semi-annual SGRC 101 learning sessions to increase networking and information sharing amongst new leaders and introduce new leaders to the services provided by SGRC.	▪ Local Governments	Yr. 1-5 $20,000	Yr. 6-10 $20,000	X
		Host an annual Local Government Officials Appreciation Event to increase networking and information sharing amongst local leaders.	▪ Local Governments ▪ GEMA ▪ FEMA ▪ Businesses	Yr. 1-5 $50,000	Yr. 6-10 $50,000	X

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
IC-A: Provide regional intergovernmental leadership training to provide a consistent knowledge base and forge connections.	Initiate intergovernmental training events for local leaders	Draft model ordinances and host training workshops for local leaders and staff.	▪ Local Governments ▪ Carl Vinson Institute ▪ DCA	Yr. 1-5 $20,000	Yr. 6-10 $20,000	
IC-B: Local governments can take advantage of the resources available through the Regional Commission for joint regional projects.	Provide resources to local governments to promote information sharing and maintain compliance with State mandates	Conduct plan implementation assistance meetings with each local government in the Region no less than once every thirty months and assist local governments with completing required reports and with submittal of applications and certifications.	▪ Local Governments	Yr. 1-5 $30,000	Yr. 6-10 $30,000	
EDU-3: There is insufficient coordination between the education sector and other local governments and agencies.	Develop programs in partnership with the education sector and local governments and agencies to further educational opportunities and career readiness for students.	Partner with University Agricultural programs and County Cooperative Extension offices to develop hands on, outdoor classrooms for agricultural and natural resource and conservation education.	▪ Local Governments ▪ University System of Georgia ▪ GDA/Georgia Grown ▪ Library System ▪ Cooperative Extension offices ▪ 4-H ▪ FFA	Yr. 1-5 $30,000	Yr. 6-10 $30,000	
EDU-A: Increase accessibility of schools.	Reduce the number of crashes that occur in school zones	Conduct a study of transportation safety in and around school zones	▪ GDOT ▪ Local schools ▪ Local governments	Yr. 1-5 $15,000		

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
	Increase the number of students who walk or bike to school	Promote National Bike to School Day through events in the Region during the month of May	▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ Local BOEs ▪ GDOT/SRTS	Yr. 1-5 $10,000		
EDU-B: More workforce training programs could be established through coordination with businesses and industries.	Increase the number of businesses or industries involved in regional workforce development programs	Hold bi-monthly meetings of the Southern Georgia Workforce Development Board to promote increased coordination of businesses and industries for workforce training programs.	▪ Workforce Development Board ▪ Private sector	Yr. 1-5 $10,000	Yr. 6-10 $10,000	X
SA-1: The senior population continues to grow rapidly, which produces a greater demand for services. The housing, transportation, recreation, and health needs of this population are not adequately addressed.	Increase the number of recreational opportunities available to seniors	Develop community gardens at senior centers throughout the Region.	▪ AAA ▪ Local Governments ▪ AARP ▪ Non-Profits	Yr. 1-5 $10,000	Yr. 6-10 $10,000	X
	Increase the number of transportation options for seniors	Update and improve the Senior Walking Maps.	▪ GDOT ▪ Local Governments ▪ AARP ▪ Non-Profits	Yr. 4-5 $30,000		

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
SA-A: Participate in the AARP Livable Communities initiative to support the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities and rural areas to be great places for people of all ages by working toward providing safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.	Encourage the provision of safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.	Amend the Area Plan on Aging to incorporate necessary activities to support the mission of the AARP Livable Communities initiative.	▪ AAA ▪ Local Governments ▪ AARP ▪ Non-Profits	Yr. 2 $50,000		X
SA-B: Health transportation providers could provide greater access to services.	Increase utilization of health transportation providers	Develop a program with Medicare to provide additional transportation for medical trips for seniors.	▪ GDOT ▪ FTA ▪ AARP ▪ AAA	Yr. 1-5 Staff Time	Yr. 6-10 Staff Time	X

APPENDICES

Appendix A. SWOT Analysis

The Regional Needs and Opportunities were developed through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities (SWOT) analysis. This was conducted through work sessions and open house sessions in which stakeholders shared their knowledge of the Region, as well as through surveys and interpretation of regional data. The stakeholder group and steering committee then selected priority needs and opportunities for each segment. In the Work Program, these are associated with corresponding concrete work items for implementation. This section shows the results from the input gathered from the SWOT Analysis. These results have been incorporated into the Regional Plan.

1. **Economic Development**

Strengths	Opportunities
- Land availability for new growth - Existing manufacturing - Transportation Corridors - Cost of living - Natural Resources - Strong agricultural/agribusiness (diverse agriculture in the Region, with many different crops produced) - Proximity to Florida - Access to aquifer - Access to ports, rail - Climate - Training and Qualified Workforce - Tourism - Small town feel, hospitality	- Growth Toward Rail - High School Industrial Education - More people to help attract large manufacturing - Tax Credits/State Rural Incentives - Development of Tourism - Workforce training - Value Added Agriculture - Job Tax Credit - Economically prosperous - Film Industry – Film Festivals - Downtown Revitalization - Low Cost of Living - Reduce rates of vacancy in CBD's - Regionalism
Weaknesses	**Threats**
- Aging and Undersized Infrastructure - Lack of funding for Economic Development - Lack of Regional Collaboration - Dysfunctional City/County Boundaries - No Money for Industrial Recruiting - Too many Dollar Stores, gas stations, and fast-food restaurants - Workforce supply - Job availability and opportunities - Distance from larger metropolitan areas - Need more training for next-generation tools	- Experiencing population loss - Commercial Blight - Low Labor Force Participation Rates - Homelessness - Rising Cost of Healthcare - Lack of Workforce Housing - National Economy - Poor City and County Relationships - Lack of Jobs for College Graduates - Lack of Focus from State - Broadband accessibility - Wage stagnation - Crime

- Trained workforce

2. Natural & Cultural Resources

Strengths
- Several rivers that are excellent for recreation (e.g., Satilla, Withlacoochee)
- Peach State Summer Theater
- Valdosta Symphony Orchestra
- Turner Arts Center
- Georgia Museum of Agriculture & Historic Village
- The Agricultural industry is an economic driver
- State Parks
- Eco-tourism
- Historic downtowns
- Okefenokee Swamp
- Unusual areas like the cluster of round lakes around Lake Park, and unique natural places such as the Broxton Rocks
- Festivals

Opportunities
- Focus on eco-tourism
- More education on passive recreation, waterways, kayaking, canoeing, etc.
- A good steward of abundant natural resources
- Education on stream & water body cleanups
- State & federal grants
- Agri-tourism
- Water trails
- Riverside/lakeside trails with amenities such as benches and instructional signage
- Additional boardwalks (the facility at Grand Bay in Lowndes County is an example)
- Investment in established nature centers (for example, the facility at Grand Bay could invite more tourism if it were expanded and kept open)
- Native American history

Weaknesses
- Natural resources of the Region are not marketed in a highly visible, cohesive way
- Lack of high-quality direct access to many natural areas (e.g., riverfront/lakeside trails)
- Some natural areas with great potential are not maintained
- Nature & culture aren't always a priority for some
- Lack of cleanups
- Lack of access to water (boat ramps, landings)
- Lack of knowledge about the local and regional history of Native American tribes
- Disrepair in historic districts
- Water quality in certain areas adjacent to industry
- Noise and light pollution

Threats
- Protection of sensitive areas
- Public education
- Conflicting objectives of tourism and preservation
- Flooding of streets in low-income areas
- Increase in natural disasters due to climate change
- Limited resources
- Many impaired waterbodies
- No preservation of historic landmarks and downtown areas
- Limited resources, funding sources, etc.
- Reduction in funding levels for historic preservation
- Monuments in disrepair and/or without explanatory signage

3. Community Facilities & Services

Strengths

- Water Supply
- Improvements to Broadband
- CDBG Accessibility for Infrastructure
- Community support
- Lots of churches (volunteer force programs)

Opportunities

- EMC Incentives for Broadband
- Extension of Natural Gas Service
- Development of Solar Energy, in a responsible manner
- Upgrades to local meeting venues in need of repair
- Career Academies
- Healthcare
- Quality Affordable Childcare
- Services for the aging population
- Equalize geographic access to active recreation
- Support & encourage preservation of historical land uses in rural areas
- Public/private partnerships
- Better coordination with faith-based organizations/churches to assist in implementing local priorities/goals

Weaknesses

- Aging & Deteriorating Water & Sewer Infrastructure
- Lack of Reliable Broadband & Cell Service
- Lack of Natural Gas Capacity
- Affordable Housing
- Involvement of School System
- Lack of private/philanthropic investment in communities
- Lack of youth-focused facilities
- Lack of organized youth activities
- Downtown computer lab & library needed for students and seniors

Threats

- Low Labor Force Participation Rates
- Affordable Housing
- Lack of Market Rate Housing
- Lack of Reliable Broadband & Cell Service
- Lack of Natural Gas Capacity
- High School Students not Trained for Employment in Existing Industries
- Lack of Sufficient Public Transportation
- Funding to maintain infrastructure
- Low Population Numbers
- Regional Collaboration
- Leadership
- Hospitals
- Aging infrastructure, no funding to correct problems
- Lack of recreational opportunities & funding for them
- Rural healthcare – lack of facilities, closures

4. Housing

Strengths

- Retiree Attraction, including for Veterans
- Wide Open Spaces
- Small communities with caring people
- Short commute times
- Utilities
- Cost of Land
- Roads
- Availability of Service Infrastructure
- New Construction
- Lower than Average Housing Costs
- Habitat for Humanity
- Many builders
- Large-scale forestry, for wood products

Opportunities

- Creating Functional & Unique Neighborhoods
- Ease of life, low traffic, safe communities
- Cost of Living
- Grants for senior living
- Housing rehabilitation
- Ministries to benefit marginalized seniors
- Support rural communities in housing & economic development
- Expansion of Code Enforcement
- Attractions for Young People
- Mixed Use Downtowns
- Development of Partnership Opportunities

Weaknesses

- Need jobs more than new houses
- Need more starter houses and high-quality rental units
- Lack of codes & enforcement
- Decline in housing stock
- Dilapidated Mobile homes
- Need more affordable housing
- Need grants for elderly housing
- Landlords need stricter guidelines to keep rental properties maintained
- Amenities like computer labs and after-school programs are needed within housing complexes
- Train noise and access to developments blocked due to trains sitting on tracks

Threats

- Lack of property maintenance
- Overgrown landscaping on public and private property
- Loss of landmarks
- "Not In My Back Yard" attitudes
- Lack of reinvestment in housing
- Lack of codes & enforcement
- Rental Rates
- Poorly Constructed Housing
- Lack of Recreational Opportunities
- Homelessness
- Lack of Collaboration amongst governments
- Preservation of prime farmland
- Conversion of farmland and/or residential areas to solar farms
- Vulnerability to natural disasters, especially for manufactured homes

5. Land Use & Transportation

Strengths

- Transportation Corridors
- Strong DOT support
- A great MPO in the Region
- Strong support for local government
- Location close to ports, I-95, I-75, I-10, US-82, Major Markets & Regional Airports
- Georgia Ports
- Rails
- Condition of Roadways
- Electric
- T-SPLOST/TIA
- Improvements to Broadband
- Tech Schools CDL Programs
- CDBG Accessibility for Infrastructure
- New Regional Transit system

Opportunities

- Increased transportation funding
- T-SPLOST/TIA
- A transportation hub for developed highways, sea, and rail
- Support, educate, and incentivize private investment in transportation
- Regional bike/pedestrian plan investment
- Need for Transportation Workforce
- Public transit – more is an asset
- Develop better zoning regulations
- Expansion of Rail
- Creating Functional and Unique Neighborhoods
- Implement Consistent Zoning and Land Use Development regulations
- Land use regulations can be revised and updated to promote equity, reduce sprawl, encourage appropriate development, and invite economic investment

Weaknesses

- Resistance of Rail Lines to Allow for Growth
- Overpasses for Vehicles Over Railroad Tracks
- Passing Lanes on 2 Lane Highways
- EV Charging Stations
- More Transportation Corridors between I-75 and I-95
- Funds for land use
- Transportation for student safety
- Need new land development regulations that encourage urban development, not greenfield development
- Transportation for students
- Many Dirt Roads
- Lack of political will for public transit
- Communities still lacking zoning regulations
- Lack of Sidewalks
- Vehicle Crashes
- Pedestrian Fatalities

Threats

- 4-Laning Highways, Bypassing Small Towns
- The Region should have reliable infrastructure connecting counties & cities to one another
- Lack of better transportation routes, more four lanes, to help with economic growth
- Lack of rail cooperation with communities
- Railroad overpasses threaten business development but help with safety
- Regional Collaboration
- Lack of Codes and enforcement
- Nonexistent, Inconsistent, and/or outdated land development ordinances and zoning regulations
- Homelessness
- Poorly Constructed Housing
- Deterioration of transportation infrastructure
- Tearing up roadways to fix or expand water/sewer infrastructure

6. Intergovernmental Coordination

Strengths	Opportunities
• Emergency management • Mutual aid agreements • Strong Regional Commission • Deep South Solid Waste Authority	• Regional development authority • City Council & County Commissioners could work together • Break down silos to work with non-traditional government agencies (e.g., transportation & health) • Establishment of regional cooperation to attract more business and industry
Weaknesses	**Threats**
• Not enough County/City coordination of services • Not enough collaboration between City and County • Long travel distances • City & County not working together, no input • Not enough input from School Boards	• Leadership • Continued good ole' boy elections • Loss of funding • County "silos"

Tifton Public Library

7. Education

Strengths	Opportunities
• Targeted Training for Demand Occupations • Cohesiveness Between Technical Colleges & Service Providers • Clusters and Pathways • Quickstart for New Industries • Relationship between K-12 & Technical Colleges • Financial Assistance Opportunities • Apprenticeships	• High School Industrial Education • Market Local Jobs in Schools • Attract More Tech jobs • Programs for youth in government • Workforce development • Tour wastewater treatment plants • Technical training in high schools • Free GED classes • After-school coordinated programs (mentors, homework, snacks)

• Strong network of colleges, tech colleges, trade programs • Wiregrass and other colleges/universities • VSU	• Continue to develop online education • Youth political experience • Transportation needed to get to locations • CTAE • Leadership • Dual Enrollment • HOPE Career Grant • More communication with businesses & industries
Weaknesses • Politics • Large Segment of Population not entering the workforce • High School Dropout Rate • 2 Georgia's – Atlanta vs. the Rest of the State • Skillset of New Generation of Workers Entering the Workforce • Turf Guarding • Inadequate services for special needs children • More education needed about drug use • School supplies should be fully funded so that teachers not to have to pay for them • Mentors needed within the schools • Male role models needed	**Threats** • Funding • Consolidation • Transportation • Kids having kids • Workforce not available • Keeping the students here (no job opportunities) • Literacy rates • Government regulation • Paperwork • Lack of Access to Technical College Programs • Personal Financial Skills • Lack of Effective Academic Remediation Plans • Resistance to Change in Education

8. Senior Services & Aging

Strengths	Opportunities
• Meals on Wheels/Congregate Meals • Senior Center Activities • Good "core" aging programs are in place	• More funded projects for the elderly • Coordination of health & transportation providers
Weaknesses	**Threats**
• Age-Friendly Efforts • Limited transportation funding for area destinations, e.g., libraries, shopping • Medication funding • Computer Education for seniors / "Digital Divide" • Senior understanding/integration with younger generations • Affordable Housing Shortage	• Decreasing finances for activities /Rising costs (inflation) • Large aging population • Social Isolation / Loneliness • Healthcare and Homecare Workforce Shortage

Willacoochee Senior Center Food Pantry

Appendix B. Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives

1. 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.

The economy of Southern Georgia is heavily dependent on agriculture and forestry products such as commercial timber production. Manufacturing has increased in key areas of the region since the previous Regional Plan Update. Partnerships with workforce development professionals, industry representatives, and technical colleges have enabled the hiring and training of the increased workforce.

As the Region complements its agricultural and manufacturing base to expand to professional and service industries, care should be taken to ensure the job opportunities and income opportunities will be diverse enough to retain the younger generation looking for challenging careers. Development of Information Technology and the Healthcare Industries is a way to accomplish that, and the colleges and universities have acknowledged that trend is working towards establishing the educational foundation.

One of the more formidable shortcomings for the Region is the inconsistent availability of broadband or internet access for businesses and residents alike. This provides inequalities for education and job training and provides significant obstacles for attracting or maintaining the technology-based industry. Unfortunately, much of this issue is out of the control of the Region's communities and is in the hands of the broadband providers which are not attracted to the Region due to the lack of density and therefore return on investment of the needed infrastructure. Grant programs have increased the appeal to industry of expanding broadband infrastructure since the previous plan update.

2. 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.

The Region is advancing towards meeting the objective of resource conservation and management. The many natural resources including the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Broxton Rocks Preserve, and Grand Bay Wildlife Management Area are well recognized, and steps are being taken to protect those and additional resources from development pressure, improve environmental quality and preserve and protect regional water resources. At times setbacks are experienced with regards to river contamination caused by

wastewater overflows, sewage failures, and pollutant discharges. A lack of funding to implement programs makes progress slower than is desired.

Regarding alternative energy technology, several communities in the Region have added photovoltaics to wastewater treatment plan property and to formerly vacant lands. While this is a benefit to the solar industry, it also helps to provide jobs in other alternative energy industries and decreases the Region's dependence on nonrenewable fuel sources.

Lack of funding is also a significant hurdle for the preservation of valuable historical resources in the Region from historical downtowns, to buildings and parks. Taking a regional approach to cultural and historical preservation may help disperse funds more efficiently and effectively.

3. 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 an expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

The Region is experiencing increasing development pressure on environmentally sensitive lands and agricultural lands resulting at times in the attempted co-location of incompatible land uses and development in areas lacking appropriate infrastructure. However, many communities in the Region have recognized the needs and have been working on developing land development regulations addressing needs of land use, infrastructure availability and capacity. Along with the development and implementation of land development regulations, additional education for community officials and the staff is being implemented.

4. Local Preparedness
Identify and implement the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, and 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.

The communities in the Region have worked hard to achieve consistency with this objective. All 18 counties and individual communities have developed and implemented a comprehensive plan to guide their decisions for long-term development as well as day to day operations. Many have implemented or updated land development regulations in response to identified needs in the comprehensive plan. All counties and communities also either have or are in the process of updating their Hazard Mitigation Plans to be able to respond to natural or human-made disasters efficiently and effectively.

5. 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 elements that are important to defining the community's character.

Fostering a beneficial sense of place is a goal which is verbalized throughout many of the comprehensive plan update processes in the Region. Many communities seek to improve and enhance their sense of place through the Main Street designation process, by creating historic districts, and by completing Urban Redevelopment Plans. A majority of communities in the Region host annual festivals celebrating the uniqueness of their community. Additionally, some communities have begun to complete small area plans to study the impact of expected growth in order to plan for any unintended consequences of rapid growth.

6. 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 higher efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer; or developing collaborative solutions for regional needs such as protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.

The communities in the Region generally operate with a spirit of regional cooperation in spite of the broad area of the Region. A few areas of improvement have been identified such as the existence of inconsistent development regulations or even the absence of those land development regulations; and the need to increase cooperation in economic development applications. The Regional Commission is willing and able to support communities to foster increasing regional cooperation.

7. 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 needs in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.

While there are no severely cost-burdened counties in the Region, five counties have a segment of the population where the median rental population pays more than 30% of its income on housing. The communities in the Region are working on development regulations and options for increased pro-active code enforcement to minimize absentee landlord neglect of housing and the ability to remove unsafe housing conditions. Funding is an issue as with most other needs to be addressed, but steps are being taken with available staff to increase the supply of lower cost and safe housing.

8. 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.

Since the previous Regional Plan Update, additional funding streams have been utilized to meet transportation infrastructure maintenance and expansion in the Region. At least one county in the Region has developed a county-wide Transportation Special Purpose Local Sales Option Sales Tax (T-SPLOST), while the entire Region has also participated in a region-wide T-SPLOST. Alternatives to the automobile are also being considered in small area plans, such as through the Hahira Studies planning process. Two partnerships have been developed with Valdosta State University (VSU) to analyze bicycle and pedestrian options throughout the Region. Working more collaboratively with the rail industry may be a future need. Conflicts have arisen in certain areas of the Region where neighborhoods and special populations such as senior citizens continue to experience long access delays due to railroad blockages. The threat of hazardous material railroad spills and concerns regarding the potential for train derailments have also been issues raised during the hazard mitigation planning process.

9. 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 availability of education to everyone and the quality of the education in the Region have been identified as an opportunity for the Region. Cooperation between workforce development staff, high schools, and technical colleges has led to the offering of many excellent vocational programs. The graduation rate has been identified in the analysis and work sessions as a need to be addressed. Lack of funding for educational programs is always a concern, not just in Southern Georgia, but on a national level as well.

10. 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 excellent 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.

Due to several sizable medical organization and hospital authorities within the Region, community health has a significant presence. The lack of urgent care facilities in the more rural areas of the Region has been mentioned as a need and has been brought to the attention of the hospital authorities who are working with the local communities to address the needs. A recent expansion of the South Georgia Medical Center (SGMC) into Berrien County and a partnership with Clinch Memorial Hospital has met an urgent need for rural healthcare in two counties within the Region.

Appendix C. Data and Maps

Regional Data Assessment

The Regional Data Assessment presents a factual and conceptual foundation upon which the rest of the Regional Plan is built. Staff collected and analyzed data and information throughout the Region based on economic development, demographics, transportation, natural and cultural resources, community facilities and services, education, and housing. The compiled data results are presented in a concise format for consideration by the stakeholders involved in the subsequent development of the Regional Needs and Opportunities, Goals, Policies, and Activities.

I) Population

- The total population for the Southern Georgia Region increased from an estimated 364,925 in 2000 to an estimated 418,944 in 2021, a 14.8% increase. The State of Georgia's population grew by 31.3 percent during the same period.

- Turner County had a 12.37% increase in population (2010 to 2021), the most substantial increase in the Region. Irwin County also experienced a substantial increase in population with a 6.88% increase between 2010 and 2021. For comparison, the state of Georgia has experienced a population increase of 10.6% since 2010.

- Eight of the eighteen counties in the Region experienced a loss in population between 2010 and 2021. Echols County suffered the highest loss (7.62%). Other counties with population loss from 2010 to 2021 were Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Charlton, Clinch, and Lanier. The highest population growth, other than Turner and Irwin counties (see above), occurred in Brooks (6.79%), Pierce (4.74%), Lowndes (4.0%), and Ware (1.81%).

- The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget is predicting an increase in population of 60,278 people region-wide by 2060 (compared to 2020). This consists of an increase of 14% with Lanier County predicted to rise in population by the highest percentage, by 34% (see Figure 4 below).
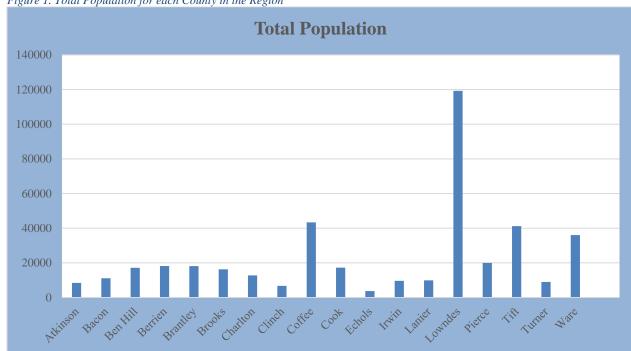
Figure 1. Total Population for each County in the Region

Total Population

Source: 2021 Population Estimates. United States Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/GA/PST045222
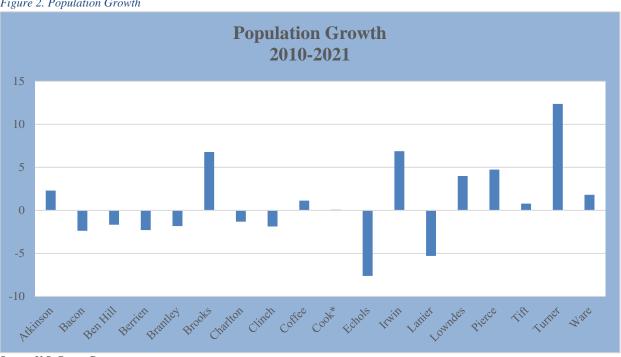
Figure 2. Population Growth

**Population Growth
2010-2021**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Turner, Brooks, Irwin, Pierce, Lowndes, Ware, and Coffee Counties have had the highest population growth by percentage. The most population loss by percentage has been in Echols and Lanier Counties. *Cook County experienced a small increase, which is not visible on the chart (0.07)

Figure 3. Regional Population Ranking for each County in the Region

Regional Population Ranking 2021							
County	Rank in Region 2015	Year 2015 Population	Rank in Region 2021	Year 2021 Population	Rank in State 2014	Rank in State 2015	Rank in State 2021	% Growth 2010-2021
Atkinson	15	8,202	16	8,391	140	139	138	2.30
Bacon	12	11,348	12	11,079	121	121	120	-2.37
Ben Hill	8	17,450	9	17,158	99	100	100	-1.67
Berrien	6	18,573	6	18,147	91	93	97	-2.29
Brantley	7	18,436	7	18,101	95	94	98	-1.82
Brooks	10	15,236	10	16,270	107	107	105	6.79
Charlton	11	12,936	11	12,766	115	115	113	-1.31
Clinch	17	6,853	17	6,725	145	145	144	-1.87
Coffee	2	42,901	2	43,386	46	47	48	1.13
Cook	9	17,240	8	17,225	101	101	101	0.07
Echols	18	4,004	18	3,699	153	153	153	-7.62
Irwin	14	8,999	14	9,618	130	132	127	6.88
Lanier	13	10,461	13	9,907	125	125	125	-5.29
Lowndes	1	114,691	1	119,276	20	21	22	4.00
Pierce	5	19,071	5	19,976	92	91	91	4.74
Tift	3	40,888	3	41,212	49	49	50	0.79
Turner	16	7,979	15	8,966	142	142	133	12.37
Ware	4	35,364	4	36,003	51	52	53	1.81

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 4. Georgia Residential Population Projections by County

Georgia Residential Population Projections by County: 2020 - 2060
COUNTY	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060	Difference (2020 to 2060)	% Increase (2020 to 2060)
ATKINSON	8,393	8,409	8,591	8,800	9,027	634	8%
BACON	11,036	11,932	12,646	13,386	14,344	3,308	30%
BEN HILL	16,614	17,165	17,524	17,448	17,342	728	4%
BERRIEN	19,408	20,216	20,396	20,256	20,056	648	3%
BRANTLEY	19,202	20,107	20,508	20,602	20,600	1,398	7%
BROOKS	15,357	15,714	15,694	15,626	15,451	94	1%
CHARLTON	13,430	13,961	14,898	15,944	16,868	3,438	26%
CLINCH	6,582	6,231	6,117	6,053	6,022	-560	-9%
COFFEE	43,218	45,168	46,187	46,338	46,128	2,910	7%
COOK	17,291	18,052	18,574	18,586	18,624	1,333	8%
ECHOLS	4,002	4,474	4,804	5,050	5,322	1,320	33%
IRWIN	9,387	9,603	9,468	9,349	9,297	-90	-1%
LANIER	10,737	11,927	12,825	13,641	14,375	3,638	34%
LOWNDES	118,268	128,381	136,688	143,463	149,299	31,031	26%
PIERCE	19,522	20,323	21,071	21,823	22,603	3,081	16%
TIFT	40,719	42,710	43,829	44,404	44,592	3,873	10%
TURNER	7,882	7,533	7,242	7,103	7,219	-663	-8%
WARE	35,826	37,503	38,540	39,342	39,983	4,157	12%
Total	**416,874**	**439,409**	**455,602**	**467,214**	**477,152**	**60,278**	**14%**

Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, Series 2021

Figure 5. Age Distribution 2021

County	Under 5	%	5-14	%	18-24	%	15-44	%	60 and over	%	85 and over	%
Atkinson	513	6.2	1,230	14.9	813	9.8	3,567	43.1	1,639	19.8	81	1.0
Bacon	745	6.7	1,609	14.4	984	8.8	4360	39.1	2,268	20.3	141	1.3
Ben Hill	1,033	6.0	2,501	14.5	1,361	7.9	6,196	35.9	4,144	24.0	337	2.0
Berrien	1,160	6.4	2,475	13.6	1,196	6.6	6,598	36.3	4,348	23.9	358	2.0
Brantley	1,089	6.0	2,518	13.9	1,260	7.0	6,361	35.2	4,278	23.7	297	1.6
Brooks	981	6.0	2,076	12.8	1,312	8.1	5,659	34.8	4,528	27.9	321	2.0
Charlton	500	4.0	1,437	11.6	1,044	8.4	4,987	40.2	2,778	22.4	137	0.6
Clinch	445	6.6	880	13.1	432	6.4	2,813	41.8	1,376	20.4	84	1.2
Coffee	2,877	6.7	5,901	13.7	4,071	9.5	17,708	41.1	8,393	19.5	482	1.1
Cook	1,178	6.9	2,445	14.2	1,731	10.1	6,420	37.4	3,855	22.4	226	1.3
Echols	277	7.5	363	9.8	297	8.0	1,555	42.1	799	21.6	73	2.0
Irwin	461	4.8	1,157	12.0	876	9.1	3,680	38.3	2,335	24.3	148	1.5
Lanier	604	6.1	1,304	13.2	894	9.1	4,223	42.8	1,858	18.8	198	2.0
Lowndes	8,681	7.3	15,809	13.3	19,425	16.3	56,274	47.2	21,520	18.0	930	0.8
Pierce	1,390	7.1	2,777	14.1	1,571	8.0	6,857	34.9	4,594	23.4	171	0.9
Tift	2,783	6.8	5,737	13.9	4,598	11.2	16,803	40.8	8,276	20.1	633	1.5
Turner	598	6.8	1,293	14.6	481	5.4	3,027	34.2	2,297	25.9	88	1.0
Ware	2,293	6.4	5,061	14.0	2,687	7.4	13,751	38.1	8,516	23.6	695	1.9

Age Distribution 2021 2021 ACS 5-year Estimates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age Distribution

- In the Southern Georgia Region, people aged 60 years and older constitute an estimated 21% of the population.

- In the Region, the 18- to 24-year-old population group also averages about 8.7% of the population, except for Lowndes County, which may be due to the presence of Valdosta State University and Moody Air Force Base, has a percentage of 16.3% in that population group. Tift also has a higher percentage (11.2%) of the 18- to 24-year-old population and has two universities, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) and the University of Georgia – Tifton campus within the county limits.

- The age group between 15 and 44 averages about 39% of the population across all counties.
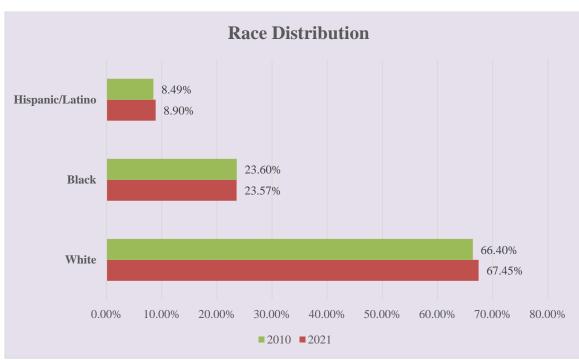
Figure 6. Race Distribution

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The Region's 2010 White/Caucasian population average across the region was 66.4%, and the 2021 White/Caucasian population was 67.4%. The Region's 2010 Black/African American population average was 23.6%, and 2021 Black/African American population was 23.6% of the total population. Overall, the Region shows a stable picture in the race distribution with no change in trend in the foreseeable future. As of 2010, 8.49% of the Region's population average was Hispanic/Latino (of any race), and as of 2021, that figure was 8.9%.

Figure 7. Income Characteristics

Income Characteristics 2017-2021 ACS							
County	Median Household Income $	Medium Family Income $	Families Below Poverty Level	%*	Individuals Below Poverty Level	%^	Labor Force	Unemployment Rate (GA Trend) % (Dec. 2021)
Atkinson	35,741	46,546	432	20.5	2,214	26.9	3,686	1.7
Bacon	40,391	50,440	466	18.6	2,557	24.5	4,412	2.5
Ben Hill	34,455	40,553	874	20.0	4,336	25.6	7,598	3.3
Berrien	44,907	56,235	696	15.1	3,774	21.1	7,714	2.4
Brantley	38,211	53,105	621	15.8	3,025	16.8	6,660	2.6
Brooks	39,770	60,372	717	19.1	3,722	23.1	7,105	2.3
Charlton	45,494	54,453	477	18.1	2,421	21.3	5,291	2.3
Clinch	47,750	54,500	443	25.3	2,010	30.2	2,395	2.0
Coffee	44,450	53,648	1,935	19.1	8,866	22.2	18,336	2.4
Cook	45,702	51,163	781	18.6	3,476	20.5	8,038	2.2
Echols	45,151	57,102	231	23.2	939	25.4	1,599	1.9
Irwin	42,312	63,251	351	15.4	1,953	20.9	7,963	2.9
Lanier	33,956	50,172	651	27.1	3,269	34.1	3,975	2.4
Lowndes	42,242	67,395	5,224	19.8	30,273	26.5	53,833	2.4
Pierce	50,820	59,942	674	13.5	3,490	17.9	8,486	2.1
Tift	46,245	58,163	1,759	17.7	8,654	22.1	18,249	2.0
Turner	35,828	48,651	421	20.8	2,329	27.2	3,862	3.5
Ware	39,419	50,351	1,349	17.3	7,999	23.8	13,392	2.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau   *(State of GA % is 10.6)   ^(State of GA % is 14.0

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Figure 8. Per Capita Income Comparison

Per Capita Income Comparison – Georgia Trend April 2015, Bureau of Economic Analysis 2021							
County	Rank in Region 2015	Year 2015 Per Capita Income $	Rank in Region 2021	Year 2021 Per Capita Income $	Rank in State 2014	Rank in State 2015	Rank in State 2021
Tift	1	34,410	1	44,913	57	45	50
Lowndes	2	34,200	2	43,546	68	50	70
Turner	3	33,620	13	38,250	27	57	136
Brooks	4	33,158	5	40,982	21	65	107
Pierce	5	32,003	4	41,882	86	81	93
Ware	6	31,207	11	38,862	120	98	132
Bacon	7	30,633	10	39,471	124	101	124
Clinch	10	29,072	3	42,450	141	123	83
Coffee	8	29,333	7	40,209	131	118	116
Berrien	9	29,187	9	39,945	76	120	119
Irwin	12	28,534	6	40,963	50	128	108
Ben Hill	11	28,895	12	38,640	121	125	133
Cook	14	26,998	8	39,380	129	139	126
Atkinson	13	27,892	16	35,527	144	133	151
Charlton	16	24,843	18	30,916	157	151	157
Brantley	18	24,172	17	35,435	148	154	152
Lanier	17	24,558	14	36,086	133	152	146
Echols	15	26,045	15	36,062	123	147	147

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Income

- **Regional Income Figures 2021:**
    - Average median household income = $41,825
    - Average median family income = $54,225
    - Per Capita Income average =$39,084
    - Lowndes County has largest median family income at $67,395.

- **Regional Poverty Figures 2021:**
    - Average poverty rate = 23.9%
    - The Highest rate of Families below Poverty Level = Lanier County, 27.1%
    - The Lowest rate of Families below Poverty Level = Pierce County, 13.5%
    - Sixteen of the Region's eighteen counties are considered to be areas of persistent poverty (more than 20% of a county's population lives below the poverty threshold). The two counties that were below the 20% threshold for individuals below the poverty level were Brantley and Pierce Counties.

- **Regional Unemployment Figures 2021:**
    - Average unemployment rate = 2.4%
    - Highest unemployment rate = Turner County, 3.5%
    - Lowest unemployment rate = Atkinson County, 1.7%

ii) Economic Development

The below map shows the distribution of employment by County within the State. Lowndes County leads the Region with an annual average of 49,616 people employed in 2021.

Georgia Employment by County
2021 Annual Average

Georgia 4,983,732
United States 152,581,000

Employment
0 - 1,000
1,001 - 2,500
2,501 - 5,000
5,001 - 10,000
10,001 - 25,000
25,001 - 50,000
50,001 - 100,000
100,001 - 250,000
250,000 - 1,000,000

Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division
Data Source - Georgia LaborMarket Explorer
April 2022

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- **Regional Income Figures 2021:**
  - Average median household income = $41,825
  - Average median family income = $54,225
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- **Regional Unemployment Figures 2021:**
  - Average unemployment rate = 2.4%
  - Highest unemployment rate = Turner County, 3.5%
  - Lowest unemployment rate = Atkinson County, 1.7%

- **Main Streets**

  The preservation of historic resources and investment in downtown areas are two ways to retain and attract economic development. Below are the Main Street communities listed in the Southern Georgia Region and on the below map:

  Georgia Exceptional Main Street Communities (GEMS):
  - City of Tifton
  - City of Valdosta

  Classic Main Street Communities:
  - City of Adel
  - City of Blackshear
  - City of Douglas
  - City of Hahira
  - City of Homerville
  - City of Nashville

MAIN STREET COMMUNITIES

Legend
- Interstates
- State Routes
- US Highways
- County Boundaries
- Classic Main Streets
- Georgia Exceptional Main Streets (GEMS)
- Cities

0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles
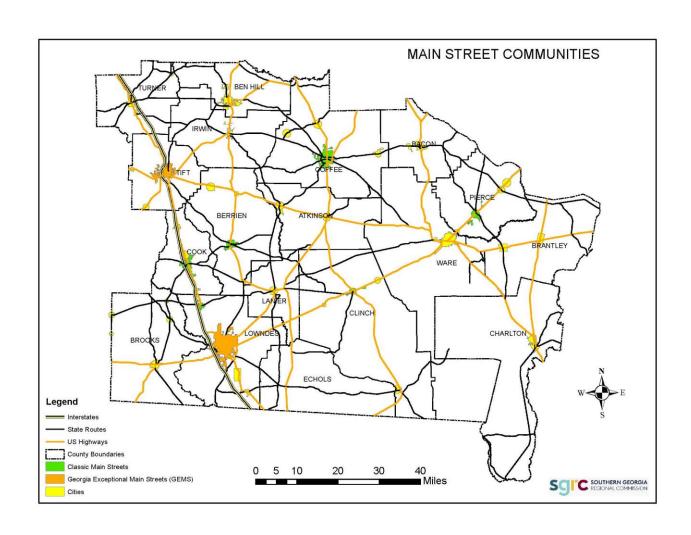
Figure 9. Business Summary 2022

Business Summary 2022 GDOL, Area Labor Profiles																			
	Total # Busines ses	Agricult ural & Mining	%	Constr uction	%	Manuf/ Transp Wareho use	%	Retail Trade	%	Info rma tion	%	He alth Car e	%	Other Servic e	%	Go vt	%	Uncl assifi ed	%
Atkinson	131	9	6.9	5	3.8	16	12.2	23	17.6	0	0.0	3	2.3	6	4.6	22	16.8	1	0.8
Bacon	287	34	11.9	9	3.1	17	5.9	51	17.8	2	0.7	19	6.6	14	4.9	25	8.7	14	4.9
Ben Hill	365	13	3.6	11	3.0	32	8.8	74	20.3	4	1.1	25	6.8	28	7.7	22	6.0	24	6.6
Berrien	311	21	6.8	26	8.4	18	5.8	56	18.0	3	1.0	23	7.4	12	3.9	27	8.7	14	4.5
Brantley	250	18	7.2	36	14.4	16	6.4	37	14.8	3	1.2	13	5.2	11	4.4	26	10.4	13	5.2
Brooks	305	40	13.1	25	8.2	8	2.6	42	13.8	2	0.7	20	6.6	25	8.2	30	9.8	22	7.2
Charlton	192	21	10.9	18	9.4	9	4.7	36	18.8	2	1.0	8	4.2	10	5.2	18	9.4	8	4.2
Clinch	185	32	17.3	9	4.9	10	5.4	29	15.7	4	2.2	12	6.5	10	5.4	24	13.0	8	4.3
Coffee	992	49	4.9	67	6.8	58	5.8	201	20.3	7	0.7	94	9.5	55	5.5	58	5.8	57	5.7
Cook	390	23	5.9	31	7.9	30	7.7	73	18.7	4	1.0	36	9.2	20	5.1	36	9.2	18	4.6
Echols	54	24	44.4	7	13.0	2	3.7	5	9.3	0	0.0	2	3.7	1	1.9	9	16.7	3	5.6
Irwin	165	17	10.3	13	7.9	4	2.4	32	19.4	3	1.8	12	7.3	5	3.0	21	12.7	7	4.2
Lanier	127	9	7.1	14	11.0	9	7.1	19	15.0	1	0.8	9	7.1	11	8.7	22	17.3	5	3.9
Lowndes	3,219	28	0.9	251	7.8	122	3.8	482	15.0	36	1.1	395	12.3	204	6.3	10 9	3.4	233	7.2
Pierce	422	38	9.0	66	15.6	19	4.5	71	16.8	3	0.7	27	6.4	26	6.2	21	5.0	24	5.7
Tift	1,197	43	3.6	74	6.2	42	3.5	224	18.7	10	0.8	114	9.5	57	4.8	70	5.8	79	6.6
Turner	201	11	5.5	4	2.0	6	3.0	38	18.9	2	1.0	15	7.5	12	6.0	23	11.4	14	7.0
Ware	990	20	2.0	65	6.6	34	3.4	194	19.6	9	0.9	122	12.3	71	7.2	62	6.3	60	6.1

Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor

Figure 10. Employment Comparison

Employment Comparison–2021

County	Rank in Region 2017	Year 2017 Employment	Rank in Region 2021	Year 2021 Employment	Rank in State 2014	Rank in State 2015	Rank in State 2021	% Growth 2017-2021
Lowndes	1	49,612	1	70,847	17	17	17	42.80
Tift	2	19,596	2	29,002	37	37	38	47.99
Coffee	3	16,933	3	24,132	41	42	41	42.51
Ware	4	15,186	4	20,301	45	45	48	33.68
Ben Hill	5	5,336	5	8,128	86	87	92	52.32
Bacon	6	4,412	10	5,297	99	98	111	20.06
Pierce	7	4,126	6	6,948	101	99	97	68.40
Cook	8	4,072	7	6,689	98	100	98	64.27
Berrien	9	3,195	8	6,252	104	104	103	95.68
Brooks	10	2,900	9	5,544	111	111	109	91.17
Clinch	11	2,509	15	3,320	121	119	130	32.32
Atkinson	12	2,414	14	3,416	130	128	129	41.51
Brantley	13	2,241	11	4,639	124	124	116	107.00
Turner	14	2,137	13	3,604	127	125	127	68.65
Charlton	15	1,974	16	3,183	126	127	131	61.25
Irwin	16	1,711	12	3,914	129	130	123	128.76
Lanier	17	1,648	17	2,617	137	137	140	58.80
Echols	18	692	18	859	150	152	156	24.13
State Total		*4,370,882*		*6,541,518*	*n/a*	*n/a*	*n/a*	*49.66*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis

Employment Comparison

- None of the eighteen counties experienced a net loss of employment for the period 2017 – 2021.

- Seven counties in the region had a smaller employment increase percentage than that of the State of Georgia.

		Less than 9th Grade		9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma		High Schools Graduate, GED or equivalent		Some College, no degree		Associate's Degree		Bachelor's Degree		Graduate or Professional Degree	
	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Atkinson	5266	535	404	407	400	1091	648	407	429	98	274	83	205	86	199
Bacon	7300	252	186	451	327	1490	1383	819	1,093	220	272	179	189	59	380
Ben Hill	11585	333	277	794	476	2792	3004	524	1203	374	541	320	594	184	169
Berrien	12546	269	305	1022	840	2695	2412	944	1268	399	757	580	501	191	363
Brantley	12458	392	126	1015	798	2988	2653	1306	1212	215	944	328	481	174	327
Brooks	11332	338	406	505	841	1982	1883	1084	1413	518	459	677	574	178	474
Charlton	9078	634	127	588	393	2282	1406	1031	850	212	461	510	229	201	154
Clinch	4583	417	104	305	355	760	941	444	534	50	171	120	230	64	88
Coffee	28413	1649	772	2351	1712	6001	5126	2104	2808	870	1032	1544	2444	371	969
Cook	11070	212	395	791	663	1745	1791	1191	1288	478	673	834	1009	329	501
Echols	2550	126	40	140	229	586	567	156	288	68	90	49	146	21	44
Irwin	6689	192	105	728	389	1326	982	542	760	266	255	252	284	271	337
Lanier	6659	155	155	445	221	1264	1611	551	559	319	227	373	395	51	333
Lowndes	70468	839	782	3412	2013	10586	12213	6071	9262	4044	4000	4945	4942	3003	4356
Pierce	13165	473	270	421	663	3048	2513	1155	1146	624	818	513	596	252	673
Tift	26321	679	703	1516	1315	4714	4095	2167	2607	1448	2389	992	1197	925	1197
Turner	6220	240	308	504	372	1169	953	476	505	136	342	153	282	58	148
Ware	24532	702	653	1984	1127	5395	4878	1798	2594	769	1122	937	1403	572	598

Figure 11. Education

Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 estimates for population 25 years and over

Education of the Labor Force
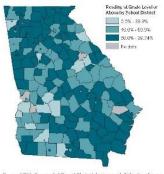
- The highest numbers for educational attainment in the Region are for high school graduation, GED or equivalent for all age groups. Those numbers drop off drastically for post-secondary education with a degree.

- A look at the educational attainment of the workforce by gender shows that males represent the vast majority of people without a high school diploma, possibly reflecting early recruitment into the workforce. Of those obtaining a high school diploma only, the number of males and females is fairly even. However, females represent a large majority of the population that obtains a college education and beyond.

- With technical schools and colleges throughout the Southern Georgia Region, there are numerous resources available for education and training. There are also programs set up to help those who are unemployed to further their skills.

- Valdosta State University offers assistance for small businesses through their UGA Small Business Development Center. This assistance is offered for many of the counties in the Region.

Below is a snapshot created by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia related to the Georgia Workforce Pipeline for Education.
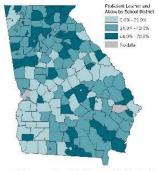
GEORGIA WORKFORCE PIPELINE SNAPSHOT | EDUCATION

64% of Georgia's 3rd-grade students were reading at grade level or above on their English Language Arts Georgia Milestones assessment.

Reading at Grade Level or Above by School District
- 0.0% - 39.9%
- 40.0% - 59.9%
- 60.0% - 99.74%
- No data
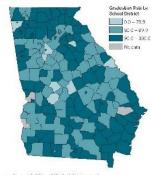
Source: 2022 Governor's Office of Student Achievement. Note: To achieve a reading status designation of Grade Level or Above, a student must demonstrate reading skill at the beginning of the grade-level stretch band.

43% of Georgia's 8th-grade students scored proficient or above on their Mathematics Georgia Milestones assessment.

Proficient Learner and Above by School District
- 0.0% - 23.9%
- 24.0% - 43.9%
- 44.0% - 78.9%
- No data

Source: 2022 Governor's Office of Student Achievement. Note: Proficient Learners demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students are prepared for the next grade level or course and are on track for college and career readiness.

In 2021, nearly **84%** of Georgia public school students graduated on time.

Graduation Rate by School District
- 0.0 - 79.9
- 80.0 - 89.9
- 90.0 - 100.0
- No data

Source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

Over **60%** of Georgia high school students in the class of 2016 enrolled in postsecondary education after graduation. Five years later only **32%** of students completed any kind of postsecondary credential or award.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Earned postsecondary credential			5.9%	17.2%	27.6%	31.8%
Enrolled in postsecondary	63.2%	56.1%	40.1%	25.6%	13.6%	8.6%
Earned career pathway credential, working in Georgia			30.7%	31.6%	32.3%	31.6%
Working without postsecondary credential or enrollment	21.7%	24.9%	20.1%	22.1%	23.0%	24.5%
Unknown	11.8%	13.6%				

Source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

Typical salaries for graduates of public Georgia colleges and universities in Georgia vary widely five years after degree completion depending on major.

- Agricultural/Animal/Plant/Veterinary Science and Related Fields: $36,025 – $68,697
- Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services: $41,128 – $78,286
- Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services: $51,969 – $98,247
- Education: $31,368 – $51,209
- Engineering: $60,458 – $100,830
- Health Professions and Related Programs: $43,265 – $78,289
- Liberal Arts And Sciences, General Studies, and Humanities: $28,910 – $56,237
- Psychology: $28,584 – $52,961
- Transportation and Materials Moving: $40,984 – $73,355

Legend: 25th percentile (low) to median | Median to 75th percentile (high)

Source: University System of Georgia. Note: Salaries are for graduates with bachelor's degrees, five years after graduation, at USG institutions, selected majors.

In 2020, people who identified as Asian with bachelor's degrees or higher had the most income. People who identified as White had the most income at lower educational levels.

HS Degree or Less
- White: $36,448
- Black: $30,742
- Asian: $35,000
- Other/Two or more: $29,967
- Hispanic: $28,511

Some College or Associates Degree
- White: $47,418
- Black: $38,968
- Asian: $37,752
- Other/Two or more: $39,493
- Hispanic: $37,752

Bachelor's Degree
- White: $68,993
- Black: $50,696
- Asian: $71,127
- Other/Two or more: $55,533
- Hispanic: $50,624

Master's, Professional, or Doctoral Degree
- White: $82,468
- Black: $55,000
- Asian: $98,000
- Other/Two or more: $74,220
- Hispanic: $70,874

All Education Levels
- White: $52,000
- Black: $40,000
- Asian: $60,405
- Other/Two or more: $38,968
- Hispanic: $32,983

Source: US Census Bureau. Note: Race categories include people of Hispanic or Latino origin. People who are Hispanic or Latino can be of any race.

12% of all Georgians age 25 and over did not have a high school diploma according to the 2016–2020 five-year estimates.

	White Alone	Black Alone	Asian Alone	Other	Hispanic or Latino Origin
Less than high school diploma	442,613	263,426	39,654	102,760	190,920
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	1,138,398	662,436	44,586	90,274	136,170
Some college or associates degree	1,164,901	671,001	43,595	90,209	104,309
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,465,356	331,992	169,594	86,730	101,235
Total	4,211,168	2,118,845	296,439	369,973	532,854

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Note: Race categories include people of Hispanic or Latino origin. People who are Hispanic or Latino can be of any race.

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Figure 12. Georgia Workforce Pipeline Snapshot

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Economic Resources and Trends

The 2022-2026 Southern Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy by bringing together the public and private sectors. As a performance-based plan, the CEDS plays a critical role in adapting to global economic conditions by fully utilizing the Region's unique advantages to maximize economic opportunity for its residents by attracting private investment that creates jobs. The following excerpt from the CEDS summarizes the Region's economic resources and trends (see the following page).

Regional

Atkinson - Bacon - Ben Hill - Berrien
Brantley - Brooks - Charlton - Clinch
Coffee - Cook - Echols - Irwin
Lanier - Lowndes - Pierce - Tift
Turner - Ware Counties

2010 Census: 406,586
2020 Census: 413,869

Population Percentage Increase 1.79%

Male - 49.6%
Female - 50.4%
Age 65+ - 62,023
Under 18 - 99,585
Median Age - 38.4
Minority - 28.3%

Housing

Median Home Value $93,300
Occupied Housing Units 151,566
Homeowner Vacancy Rate 1.2%
Rental Vacancy Rate 5.1%

**% of Housing Units that are
Transportation Disadvantaged 7.5%**

Economic

Median Household Income $39,632
Per Capita Income $21,050
**Per Capita Living Wage
$31,927**
% of People Below Poverty Level 24.0%

Top 5 Industries

Health Care & Social Assistance
Manufacturing
Retail Trade
Educational Services
Accommodation & Food Services

GA DOL
1st Qtr. 2022

Food Insecurity Rate
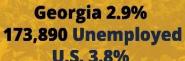
Region - 15.0%
Georgia - 10.9%
National - 11.8%

Top 5 Employers

Moody Air Force Base
Valdosta State University
Memorial Satilla Health
Pilgrim's Pride Corp
Coffee Regional Medical Center

GA DOL
1st Qtr. 2022

Unemployment Rate
As of July, 2022

Georgia 2.9%
173,890 Unemployed
U.S. 3.8%

1.US Census Bureau, 2020 Census
2.US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Data
3.www.livingwage.mit.edu
4.www.feedingamerica.org
5.Georgia Labor Market Explorer

iii) Housing

- Regional Housing Statistics:
  - Single Family = 61.82% of total housing units
  - Multi-Family = 13.38% of total housing units
  - Mobile Homes = 24.33% of total housing units

- A large number of mobile homes are attributed to the fact that they are easy to purchase, are less costly, and can be quickly set up and made ready for moving in, even in rural areas.

- The low numbers for Multi-Family housing stock are reflective of a more agrarian and rural region where there are few areas with sufficient population density to warrant multi-family housing development. This is supported by the fact that the highest numbers of multi-family housing occur in counties with larger urban areas, student and military populations, and metropolitan/micropolitan centers.

- There is a shortage of accessible, affordable housing throughout the Region for independent living. Housing Choice Voucher Program Housing (formerly known as Section 8) is available in some areas, and there is a need for more affordable housing for persons on a fixed/limited income, such as those with disabilities. Currently, 14.21% of the regional population has a disability. Housing Choice Voucher Program Housing would allow them to pay no more than 30% of their income for rent and a government agency would fund the remaining, most often Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) also can assist those individuals on a fixed income. Through DCA, an individual can apply for assistance through the Housing Choice Voucher Program. This program currently serves 149 of the 159 counties in Georgia; the remaining 10 counties are served by those county's housing authority.

Figure 13. Value of Housing Stock

Value of Housing Stock; Owner-occupied units 2021 US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates						
	Total	Less than $50,000	$50,000-$99,999	$100,000-$199,999	$200,000-$499,999	$500,000-$999,999	Above $1,000,000
Atkinson	2,062	821	701	357	158	25	0
Bacon	2,826	722	799	798	461	46	0
Ben Hill	4,018	1,202	1,104	1,071	572	63	6
Berrien	4,560	1,075	1,120	1,446	862	51	6
Brantley	5,184	2,025	875	1,638	475	157	14
Brooks	4,164	902	1,136	1,118	869	139	0
Charlton	2,911	800	676	940	425	47	23
Clinch	1,692	589	564	358	169	12	0
Coffee	9,658	2,419	2,132	3,040	1,943	111	13
Cook	3,901	743	1,021	1,205	831	94	7
Echols	946	302	214	200	117	88	25
Irwin	2,620	616	950	652	325	60	17
Lanier	2,289	348	554	941	418	5	23
Lowndes	23,937	2,557	2,891	8,938	7,462	1,957	132
Pierce	5,484	1,504	1,162	1,755	944	119	0
Tift	9,394	1,678	1,794	3,310	2,410	197	5
Turner	2,184	600	754	598	205	0	27
Ware	8,069	2,218	2,363	2,461	978	49	0

Source: US Census Bureau, 2015

Value of Housing Stock

General Housing Stock Values:
- 22.02% are less than $50,000
- 21.70% are $50,000 - $99,999
- 32.14% are $100,000 - $199,999
- 20.46% are $200,000 - $499,999
- 3.36% are $500,000 - $999,999
- 0.31% are above $1,000,000

Figure 14. Housing Characteristics

Housing Characteristics 2021 US Census ACS, 5-year estimates							
County	Total Units	Single Family	%	Multi-Family	%	Mobile Homes	%
Atkinson	3,475	1,781	51.3	202	5.9	1,479	42.6
Bacon	4,803	2,736	57	369	7.2	1,682	35
Ben Hill	8,102	4,957	61.2	1,304	16.2	1,793	22.1
Berrien	8,082	5,080	62.9	419	5.2	2,529	31.3
Brantley	8,133	3,600	44.3	166	2.1	4,330	53.2
Brooks	7,343	4,395	59.9	617	8.3	2,298	31.3
Charlton	4,633	2,367	51.1	88	2.0	1,876	40.5
Clinch	3,019	1,952	64.7	276	9.2	791	26.2
Coffee	17,301	10,054	58.1	1,495	8.7	5,712	33.0
Cook	7,256	4,411	60.8	704	9.7	2,112	29.1
Echols	1,659	641	38.6	49	2.9	964	58.1
Irwin	4,141	2,861	69.1	309	7.4	948	22.9
Lanier	4,109	2,532	61.6	154	3.7	1,421	34.6
Lowndes	48,226	32,746	67.9	11,229	23.2	4,163	8.6
Pierce	8,316	5,244	63.1	289	3.5	2,742	33.0
Tift	17,239	10,386	60.2	3,027	17.5	3,781	21.9
Turner	3,912	2,679	68.5	399	10.1	834	21.3
Ware	15,922	10,177	63.9	2,403	14.7	3,288	20.7

Source: US Census Bureau, 2021

The largest gain of housing stock occurred in the twenty-year period between 1980 and 1999. After 1999, the number of new structures begins to drop. Lowndes County and Coffee County both contain the highest number of older structures (those built in 1939 or earlier).

Figure 15. Number of Residential Structures by Age and County

County	Built 2020 or later	Built 2010 to 2019	Built 2000 to 2009	Built 1990 to 1999	Built 1980 to 1989	Built 1970 to 1979	Built 1960 to 1969	Built 1950 to 1959	Built 1940 to 1949	Built 1939 or earlier
Atkinson	0	350	537	854	456	400	211	214	242	211
Bacon	16	310	769	937	819	851	373	299	194	235
Ben Hill	0	161	1,044	1,517	1,610	1,192	773	745	239	821
Berrien	0	518	1,149	1,861	1,153	1,022	880	865	188	446
Brantley	19	528	1,928	2,153	1,111	1,045	542	407	160	240
Brooks	0	422	1,207	1433	1,027	1,276	670	451	471	386
Charlton	0	187	737	811	896	825	398	339	80	360
Clinch	0	202	374	312	518	554	264	359	322	114
Coffee	5	1,067	2,323	4,541	3,404	2,501	1,238	728	362	1,132
Cook	0	284	1,318	1,473	935	1,326	791	449	174	506
Echols	0	75	246	442	347	349	73	71	16	40
Irwin	0	234	353	828	715	719	196	447	216	433
Lanier	0	532	862	901	675	330	209	111	117	372
Lowndes	0	4,699	10,325	10,184	7,179	6,623	3,677	2,933	1,085	1,521
Pierce	0	459	1,290	2,020	1,610	1,085	769	512	282	289
Tift	51	936	2,123	3,312	2,811	3,639	1,340	1,537	941	549
Turner	14	95	407	614	649	418	473	519	189	534
Ware	13	650	1,530	2,446	2,318	2,883	1,899	2,350	817	1,016

Table title: **Number of Residential Structures by Age and County** 2021 US Census ACS, 5-year estimates

Source: US Census Bureau
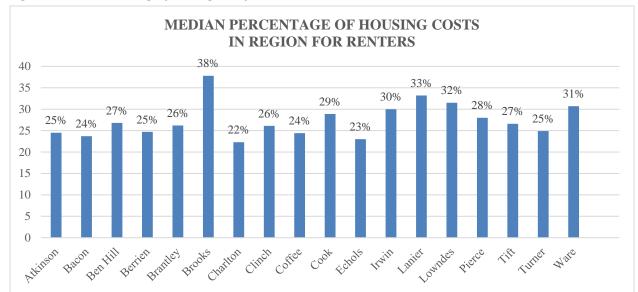
Figure 16. Median Percentage of Housing Costs for Renters

**MEDIAN PERCENTAGE OF HOUSING COSTS
IN REGION FOR RENTERS**

Atkinson 25%, Bacon 24%, Ben Hill 27%, Berrien 25%, Brantley 26%, Brooks 38%, Charlton 22%, Clinch 26%, Coffee 24%, Cook 29%, Echols 23%, Irwin 30%, Lanier 33%, Lowndes 32%, Pierce 28%, Tift 27%, Turner 25%, Ware 31%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2021, 5-year ACS Estimates

There are currently 5 of the 18 counties cost-burdened with the median paying 30% or more of net income on total rental housing costs. Brooks County renters are paying 38% total rental housing costs. Charlton County renters are paying the least amount at 22% of total housing costs. There are 13 counties paying less than 30% of their net income for rental housing. At the present time, there are no counties severely cost-burdened- paying 50% or more of total net income on rental housing. It has been recommended that no household pay more than 30% of net income on housing. There is a need for more affordable rental housing throughout the Region, especially for the 5 counties with the burden of 30% or more being spent on rental housing.

Figure 17. Unemployment Rate Percentage by County

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE PERCENTAGE BY COUNTY

County	Rate
Ware	2.3
Turner	3.5
Tift	2
Pierce	2.1
Lowndes	2.4
Lanier	2.4
Irwin	2.9
Echols	1.9
Cook	2.2
Coffee	2.4
Clinch	2
Charlton	2.3
Brooks	2.3
Brantley	2.6
Berrien	2.4
Ben Hill	3.3
Bacon	2.5
Atkinson	1.7
Georgia	3.3
U.S.	3.9

Source: Georgia Trend, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021

The unemployment rate in December 2021 averaged 3.3% in Georgia and 3.9% in the US. The unemployment average for the 18 county Southern Georgia Region was 2.4%, in December 2021. Of the 18 counties, Turner County had the highest unemployment rate at 3.5%.

Figure 18. Housing Types

HOUSING TYPES US Census, 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates					
COUNTY	TOTAL	SINGLE-FAMILY	DUPLEX	APARTMENTS	MOBILE HOMES	BOAT, RV, Van, ETC.
Atkinson	3475	1801	68	114	1479	13
Bacon	4803	2764	99	242	1682	16
Ben Hill	8102	5001	540	720	1793	48
Berrien	8082	5116	51	332	2529	54
Brantley	8133	3642	62	62	4330	37
Brooks	7343	4457	69	486	2298	33
Charlton	4633	2376	180	172	1876	29
Clinch	3019	1973	77	178	791	0
Coffee	17301	10159	308	1082	5712	40
Cook	7256	4572	40	503	2112	29
Echols	1659	641	12	13	964	5
Irwin	4141	2965	103	102	948	23
Lanier	4109	2532	13	141	1421	2
Lowndes	48226	33643	1166	9166	4163	88
Pierce	8316	5301	34	198	2742	41
Tift	17239	10545	952	1916	3781	45
Turner	3912	2695	108	275	834	0
Ware	15922	10308	656	1616	3288	54

Source: US Census Bureau, 2021

There is a total of 173,169 housing units within the Region. Of the total housing units, 50.40% are single-family units, 4.12% are duplexes, 9.09% are apartments, 25.27% are mobile homes, and 9.44% are boats, RV's, vans, etc.

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) offer housing opportunities for persons with AIDS (the HOPWA program). They assist anyone who is HIV-positive, low-income, and meets their criteria. Funds are provided for short-term assistance to families and individuals affected or infected with HIV. Funds are limited for help with homeless, single-

parent families or dual-parent families, and individuals. The amount of financial support is based on the county, size of household, and income. This assistance is limited and is available in the entire Southern Georgia Region. Funds help to cover the costs of rent, mortgage, utilities, and offers resources and services support.

Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) offers assistance with the aging and those with disabilities through Georgia's Aging & Disability Resource Connection. They provide help with information on resources, education, and funding that may be available to the communities.

Homeless Population

The Georgia Balance of State Continuum of Care Point In Time Homeless County 2019 report provides a snapshot of the homeless population, homeless bed resources, and resource utilization on a single night in January 2019. Below are the results of the County-level data for the Southern Georgia Region and the map that follows the data shows the distribution of the homeless population in Georgia.

Figure 19. Balance of State Point-In-Time County-Level Data

COUNTY	Unsheltered Homeless Persons	Unsheltered Veterans	Unsheltered Chronic	Sheltered Homeless Persons	Total Homeless	PIT Utilization (% of Available Beds)
Balance of State Point-In-Time County-Level Data						
Atkinson	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bacon	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ben Hill	4	0	0	0	4	0
Berrien	1	0	0	0	1	0
Brantley	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brooks	0	0	0	0	0	0
Charlton	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clinch	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coffee	18	1	2	0	18	0
Cook	1	0	0	0	1	0
Echols	0	0	0	0	0	0
Irwin	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lanier	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lowndes	68	33	5	76	83	92%
Pierce	0	0	0	0	0	68%
Tift	0	0	0	37	37	45
Turner	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ware	15	1	2	13	28	93%

Source: GA DCA Georgia Balance of State Continuum of Care Point In Time Homeless Count
Biannual Report: 2019

2019 Georgia Balance of State
Report on Homelessness
Total Homeless Persons

Legend
- 0
- 1 - 9
- 10 - 24
- 25 - 49
- 50 - 99
- 100 - 199
- 200 - 599
- Outside Balance of State

Georgia® Department of
Community Affairs
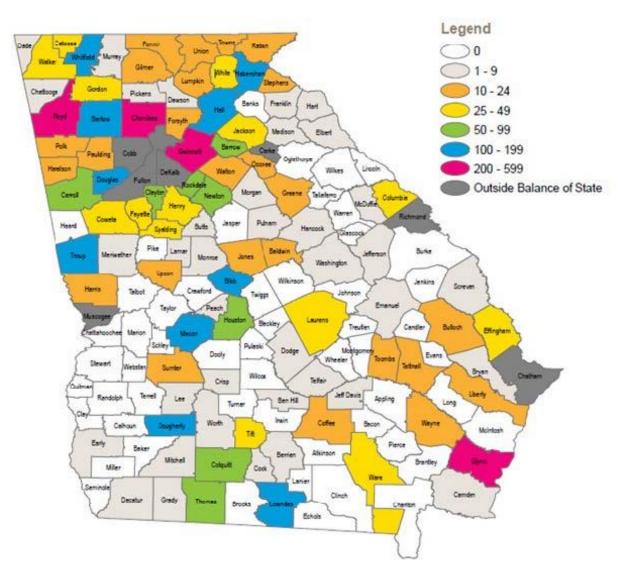
Figure 20. Travel Time to Work

County	Total	<5 Minutes	5-9 Minutes	10-14 Min	15-19 Min	20-24 Min	25-29 Min	30-34 Min	35-39 Min	40-44 Min	45-59 Min	60-89 Min	90+ Minutes
Atkinson	3,363	1%	14%	12%	13%	20%	10%	15%	2%	2%	6%	2%	3%
Bacon	4,059	2%	14%	26%	14%	9%	5%	12%	3%	3%	6%	3%	3%
Ben Hill	7,126	5%	26%	31%	12%	8%	2%	9%	0%	0%	5%	1%	1%
Berrien	6,798	7%	9%	13%	16%	16%	9%	13%	3%	3%	6%	1%	2%
Brantley	6,142	1%	3%	9%	11%	13%	3%	20%	7%	9%	15%	8%	3%
Brooks	6,253	8%	13%	11%	6%	17%	5%	21%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Charlton	4,509	4%	16%	16%	9%	6%	4%	9%	2%	4%	16%	12%	1%
Clinch	2,255	10%	18%	16%	13%	7%	5%	8%	1%	2%	8%	8%	2%
Coffee	17,103	2%	16%	26%	20%	16%	5%	7%	1%	2%	4%	2%	1%
Cook	7,449	1%	9%	21%	12%	12%	8%	17%	4%	1%	7%	4%	3%
Echols	1,491	10%	18%	4%	9%	12%	9%	9%	1%	12%	8%	6%	1%
Irwin	3,946	4%	18%	14%	13%	9%	6%	21%	1%	2%	5%	4%	3%
Lanier	3,444	3%	14%	8%	14%	19%	8%	19%	3%	3%	5%	2%	1%
Lowndes	49,524	3%	12%	21%	24%	16%	7%	7%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Pierce	8,105	1%	6%	11%	19%	20%	5%	19%	4%	2%	5%	6%	1%
Tift	17,038	5%	14%	26%	25%	8%	4%	7%	1%	3%	4%	4%	1%
Turner	3,339	6%	20%	9%	8%	19%	6%	11%	4%	3%	7%	5%	2%
Ware	12,320	2%	8%	20%	27%	19%	4%	7%	2%	1%	5%	3%	2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates; Table B08303

Travel Time to Work

- Residents have to travel further to find work as evident by the high spikes in 30–34-minute travel times.

- The counties with the shortest commute times (5-20 minutes) are those with larger commercial areas (Lowndes, Tift, Ware, Ben Hill and Coffee County).

- There are very few extreme commuters (defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as workers who travel 90 minutes or more each way to work) in the Region.

iv) Community Facilities and Services

Most incorporated municipalities in the Region have municipal water and sewer systems, except for a few smaller cities that do not. Some counties in the Region provide water and sewer service to select areas. Storm water management is handled at the local level.

All communities in the Region are covered by fire protection services provided by local fire departments. Some counties have consolidated fire departments covering both incorporated and unincorporated areas.

Public safety services in the Region are provided by county sheriff's departments and municipal police departments. Some smaller municipalities contract with the surrounding county for police services rather than having their police department.

Parks and recreation facilities and services are provided at the local government level except for in a few areas where a joint Parks and Recreation Authority exists (for example, the Valdosta-Lowndes Parks and Recreation Authority).

Most counties in the Region have their own solid waste disposal facility. Brantley County contracts with solid waste service providers outside the Region.

Some areas of the Region, generally more urban areas, are served by multiple broadband providers. Many rural areas of the Region are served by only one broadband provider, or by none at all. Improved broadband access is identified in this plan as a regional need.

Broadband

Broadband service in the Region is provided through DSL, cable, fiber, fixed wireless, and satellite. The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's 2014 *Digital Economy Plan* called for expanded broadband access in the Region along with strategies for the Region to remain competitive and maintain a qualified workforce in an increasingly digitized economy. The Georgia legislature, in recognition of the importance of broadband infrastructure to the vitality of communities passed the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act (SB 402) in 2018. The Act provides for broadband services[1] planning, deployment, and incentives, along with other purposes. It also requires comprehensive plans to include the promotion of the deployment of broadband services. The counties and cities in the Region recognize the importance of broadband expansion to economic development and quality of life for residents.

Provision of broadband services enables access by residents to a number of vital services such as healthcare, economic opportunity, and education. Expansion of rural broadband along with improvement in the provision of broadband services can address concerns of resident out-migration. Effective and efficient broadband enables internet-based businesses to succeed in the global economy. It is difficult to educate upcoming generations of students in web literacy and digital skills training without adequate broadband speed and connectivity. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of home broadband availability and quality as all students and many workers studied and worked remotely.

The latest data shown in the map below identifies 29% of the locations in the Southern Georgia Region as unserved. This analysis is based on a broadband availability map made available in June, 2020 and most recently updated in July, 2022. The new map utilizes more granular data than the previously utilized Federal Communications Commission (FCC) map.

Regional statistics are based on a fixed, terrestrial broadband definition of 25 megabits per second down and 3 megabits per second up. The 25/3 requirement is the minimum speed to be considered broadband. Populated areas that did not meet this definition are delineated in Map 1 (above) as 'Unserved'. It should be noted that streaming videos in 4K or high definition by several users in one location may necessitate internet speeds in excess of the state defined broadband amount.

With the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge's western entrance in Clinch County, the eastern entrance in Charlton County, and with access to the St. Marys, Suwannee, Alapaha, Little Satilla, Satilla, and Alabaha Rivers, tourism is a major attraction and economic stronghold in the Region. For navigation purposes and sense of safety, visitors depend on reliable cellular service. The portions of the Region further away from the incorporated cities experience the largest gaps in cellular service coverage.

Some of the county and municipal government buildings are connected by fiber, however many jurisdictions are interested in connection, should funding be available. Jurisdictions in the Region recognize there are many barriers for private broadband services providers to effectively roll-out

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[1] As defined in O.C.G.A. §50-40-1. Definitions. "Broadband services" means a wired or wireless terrestrial service that consists of the capability to transmit at a rate of not less than 25 megabits per second in the downstream direction and at least 3 megabits per second in the upstream direction to end users and in combination with such service provides:
    (A) Access to the Internet; or
    (B) Computer processing, information storage, or protocol conversion.

necessary broadband infrastructure in rural areas of the State. Regional leaders recognize the importance of broadband quality for industry retention and recruitment within small, rural communities. Community leaders continuously seek improvement in the quality of life for their rural residents. Industry relocation and business creation are dependent on the necessary infrastructure being in place. The lack of high-quality broadband infrastructure is a major impediment to not only recruitment but also for the expansion of established local industry. The Broadband Ready Community and Site designation has been established to incentivize private investment in the provision of rural broadband services. Many jurisdictions in the Region either plan to apply or have already applied for these designations to signal to the State and to private Internet Service Providers their prioritization of rural broadband improvement and expansion in the community.
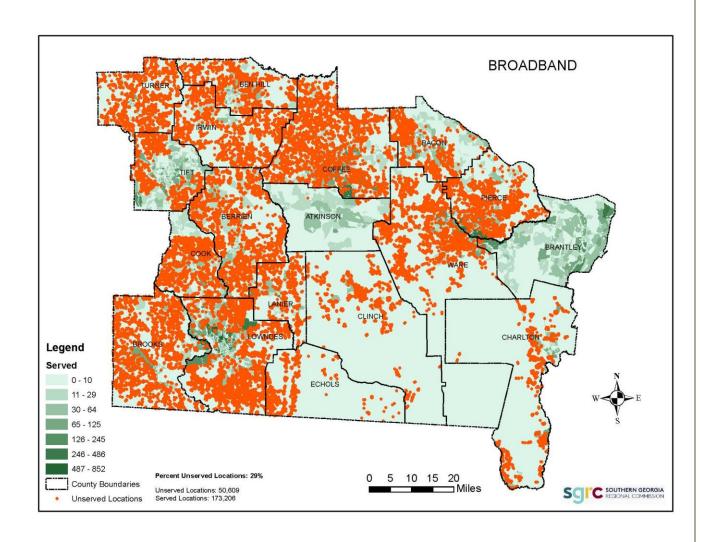
The infrastructure through which broadband is provided, and the condition of that infrastructure, is widely varied throughout the Region. DSL service is provided through telephone lines. Cable broadband is delivered through cable lines that often share poles with telephone and electric wires. As such, cable and DSL broadband infrastructure is vulnerable to damage from storms.

Mobile (3G/4G) broadband access is provided via cell phone towers throughout the Region, with varying levels of coverage; most cell towers in the Region are relatively newly constructed and are in excellent condition. New construction of cell towers has been identified as a concern for the operations of Moody Air Force Base; following a Joint Land Use Study completed in 2012, jurisdictions surrounding the base have adopted zoning ordinances limiting building height and other development and activities in or near areas of military operations. Some more remote areas of the Region are still without adequate mobile coverage by multiple providers.

Due to the increasing importance of broadband access in daily life, business, and recreation, broadband availability is increasingly likely to influence development patterns in the Region. Broadband should be included, along with other utilities and infrastructure, in all new developments. Broadband access will be a critical factor in determining the success of future developments of all types, including residential, commercial, and industrial.
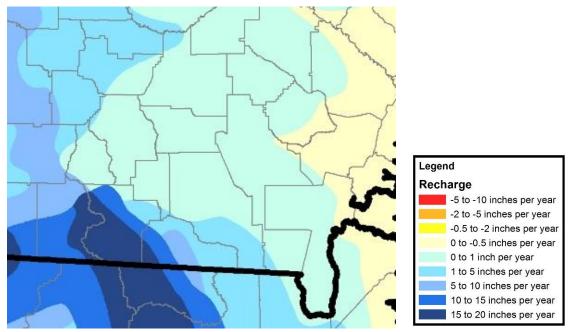
Also, as broadband access has become so crucial for so many people, the resiliency of broadband infrastructure will be a critical consideration for future hazard mitigation plans and other plans dealing with disaster resiliency. Broadband outages are no longer just inconvenient; they can also take a public safety and economic toll.

Broadband Map – Served and Unserved

BROADBAND

Legend

Served
- 0 - 10
- 11 - 29
- 30 - 64
- 65 - 125
- 126 - 245
- 246 - 486
- 487 - 852

County Boundaries

• Unserved Locations

Percent Unserved Locations: 29%

Unserved Locations: 50,609
Served Locations: 173,206

TURNER

BEN HILL

IRWIN

TIFT

BERRIEN

COFFEE

BACON

ATKINSON

PIERCE

COOK

BRANTLEY

LANIER

WARE

LOWNDES

CLINCH

BROOKS

CHARLTON

ECHOLS

N
W — E
S

0 5 10 15 20
Miles

SGRC SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Water and Sewer Supply and Treatment

The entire Southern Georgia Region is within the Floridan Aquifer recharge area (see the map below), with recharge rates ranging from 0 to 20 inches per year.

Floridan Aquifer recharge areas in the Southern Georgia Region. Source: Florida Springs Institute (http://floridaspringsinstitute.org/floridan-aquifer).

In most of the Southern Georgia Region, municipalities provide water and sewer services within their incorporated boundaries, and wells and septic tanks serve unincorporated areas. However, there are some exceptions to this. Several smaller municipalities (generally those with a population under 1,000) have only water service, and private septic tanks rather than sewers serve residents. Two small towns-the Cities of Dasher and Offerman-do not have water service. Many incorporated cities extend their water and sewer services outside their municipal boundaries to serve industrial parks, densely populated areas, or other areas of need. These services are documented in the Joint Service Delivery Strategies of each county.

Also, some relatively densely populated unincorporated areas are served by counties or private water and sewer systems, such as Lowndes County, which provides water and sewer service to many residents, and the Satilla Regional Water and Sewer Authority (SRWSA), which serves approximately 13,440 people in unincorporated areas of Ware and Brantley Counties for water service. SRWSA serves approximately 3,100 sewer customers. Private companies provide water service to residents in several unincorporated residential developments around the Region.

A wide range of conditions exist for the water and sewer infrastructure of the Region. Some areas have newer infrastructure that is more than adequate, while some communities have aging or insufficient infrastructure. The Southern Georgia Regional Commission works closely with municipalities in the Region to ensure that all needed water and sewer infrastructure improvements are planned for during the Comprehensive Plan update process and are included in all relevant plans. The maintenance, upgrading, and expansion (as needed) of water and sewer infrastructure is a continually ongoing

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process for the communities in the Region. The lifespan of any given water/sewer system in the Region depends on the condition and age of that system. Through well-coordinated land use planning at the regional and local level, communities in the Region will continue to provide the infrastructure that they need to grow and prosper.
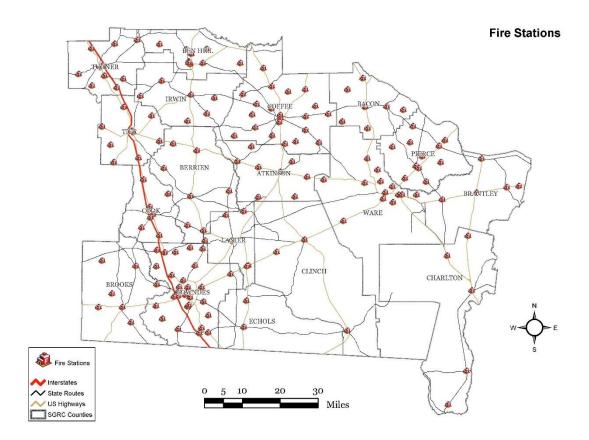
Storm-water Management

Storm-water in the Region is generally managed as part of local curb-and-gutter and street drainage systems. Within the Region, only the City of Valdosta has a specific storm-water management department and has a Master Storm-water Management Plan. Many municipalities in the Region experience flooding of streets after heavy rainfalls. Street drainage needs are documented and planned for in the local Comprehensive Planning process. Many of the cities in the Region have recently received Community Development Block Grants and other grants to improve street drainage, culverts, and other related infrastructure, along with street repaving, curb-and-gutter installation, and other associated activities. The condition of streets and other infrastructure throughout the Region concerning drainage and storm-water is highly variable and is profoundly influenced by the weather and the amount of rainfall a given area receives.

As the Region continues to grow, improved and expanded storm-water management will be necessary. Several communities have debated the creation of a joint storm-water utility or commission. Many local governments have environmental ordinances that relate at least partly to storm water. The risk of flooding is addressed in the Hazard Mitigation Plans of each of the Region's counties, along with measures to reduce local vulnerability to such hazards.

Fire Protection
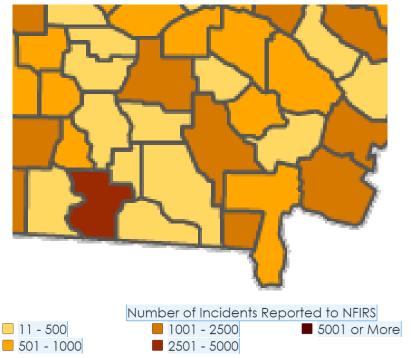
While most of the incorporated municipalities in the Region have their own distinct fire departments, there are also some joint fire departments in the Region that serve both the County and Cities (for example, the Alma-Bacon County Fire Department, which serves Bacon County and the City of Alma). Many other fire departments have service-sharing agreements whereby some cities may share some, if not all, fire services with the surrounding county. ISO ratings in the Region vary from 1 to 9, depending on location. The map below shows the locations of fire stations in the Region.

Fire Stations in the Southern Georgia Region. Source: SGRC data

As can be seen in the map above, some areas in the Region are a considerable distance from fire stations. The majority of these areas contain a lower density of population. Needed resources for fire stations such as firefighting equipment and infrastructure are documented and planned for in Comprehensive Plan updates and Pre-Hazard Mitigation Plan updates, both of which are updated every five years.

The map below shows the number of incidents reported to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) between 2015 and 2019.

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Source: NFIRS (https://www.fema.gov/data-visualization-fire-incidents-states-counties)

As a significant portion of the Region consists of forested land, wildfires are a common occurrence throughout Southern Georgia. These can be especially hazardous in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), defined as areas where homes are built near or among lands prone to wildland fire. Local Hazard Mitigation Plans contain measures to reduce community vulnerability to wildfires, and local Comprehensive Plans include a Land Use Element to guide future development.

Public Safety

Most of the larger municipalities in the Region have their own distinct police departments; several of the smaller towns are provided with law enforcement services by the sheriff's department of the surrounding county. Such sharing of services is outlined in each county's joint Service Delivery Strategy. The needs of local police and sheriff's departments are included in many local Comprehensive Plans and Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Parks and Recreation

There are four State Parks in the Region: General Coffee State Park, Reed Bingham State Park, Laura Walker State Park, and Stephen C. Foster State Park. Other major public recreational areas in the Region include the 402,000-acre Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR); the privately-owned Okefenokee Swamp Park; the 4,049-acre Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge; the Grand Bay Wildlife Management Area in Lowndes County; and the 320-acre Gaskins Forest Education Center in Berrien County. The 1,650-acre Broxton Rocks Preserve in Coffee County is an especially sensitive and protected resource with many species of rare plants which is part of the larger Broxton Rocks Conservation Area. This protected area is only open to visitors during parts of the year in order to protect the fragile ecosystems that exist at the site such as the Altamaha grit-influenced longleaf pine-wiregrass sandhill, Altamaha grit outcrop complex, and Pitcherplant bog.

At the local level, all the municipalities in the Region have public parks of varying sizes and qualities. Community needs concerning parks and recreation are documented and planned for in each community's local Comprehensive Plan. Generally speaking, there is a desire for more and improved parks and recreational facilities throughout the Region that is linked to a desire for more opportunities to get exercise and more youth activities. Some communities have joint parks and recreation authorities; for example, the Valdosta-Lowndes Parks and Recreation Authority (VLPRA) operates over 30 parks in the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County and is guided by the Valdosta-Lowndes Parks and Recreation Master Plan. In 2019, VLPRA and the Miracle League of Valdosta built the nation's largest Miracle Field at Freedom Park in Valdosta. The complex consists of one 200-foot Miracle Field with a two-dimensional rubberized field with fully accessible dugouts, concession stand, and restroom building. The site includes a fully accessible pavilion and a boundless playground for children of all abilities to enjoy. The Region also has several golf courses and other sports facilities, and four YMCAs. Some of the larger cities in the Region operate public swimming pools.

Other notable recreational features in the Region include the Satilla River and Suwannee River Water Trails and many other streams and rivers that are navigable in a small boat; several local Comprehensive Plans call for improvements to boat ramps, public river beaches, and other improvements that would expand public access to the Region's waterways.

Many of the Region's outdoor recreational facilities suffer from the impact of littering; community clean-up events have been organized in many areas, but are often inadequate to keep facilities clean. Infrastructure such as boardwalks (for example, at Grand Bay Wildlife Management Area) is in need of repair in some locations. Many communities in the Region have received grant funding to improve recreational facilities and to build infrastructure such as trails and walking tracks, while some communities are still in need of financing for these amenities. The quality of parks and recreational facilities will be crucial for maintaining a good quality of life as the Region continues to grow.

Solid Waste Management
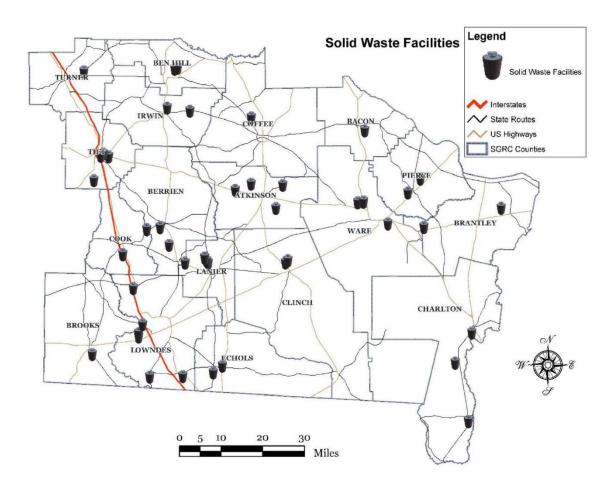
The map below shows the location of solid waste facilities in the Region. The provision of solid waste pickup and disposal is coordinated by the joint Service Delivery Strategy of each county and the municipalities therein. Each county in the Region also has a Solid Waste Management Plan. Improvements in solid waste management services, equipment, and infrastructure are called for in many local Comprehensive Plans. Some municipalities provide trash pickup services directly to residents, while others contract with a private company to do so.

Some larger municipalities, such as the City of Valdosta, provide recycling drop-off centers as part of City services in addition to trash pickup. Several communities have documented litter as a problem in public places and along roadsides, and have planned for measures to reduce littering, including mandatory trash pickup, public outreach campaigns, cleanup events, and enforcement of anti-littering ordinances.

As the Region grows, demands on solid waste management systems will continue to grow, as well. Sensitive areas may be proposed for new landfill sites which are in conflict with the desires for conservation area preservation. Increasing population density in unincorporated areas may increase incidences of illegal dumping and littering. In areas without mandatory trash pickup, problems such as

illegal dumping and trash burning will continue to occur. At the same time, growing population and technological advances may make recycling systems more widespread and more financially feasible.

The Deep South Regional Municipal Solid Waste Management Authority (DSRMSWMA) is a multi-jurisdictional authority which was created in 1996 to address future solid waste needs. The following jurisdictions are currently members: Berrien County, Echols County, City of Lakeland, Lanier County, Lowndes County, City of Nashville, and City of Valdosta. The authority meets quarterly and manages a grant program for member governments in addition to distributing royalty payments generated through tonnage fees to be used for certain solid waste activities.

Waste Management Facilities in the Southern Georgia Region. Source: SGRC data

v) Transportation System

Road Network

Transportation Map 1 shows the existing road transportation network in the Region, organized by roadway classification: Interstate, Other Principal Arterial, Minor Arterial, Major Collector, and Minor Collector. Because there is no regional transportation model, level of service data does not exist at this time.

No regionally significant needs with the road network are currently identified, apart from safety (see the following crash heat map).

Crashes

Transportation Map 2 shows motor vehicle crash data points for the Region for 2018-2022. Individual crash points are shown in green, while areas of multiple crashes are shown in orange. As can be seen from the map, safety needs exist on nearly all of the Region's roads.

Governor's Road Improvement Program

Transportation Map 3 shows the current status of roads in the 2023 Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP).

Bicycle Network

Transportation Map 4 shows bicycle corridors in the Region. State Bicycle Routes 10, 15, and 20 pass through the Region, as does the proposed U.S. Bike Route 15. Also, several counties have locally designated bicycle routes.

Mode choice is generally limited throughout the entire Region (except in a few select areas, depending on trip destination and origin), due to the overall lack of sidewalks, lack of bicycle infrastructure, and lack of public transit services.

Pedestrian Network

Transportation Map 5 shows the sidewalk networks in the Region. Some of the Region's larger cities (for example, Tifton, Valdosta, and Waycross) have extensive sidewalk networks. However, these networks are not comprehensive; gaps, safety needs, and lack of connectivity persist.

Public Transportation

Transportation Map 6 shows the public transportation options available in the Region. Fifteen of the eighteen counties opted into the Regional Transportation service that can be used by the general public for various trips within their county as well as in the other counties that are a part of the Regional Transit Program. Rides for this transit service must be scheduled in advance.

The DHS Coordinated Transportation system serves the consumers of the DHS divisions throughout the Region, including the Division of Aging Services (DAS), the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), as well as consumers of their partner agencies, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) and the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA). The goal of the DHS Coordinated Transportation System is to enhance the lives of consumers in Georgia by

strengthening families while supporting their self-sufficiency and helping to protect vulnerable children and adults.

Also, limited transportation services are available in all counties of the Region to eligible residents, including but not limited to Medicaid beneficiaries (through Modivcare), and private taxicab companies also serve many of the communities in the Region. Uber and Lyft, "transportation networking companies," have available services in the Region as well.

Urban On-Demand Transit was implemented in the City of Valdosta in 2021. This On-Demand service provides rides throughout the urban area. Intercity public bus service is provided by Greyhound lines from two stations in the Region (Tifton and Valdosta). Passenger air service is available from Valdosta Regional Airport, the only airport in the Region served by a commercial airline.

The only fixed-route public transportation service in the Region is the Blazer Shuttle bus service operated by Valdosta State University, which serves the VSU area.

Railroads, Trucking, Port Facilities, and Airports.

Transportation Map 7 shows freight railroads in the Region. The Region has a comprehensive freight rail network operated by CSX, Norfolk Southern, and other companies. Rice Yard, in Waycross, is a significant "hump"-type classification yard.

There are no passenger rail stations in the Region with the exception of an excursion train (the Azalea Sprinter) operating along the historic Georgia and Florida Railroad between Valdosta and Willacoochee. The Azalea Sprinter offers six different excursions, which include daily trips, dinner on the train, a Ride with Santa Special Christmas Trip, and more. The train offers these excursions with various stop points including a round-trip from Willacoochee to Valdosta, which is approximately six hours.

Although not passenger rail within our region, Amtrak's Silver Star, Silver Meteor, and Auto Train lines pass through the Region, along a railroad running parallel to U.S. Route 301 and crossing through the cities of Folkston and Nahunta.

Transportation Map 8 shows the intermodal freight network in the Region and beyond, including major airports, major seaports, and railyards.

Transportation Map 9 shows commercial and general-purpose airports in the Region.
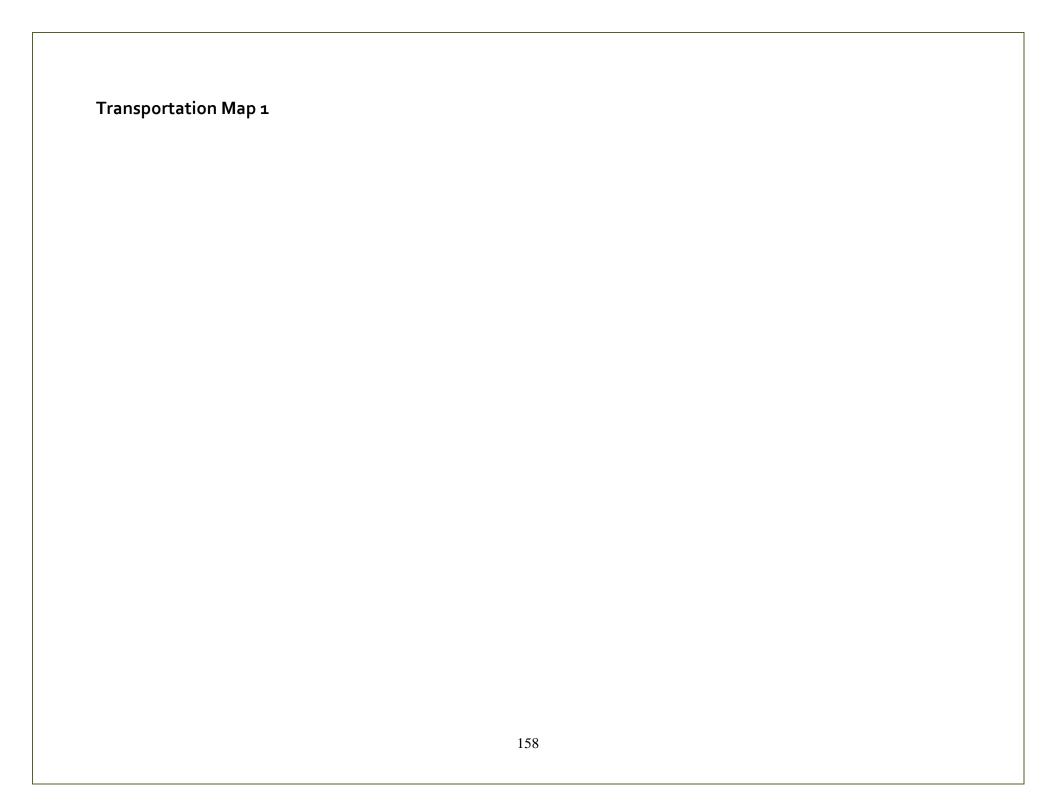
Transportation and Land Use Connection
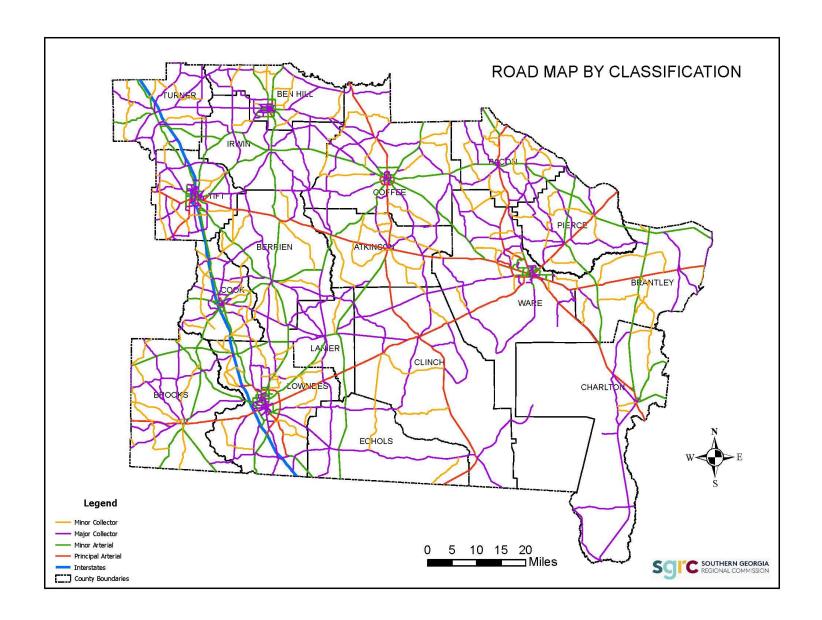
No areas of the Region are currently identified as experiencing regionally significant traffic congestion or having significantly underutilized transportation facilities.

Alternative Fuels

Transportation Map 10 shows Electric Vehicle Charging Stations in the Region.

Transportation Map 11 shows Alternative Fuels Corridors in the Region.

Transportation Map 1

ROAD MAP BY CLASSIFICATION

Legend
- Minor Collector
- Major Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Interstates
- County Boundaries

0 5 10 15 20 Miles

SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Transportation Map 2

Crash Data Heat Map

Legend
— Interstates
— State Routes
— US Highways
☐ Counties

Transportation Map 3

Governor's Road
Improvement Program
(GRIP)
Current Status
February 2023

Legend:
- Open
- Under Construction
- Right of Way
- Preliminary Engineering
- No Activities

Transportation Map 4

REGIONAL BICYCLE CORRIDORS

Legend

- Georgia Bicycle Route 10
- Georgia Bicycle Route 15
- Georgia Bicycle Route 20
- Proposed US Bike Route 15
- Local Bike and Pedestrian Routes
- Interstate Highways
- State Routes
- US Highways
- Cities
- County Boundaries

0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Transportation Map 5

REGIONAL PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Legend

— Trails
— Sidewalks
— Interstate Highways
— State Routes
— US Highways
County Boundaries
Cities

0 5 10 20 30 40
Miles

TURNER
BEN HILL
IRWIN
BACON
COFFEE
TIFT
PIERCE
BERRIEN
ATKINSON
BRANTLEY
COOK
WARE
LANIER
CLINCH
CHARLTON
BROOKS
LOWNDES
ECHOS
ECHOLS

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167

Transportation Map 6

RURAL PUBLIC TRANSIT

Legend

Interstates
State Routes
US Highways
Counties with no rural public transit
Counties with rural public transit
County Boundaries

0 5 10 15 20
Miles

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Transportation Map 7

RAILROADS AND RAIL YARDS

Legend
- ⬤ Railyards
- ┼─┼ Railroad
- County Boundaries

0 5 10 15 20 Miles

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Transportation Map 8

Georgia's State Freight Network

*Source: Georgia Statewide Freight & Logistics Plan, GDOT, 2012

Revised- October, 2016

Source: GDOT

Transportation Map 9

AIRPORTS

0   5   10   20 Miles

Legend

✈ Airports served by commercial airlines — Interstates

✈ General Aviation Airports — US Highways

County Boundaries — State Routes

Cities

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Transportation Map 10

ELECTRIC VEHICLE
CHARGING STATIONS

Legend
Interstates
State Routes
US Highways
Public Charging Station
No Charging Station
County Boundaries

TURNER
BEN HILL
IRWIN
BACON
TIFT
COFFEE
PIERCE
BERRIEN
ATKINSON
BRANTLEY
COOK
WARE
LANIER
CLINCH
CHARLTON
BROOKS
LOWNDES
ECHOLS

0 5 10 15 20
Miles

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Transportation Map 11

ALTERNATIVE FUEL CORRIDORS

Legend

— Pending Corridor
— Ready Corridor
⬚ Counties

Turner

Ben Hill

Irwin

Coffee

Bacon

Tift

Berrien

Atkinson

Pierce

McIntosh

Cook

Ware

Brantley

Glynn

Lanier

Clinch

Camden

Brooks

Lowndes

Charlton

Echols

Nassau, Fl

Leon, Fl

Hamilton, Fl

Jefferson, Fl

Madison, Fl

Baker, Fl

Duval, Fl

Suwannee, Fl

Columbia, Fl

Clay, Fl

Bryan

Liberty

0   10   20   30   40
Miles

SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

N
W   E
S

Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Southern Georgia Region contains one Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Valdosta-Lowndes MPO. This MPO was created in 2003 as a result of the 2000 Census and is the recipient of federal funding to manage transportation programs guided by three committees, the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Technical Advisory Committee, and the Policy Committee. Below is an organizational chart for the VLMPO.

VLMPO staff prepare an annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) with a twenty-year time horizon, and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The MTP is updated every five years; the currently adopted plan is the 2045 MTP however, the 2050 MTP is beginning the update process. The TIP is required to cover a minimum of four years for the short-term work program. The urbanized area for the VLMPO is shown in the below map and contains all of Lowndes County with portions of Berrien, Brooks, and Lanier Counties.

VLMPO Area

COOK
BERRIEN
LANIER
BROOKS
LOWNDES
ECHOLS

Legend

☐ Cities
☐ Valdosta Urbanized Area 2010
— I75
☐ Counties
☐ Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary

0   2.75   5.5   11 Miles

Georgia's Regional Transportation Investment Act of 2010

As the Georgia economy continues to grow, the issue of transportation – the need of moving of people and goods- in, out, around, and across the state continues to grow as well. A long-term plan for funding Georgia's roads, bridges, railways, ports, and technology is essential for safe and efficient transportation throughout the State. To provide this plan, the Georgia General Assembly created the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) of 2010. This act, also sometimes referred to as the "Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax" (TSPLOST) provides a legal mechanism in which regions throughout Georgia have the ability to impose a 1% sales tax to fund transportation improvements within their region.

TIA 2010 is a legal mechanism creating 12 Special Tax Districts in Georgia based on Georgia's 12 Regional Commissions and their respective region boundaries. The process begins in a region when a majority (more than 50%) of the counties in that region pass resolutions stating that they wish to start the TIA process. The first action happens with the formation of a Regional Transportation Roundtable (Roundtable). The Roundtable consists of the County Commission Chairman from each of the counties in the region and one mayor from each county. The County Commission Chairmen are automatically members of the Roundtable by law. The one mayor serving on the Roundtable from each county is decided by the municipalities in that county.

The Roundtable then forms the Executive Committee which is composed of five members elected from the Roundtable membership. Also serving on the Executive Committee are two members of the House of Representatives selected by the Chairperson of the House Transportation Committee and one member of the Senate selected by the Chairperson of the Senate Transportation Committee. The Executive Committee prepares the draft investment list and conducts two public meetings for the purpose of obtaining comments on the draft investment list. The Executive Committee then prepares a summary of the comments on the regional investment list and delivers it to the members of the Regional Transportation Roundtable.

Next, the Regional Transportation Roundtable, in accordance with OCGA 48-8-243, holds its final meeting where the draft investment list is considered for approval by a majority vote of the representatives present at the Roundtable. The approved investment list must include the following: 1.The specific transportation projects to be funded; 2.The anticipated schedule of such projects; 3.The approximate cost of such projects; and 4.The estimated amount of net proceeds to be raised by the tax, including the amount of proceeds, to be distributed to the local governments pursuant to the OCGA 48-8-249. Following the approval of the investment list, the Roundtable certifies that it utilized the revenue projection provided by the State Fiscal Economist. It then provides the Director of Planning for the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) the Special Tax District Final Investment List for distribution in accordance with OCGA 48-8-243(b). Finally, the Roundtable requests the election superintendents of each county in the region to call for an election for the imposition of the tax to the voters within the particular region. A Regional Commission is usually responsible for administering the process from this point leading up to the referendum vote in its region because it is a neutral agent and only provides facts and information to local governments and the public regarding this process.

Once a referendum is issued and the voting process takes place, the voters in a majority (more than 50%) of the counties in the particular region must have voted in favor of the tax. If a majority of counties in the region do not vote in favor of the tax, there is a waiting period of 24 months before the process can be restarted. If a majority is reached, then the TIA is considered approved for the entire region including all counties within it. The Regional TIA 1% sales tax then becomes effective in all

counties within the geographic region regardless of whether a particular county has previously passed an individual TIA or not.

OCGA 48-8-251 requires that a Citizens Review Panel (CRP) must be created for districts where TIA was approved by voters. The Citizens Review Panel consists of five citizens that reside within the region. Three of the members are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and two members are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. The CRP is responsible for reviewing the administration of the projects and programs on the investment list. The CRP assesses progress and expenditures for their region and presents an annual status report to the Georgia General Assembly at the end of each calendar year.

Funds collected from sales in a region with an active TIA in place are divided into two parts. The majority of the funds, 75% of a region's TIA proceeds, are used to fund all projects on the region's final project list as approved by that region's roundtable and these are known as "Regional" funds. GDOT is responsible for the management of the budget, schedule, execution and delivery of projects on the Approved Investment Lists, in coordination with the state and local agencies.

The remaining 25% of a region's TIA proceeds is divided among all local governments within the region based on the current Local Assistance Road Program (LARP) formula. The 25% "Local" fund share is referred to as discretionary funds and may be used for any transportation project delivered solely by local governments.

Discretionary funds can be used by the local governments on a variety of transportation related projects. The definition of a "Project" is contained in OCGA 48-8-242 and is as follows: any new or existing airports, bike lanes, bridges, bus and rail mass transit systems, freight and passenger rail, pedestrian facilities, ports, roads, terminals, and all activities and structures useful and incident to providing, operating, and maintaining the same including operations and maintenance. Discretionary funds can also be applied as a match for state and federal funding.

Georgia saw its first round of Regional TIA's in 2012 when voters in three regions – River Valley, Central Savannah River Area and Heart of Georgia Altamaha approved participation. And in 2018, the Southern Georgia Region joined the group. This first round of participants is referred to as TIA 1. In 2020, Central Savannah River Area approved a second decade of involvement – called TIA 2 – and in 2022, River Valley and Heart of Georgia Altamaha also approved an additional term.

Southern Georgia Region Transportation Investment Act (TIA) in Region 11

In 2017, the Southern Georgia Regional Commission Council directed the Southern Georgia Region's Transportation Department to carry out the project selection process, in coordination with GDOT, for a Regional Transportation Sales Tax Referendum. As a result of the effort, the voters of the Southern Georgia Region (Region 11) passed a referendum on May 22, 2018 to enact a Regional Transportation Sales Tax, referred to as TIA 1, making the SGRC Region only the fourth region in Georgia, out of a total of 12 regions, to participate.

First a Citizens Review Panel was formed for reviewing the administration of the projects and programs on the investment list. Later, on October 1, 2018, the sales tax collection process began. The 10-year, 1% sales tax has funded, and continues to fund, regional and local transportation projects developed by each participating county in the Region. The original approved budget for the collection period was for $408,763,452.19 with a total of 151 projects on the funding list.

Revenues derived from the TIA taxes are collected by the Georgia Department of Revenue for the use and benefit of the Southern Georgia Region. The funds are then transferred to the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission (GSFIC) which then disburses the proceeds as soon as practical after collection. GSFIC distributes the funds and transfers 25% of the distributions to the local governments as monthly allocations. The funds that local governments receive from TIA shall be only used for transportation projects as defined in paragraph (10) of Code Section 48-8-242 and may also be used as the local match as required for state transportation projects and grants. (GDOT) is responsible for the management of the budget, schedule, execution and delivery of all projects contained in the Approved Investment List for the Southern Georgia Region (Region 11).

According to OCGA 48-8-241, thirty percent (30%) of all estimated revenue must be spent on projects in the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan. It is anticipated the projects identified on the regional distribution of funds (75% of estimated revenue) will easily meet this 30% requirement, meaning that no local government in the Region should have to program any projects to meet this requirement.

As related to Local Maintenance and Improvement Grants (LMIG), which are distributed by GDOT, a county without an active TIA would be required a local match of 30%. However, during the 10-year period of the active TIA, the minimum 30% match for counties in the Region is lowered to 10%.

Local governments in the Southern Georgia Region have chosen to use their discretionary funds for a variety of purposes. Some of options that have been chosen are: road paving; purchase of pipe and other supplies for road maintenance; purchase of road graders for dirt road maintenance, and many others.

Since the beginning of the 2018 TIA in the Southern Georgia Region 11, the collection amount of the tax has been higher than originally projected by the Georgia State Fiscal Economist and therefore it is estimated that the projects in the Region will be fully funded before the end of the initial 10-year TIA 1 term established in October of 2018. The estimate places the sales tax ending approximately 24 months (two years) early indicating that the tax will end approximately in March of 2026. In light of this finding, the Southern Georgia Regional Commission Council had shown interest in pursuing the process for another ten-year period beginning earlier than originally expected. As a result, the SGRC Planning and Transportation Department is working with the counties in the Region to secure enough participation resolutions to begin the process. When participation is guaranteed by a majority of the counties, then SGRC could move forward with the process. The new regional transportation tax would be referred to as TIA 2 and could be on the ballot in either 2024 or 2025 for the Southern Georgia Region (Region 11).

vi) Water Trails, Natural Resources, and Ecotourism Maps

The Water Trails Map (see the following page) shows designated Water Trails and boat ramps throughout the Region. The Natural Resources Map (follows after the Water Trails Map) shows National Wildlife Refuges, State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, Preserves, and Public Fishing Areas in the Region.

SGRC Planning Services and GIS staff created a web-based mapping Ecotourism map and interactive tool for residents and visitors to promote ecotourism destinations within the Region (see third map below). This task was a work plan item in the 2018 Regional Plan Work Program. The entire Region is blessed with vast natural resources – from the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR) in the southeastern portion of the Region to the Milton "Buddy" Hopkins Nature Preserve in Fitzgerald.

Dr. B. Bynum Boley and Dr. Gary T. Green both of UGA's Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources make a strong case for conserving natural resources, "…ecotourism destinations benefit in the form of enhanced tourism competitiveness from the protection of quality natural resources while the conservation of these natural resources is increasingly valued because these resources are realized as the foundation of the ecotourism industry and the driver of all economic benefits associated with ecotourism[2]. Solely looking at the ONWR, it is estimated that greater than 700,000 visitors generate an economic impact in Charlton, Clinch, and Ware Counties of approximately $88 million each year[3].
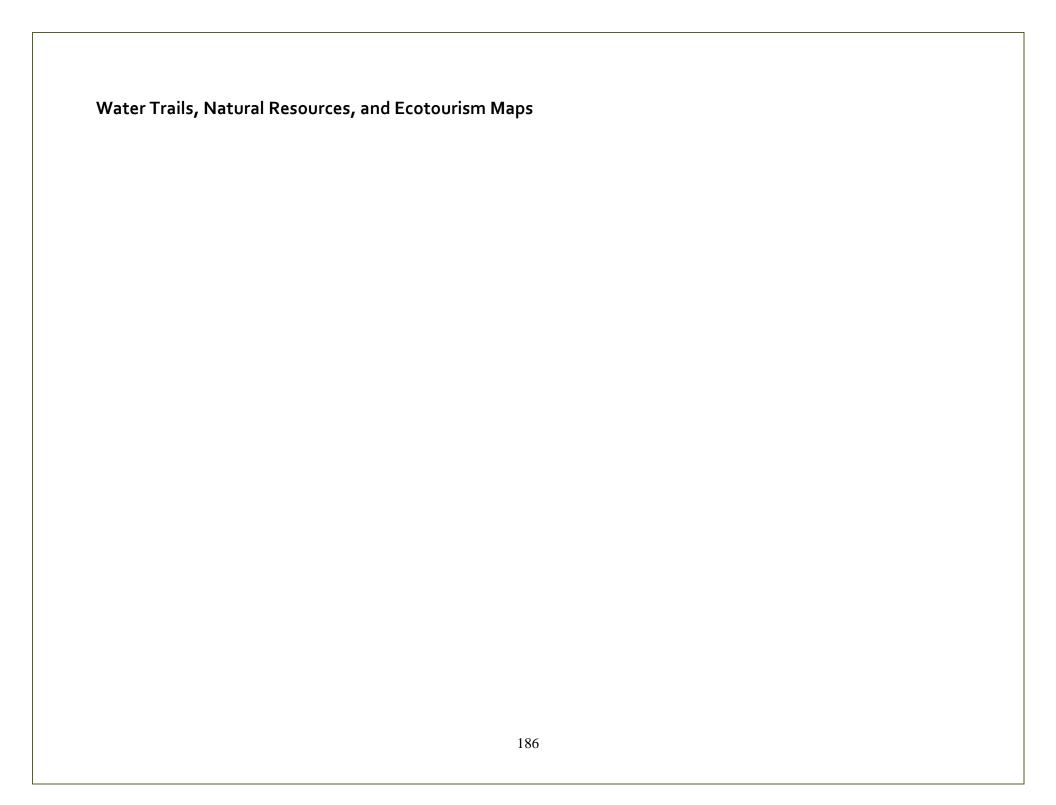
Identifying and recognizing the intersection between environmental and economic goals in the Regional Plan, the CEDS, and in Comprehensive Plan updates is a huge step towards the preservation and stewardship of natural resources for their long-term survival. Aside from the economic benefits of natural resources, there are health and wellness benefits from enjoying restful and relaxing activities outdoors.
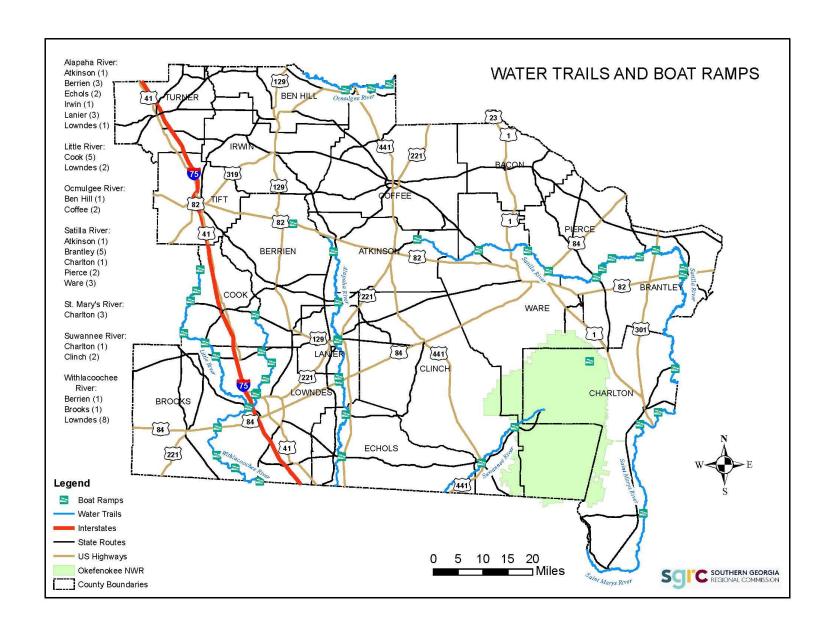
Now that the process of completing the mapping tool is complete, staff are looking into methods of promoting the tool. The site can be accessed either from the Regional Commission website or directly from this site: www.sgrcmaps.com/ecotourism. SGRC welcomes and encourages promotion of the tool on Chamber of Commerce, tourism, economic development, Main Street, and/or local government websites.
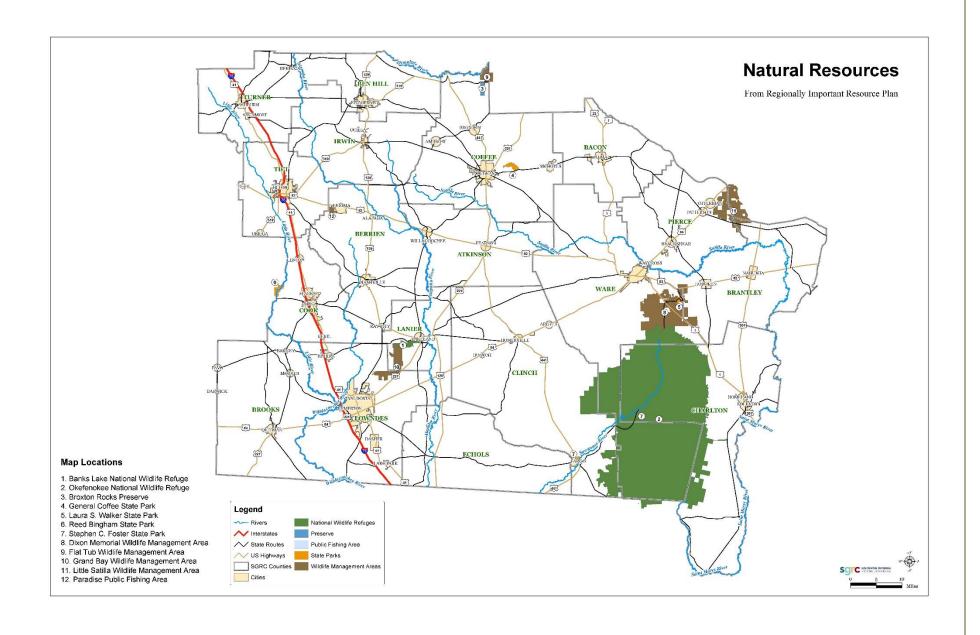
*Banks Lake, **Lakeland**, GA*
(Photo credit ExploreGeorgia.org)

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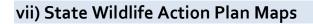
[2] B. Bynum Boley & Gary T. Green (2015): Ecotourism and natural resource conservation: the 'potential' for a sustainable symbiotic relationship, Journal of Ecotourism, DOI: 10.1080/14724049.2015.1094080
[3] U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Division of Economics. 2019. *The Economic Contributions of Recreational Visitation at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge*

Water Trails, Natural Resources, and Ecotourism Maps

WATER TRAILS AND BOAT RAMPS

Alapaha River:
Atkinson (1)
Berrien (3)
Echols (2)
Irwin (1)
Lanier (3)
Lowndes (1)

Little River:
Cook (5)
Lowndes (2)

Ocmulgee River:
Ben Hill (1)
Coffee (2)

Satilla River:
Atkinson (1)
Brantley (5)
Charlton (1)
Pierce (2)
Ware (3)

St. Mary's River:
Charlton (3)

Suwannee River:
Charlton (1)
Clinch (2)

Withlacoochee
River:
Berrien (1)
Brooks (1)
Lowndes (8)

Legend

- Boat Ramps
- Water Trails
- Interstates
- State Routes
- US Highways
- Okefenokee NWR
- County Boundaries

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0 5 10 15 20 Miles

Natural Resources

From Regionally Important Resource Plan

Map Locations

1. Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge
2. Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
3. Broxton Rocks Preserve
4. General Coffee State Park
5. Laura S. Walker State Park
6. Reed Bingham State Park
7. Stephen C. Foster State Park
8. Dixon Memorial Wildlife Management Area
9. Flat Tub Wildlife Management Area
10. Grand Bay Wildlife Management Area
11. Little Satilla Wildlife Management Area
12. Paradise Public Fishing Area

Legend

Rivers	National Wildlife Refuges
Interstates	Preserve
State Routes	Public Fishing Area
US Highways	State Parks
SGRC Counties	Wildlife Management Areas
Cities	

Quiet Creeks, Peaceful Pines, & Dark Skies

Visit www.sgrcmaps.com/Ecotourism for an interactive map.

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www.sgrc.us

1 Flat Tub Wildlife Management Area
This WMA is open for hunting for deer, turkey, squirrel and waterfowl. River fishing and wildlife viewing are also popular activities.
GA 107, North Coffee County • 229-426-5267
www.georgiawildlife.com/flat-tub-wma

2 Broxton Rocks Preserve
Nature preserve complete with a waterfall, caves and rare plant life. The property is owned by the Nature Conservancy, and reservations are required for hiking tours. www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/broxton-rocks

3 Milton "Buddy" Hopkins Nature Preserve
Bird watchers come to this 1-mile boardwalk loop around a grassy wetland area to see approximately 100 different species of birds. Appomattox Rd, Fitzgerald • www.fitzgeraldga.org/birdwatching

4 General Coffee State Park
The park is known for agricultural history at Heritage Farm, with log cabins, a tobacco barn and other exhibits. Children enjoy feeding the park's farm animals, which usually include goats, sheep, chickens, pigs, and donkeys. John Coffee Road, Nicholls
912-384-7082 • www.gastateparks.org/generalcoffee

5 Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village
The grounds consist of five areas: a traditional farm community of the 1870s, an 1890s progressive farmstead, an industrial sites complex, rural town, national peanut company, and the Museum of Agriculture Center. Costumed interpreters explain and demonstrate the lifestyle and activities of this time in Georgia's history. Whiddon Mill Rd, Tifton
229-391-5205 • gma.abac.edu

6 Paradise Public Fishing Area
Sixty lakes totaling 525 acres, provide excellent boat and bank fishing. Paradise PFA offers a relaxed setting for families and solitary anglers alike. Paradise Drive, Enigma
www.georgiawildlife.com/paradise-pfa

7 Mossy Pond Lodge
Provides quail and pheasant hunts, sporting clay shoots and lodging. Mayberry Rd, Patterson
912-288-1549 • www.mossypondretrievers.com/mossy-pond-outfitters

8 Little Satilla Wildlife Management Area
Composed of 18,920 acres and located only an hour away from the Atlantic Ocean, Little Satilla Wildlife Management Area is known for its diverse landscapes and excellent hunting opportunities. Hunting opportunities include deer, turkey, waterfowl and small game. GA 32, East of Patterson • 912-262-3173

9 Gaskin Forest Education Center
Privately owned conservation reserve nestled on nearly five thousand acres of pine trees bordering the 202-mile-long Alapaha River.
Moore Sawmill Rd, Alapaha • 229-339-3966

10 Gopher Plantation
The Gopher Plantation offers diverse topography that provides an optimum wildlife habitat. Intensive management has created an abundance of wildlife seldom available to the public. It creates a touch of heaven to the hunter after being micromanaged for over 35 years. Gopher Ln, Millwood • 912-284-1722
www.gopherplantation.com

11 Moccasin Creek Off Road Park
Family oriented off road park where you can ride your ATVs/UTVs/Golf Carts over 500 acres and 8 miles of maintained trails. The park has trails ranging from just muddy enough to get your tires dirty to challenging trails that test your skills.
Wilton Rd, Blackshear • 912-281-5842
www.moccasincreekorp.com/home

12 Shadow Oak Plantation
Hunting lodge that serves small and intimate groups of avid quail and upland bird enthusiasts on traditional plantation-style quail hunts. For photography enthusiasts and non-hunting guests, the plantation offers a mini-safari of exotic animals including peacocks, ostrich, emu, zebras, antelope, ankole, Watusi cattle, buffalo, fallow and red deer.
June Hendley Rd, NE of Nashville
www.shadowoakplantation.com

13 Southern Forest World Environmental Center
Museum dedicated to the history of forestry.
N August Ave., Waycross • 912-285-4056
www.southernforestworld.com

14 Reed Bingham State Park
A 375-acre lake popular with boaters and skiers. Activities include rental bicycles, canoes and kayaks. Evergreen Church Rd, off of GA 37, West of Adel
229-896-3551 • www.gastateparks.org/ReedBingham

15 Laura Walker State Park
Laura S. Walker State Park is a 626-acre Georgia state park located near Hoboken and the Okefenokee Swamp. The park is named after Laura S. Walker, a Georgia writer, teacher, civic leader, and naturalist.
GA 177, E of Waycross • 912-287-4900
www.gastateparks.org/LauraSWalker

16 The Ford Farm
The Ford Farm is a quiet refuge for nature lovers and quail hunters alike. The Farm offers eight hunting courses and lodging as well. 414 Cross Creek Rd, Lakeland • 229-560-1791 • www.thefordfarm.com

17 Obediah's Okefenok
Obediah's Okefenok is the restored homestead of Obediah Barber, an early settler of the area. The park offers a glimpse into the frontier lifestyle of the late 1800's. (Open Friday - Sunday Only)
5115 Swamp Rd, Waycross • 912-287-0090
www.okefenok.com

18 Dixon Memorial Wildlife Management Area
The Dixon Memorial Wildlife Management Area provides hunting and shooting opportunities as well as geocaching and wildlife viewing. The state-owned property consists of upland pine forest and cypress-gum wetlands.
5000 Check Station Rd, Waycross • 229.426.5267
www.georgiawildlife.com/dixon-memorial-wma

19 Okefenokee Swamp Park
Few places in America can offer as varied and extensive wildlife as Okefenokee Swamp Park. Over 200 species of birds have been identified by refuge personnel and visiting ornithologists. There are over 40 species of mammals, more than 50 species of reptiles, and 60 species of amphibians. The waters house an abundance of fish, 34 different kinds.
US 1 South, Waycross • 912-283-0583
www.okeswamp.com

20 Possum Creek Off Road Park
Possum Creek Off Road Park caters to ATVis, UTVis, Jeeps, Trucks, etc. They are open the 2nd and 4th weekend of each month. Camping is provided.
2694 Possum Creek Rd, Ray City • 229-563-3023

21 Live Oak Plantation Lodge
The Live Oak Plantation Lodge is located on 3,000 acres of managed wildlife habitat. The plantation offers skeet shooting, hunting, fishing, and golf to visitors and guests. 675 Plantation Rd, Adel
800-682-HUNT • www.huntliveoak.com

22 Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge
Banks Lake is a shallow blackwater lake containing cypress swamp, freshwater marsh, uplands, and open water. Fishing, paddling, wildlife viewing, and boat rentals are available to visitors at the Banks Lake NWR. GA Hwy 122, Lakeland • 229-569-0147
www.fws.gov/refuge/banks_lake

23 Robert Simpson Nature Trail
Visitors to the Robert Simpson Nature Trail can view plant life, natural bogs and experience fishing on Lake Irma. The Nature trail abuts the mountain bike trail. N Temple St, Lakeland • 229-482-9755
www.lakelandchamber.org/parks--trails

24 Grand Bay Wildlife Management Area
The Grand Bay Wildlife Management Area encompasses 2,623 acres of state-owned property and 5,874 acres of land under license from the U.S. Air Force. The area consists of upland pine/hardwood forest and cypress/gum wetlands with opportunities for hunting, geocaching, canoeing, hiking, and fishing. Knights Academy Rd, Valdosta • 229-426-5267
www.georgiawildlife.com/grand-bay-wma

25 Newell Lodge & Resort
The Newell Lodge & Resort offers guests horseback riding, hay rides, wildlife viewing, and relaxation. It is centrally located to multiple sites in the region, including the Okefenokee Swamp and coastal attractions. Ozzie Rowell Rd, Folkston
912-496-2838 • www.newelllodgeandresort.com

26 Charlton Regional Visitor Center
The Visitor Center is located in the Depot and informs visitors of the many activities and attractions within and surrounding the Okefenokee Swamp.
3795 Main St, Folkston • 912-496-2536
www.charltoncountyga.us/246/Visitor-Center

27 Stephen C. Foster State Park
Stephen C. Foster is a remote park, located within the Okefenokee Swamp ñ a shallow peat-filled bog which encompasses 438,000 acres along the Georgia/Florida line. The State Park offers visitors opportunities to fish, canoe/kayak, star gaze, hike, geocache, bike, and view wildlife. Hwy 177 Fargo
912-637-5274 • www.gastateparks.org/StephenCFoster

28 Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge has 353,981 acres of National Wilderness Area within refuge boundaries. In addition, the refuge is a Wetland of International Importance as it is one of the worlds largest intact freshwater ecosystems. Visitor activities include wilderness canoeing, wildlife viewing, hunting, boat tours, fishing, and environmental education.
11 miles SW of Folkston, off Hwy 121/23
912-496-7836 • www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee

29 Grassy Pond
Grassy Pond is a daily recreational park operated by Moody Air Force Base that is open to the public. The 500 acre park contains several amenities for visitors, including: nature trails, boating, fishing, playgrounds, beach volleyball, and basketball.
5360 Grassy Pond Rd, Lake Park
229.559.5840 • www.moodyfss.com/grassy-pond

30 Soggy Bottom Mud Park
Soggy Bottom is a 180 acre outdoor recreation park with amenities including fishing, swimming, hiking, bicycling, wildlife viewing, and off road riding/racing. 1000 Hwy 121, St. George • 904-786-5503
www.soggybottommp.com

Visit www.sgrcmaps.com/WaterTrails for a map of boat ramps along South GA waterways

RV Parks and Campgrounds

A	Paulk Park RV Park	229-426-5050
B	Paradise Lake RV Park	229-388-3481
C	Tifton KOA	229-386-8441
D	Cecil Bay RV Park	229-794-1484
E	Cain's Creekside RV Park	229-794-9416
F	Big Mike's RV Camp	912-487-3661
G	Valdosta Oaks RV Park	229-247-0494
H	River Park RV Park	229-560-6352
I	Griffis Fish Camp	912-637-5289
J	Trader's Hill Campground	912-496-3412
K	Pastimes Cabins, RV Park	912-496-4472
L	Lake Park Campground & RV Park	229-559-6555
M	Eagle's Roost RV Resort	229-559-5192

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vii) State Wildlife Action Plan Maps

The maps that follow are included from the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) last updated in 2015. These maps show the Ecoregions of Georgia, Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas, and Greenway Opportunities.

Ecoregions of Georgia

Ecoregions denote areas of general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources. They are designed to serve as a spatial framework for the research, assessment, management, and monitoring of ecosystems and ecosystem components. Ecoregions are directly applicable to the immediate needs of state agencies, including the development of biological criteria and water quality standards and the establishment of management goals for nonpoint-source pollution. They are also relevant to integrated ecosystem management, an ultimate goal of many federal and state resource management agencies.

The approach used to compile this map is based on the premise that ecological regions can be identified through the analysis of the spatial patterns and the composition of biotic and abiotic phenomena that affect or reflect differences in ecosystem quality and integrity (Wiken 1986; Omernik 1987, 1995). These phenomena include geology, physiography, vegetation, climate, soils, land use, wildlife, and hydrology. The relative importance of each characteristic varies from one ecological region to another regardless of the hierarchical level. A Roman numeral hierarchical scheme has been adopted for different levels of ecological regions. Level I divides North America into 15 ecological regions. Level II divides the continent into 52 regions (Commission for Environmental Cooperation Working Group 1997). At level III, the continental United States contains 104 ecoregions and the conterminous United States has 84 ecoregions (United States Environmental Protection Agency [USEPA] 2000). Level IV is a further subdivision of level III ecoregions. Explanations of the methods used to define the USEPA's ecoregions are given in Omernik (1995), Omernik and others (2000), Griffith and others (2001) and Gallant and others (1989).

Georgia contains barrier islands and coastal lowlands, large river floodplain forests, rolling plains and plateaus, forested mountains, and a variety of aquatic habitats. Ecological and biological diversity is enormous. There are 6 level III ecoregions and 28 level IV ecoregions in Georgia and most continue into ecologically similar parts of adjacent states.

The level III and IV ecoregion map was compiled at a scale of 1:250,000 and depicts revisions and subdivisions of earlier level III ecoregions that were originally compiled at a smaller scale (USEPA 2000; Omernik 1987). This poster is part of a collaborative project primarily between USEPA Region IV, USEPA National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory (Corvallis, Oregon), Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR), and the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Collaboration and consultation also occurred with the United States Department of Agriculture-Forest Service (USFS), United States Department of the Interior-Geological Survey (USGS)-Earth Resources Observation Systems (EROS) Data Center, and with other State of Georgia agencies.

The project is associated with an interagency effort to develop a common framework of ecological regions (McMahon and others, 2001). Reaching this objective requires recognition of the differences in the conceptual approaches and mapping methodologies applied to develop the most common ecoregion type frameworks, including those developed by the USFS (Bailey and others, 1994), the USEPA (Omernik 1987, 1995), and the NRCS (U.S. Department of Agriculture-Soil Conservation Service, 1981). As each of these frameworks is further refined, their differences are becoming less discernable. A regional collaborative project such as this one in Georgia, where some agreement has been reached among multiple resource management agencies, is a step toward attaining consensus and consistency in ecoregion frameworks for the entire nation.

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45 Piedmont
- 45a Southern Inner Piedmont
- 45b Southern Outer Piedmont
- 45c Carolina Slate Belt
- 45d Talladega Upland
- 45h Pine Mountain Ridges

65 Southeastern Plains
- 65c Sand Hills
- 65d Southern Hilly Gulf Coastal Plain
- 65g Dougherty Plain
- 65h Tifton Upland
- 65k Coastal Plain Red Uplands
- 65l Atlantic Southern Loam Plains
- 65o Tallahassee Hills/Valdosta Limesink
- 65p Southeastern Floodplains and Low Terraces

66 Blue Ridge
- 66d Southern Crystalline Ridges and Mountains
- 66g Southern Metasedimentary Mountains
- 66j Broad Basins

67 Ridge and Valley
- 67f Southern Limestone/Dolomite Valleys and Low Rolling Hills
- 67g Southern Shale Valleys
- 67h Southern Sandstone Ridges
- 67i Southern Dissected Ridges and Knobs

68 Southwestern Appalachians
- 68c Plateau Escarpment
- 68d Southern Table Plateaus

75 Southern Coastal Plain
- 75a Okefenokee Plains
- 75e Sea Island Flatwoods
- 75g Okefenokee Swamp
- 75h Bacon Terraces
- 75i Floodplains and Low Terraces
- 75j Sea Islands/Coastal Marsh

Level III ecoregion
Level IV ecoregion
State boundary
County boundary

SCALE 1:1,500,000

Albers Equal Area Projection
Standard parallels 33° N and 34° N

Level III Ecoregions of the Conterminous United States

POTENTIAL CONSERVATION
OPPORTUNITY AREAS

2005

Patch Characteristics

>100
PTVSC, >100
SCDO, <100
PTVSC+SCDO, <100
SCDO, >100
PTVSC+SCDO, >100

Existing Conservation Lands

KEY TO ACRONYMS: PTVSC = natural vegetation patches with a significant number of terrestrial vertebrate species of concern; SCDO = natural vegetation patches with a significant number of species of concern documented occurrences; <100 = natural vegetation patches with core area less than 100 hectares (247 acres); >100 = natural vegetation patches with core area greater than 100 hectares (247 acres).

Map created by the WRD Nongame Wildlife & Natural Heritage Section using data produced under contract with the UGA Natural Resources Spatial Analysis Laboratory, Athens, Georgia.

Figure 2. Potential conservation opportunity areas map from 2005 SWAP.

Figure 4. Draft Georgia Greenway Opportunities Map

viii) Historic Resources

Historic Resources Map

The Historic Resources Map (see the following page) shows sites and areas of historic significance throughout the Southern Georgia Region.

Historic Resources

From Regionally Important Resource Plan
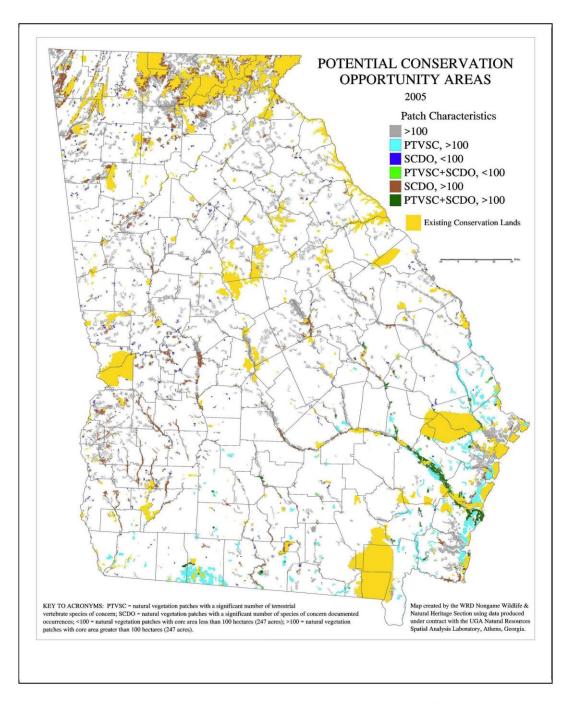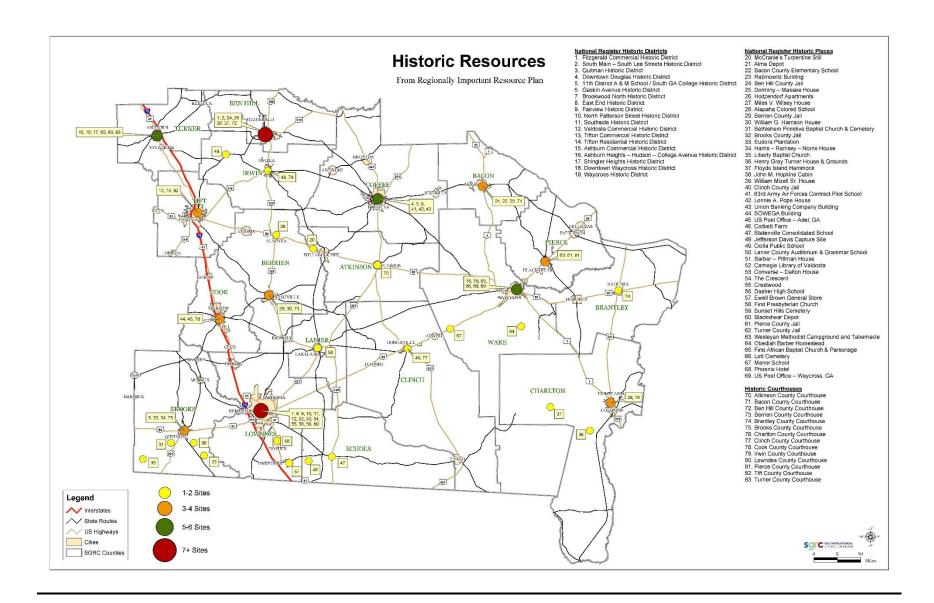
National Register Historic Districts
1. Fitzgerald Commercial Historic District
2. South Main – South Lee Streets Historic District
3. Quitman Historic District
4. Downtown Douglas Historic District
5. 11th District A & M School / South GA College Historic District
6. Gaskin Avenue Historic District
7. Brookwood North Historic District
8. East End Historic District
9. Fairview Historic District
10. North Patterson Street Historic District
11. Southside Historic District
12. Valdosta Commercial Historic District
13. Tifton Commercial Historic District
14. Tifton Residential Historic District
15. Ashburn Commercial Historic District
16. Ashburn Heights – Hudson – College Avenue Historic District
17. Shingler Heights Historic District
18. Downtown Waycross Historic District
19. Waycross Historic District

National Register Historic Places
20. McCranie's Turpentine Still
21. Alma Depot
22. Bacon County Elementary School
23. Rabinowitz Building
24. Ben Hill County Jail
25. Dorminy – Massee House
26. Holtzendorf Apartments
27. Miles V. Wilsey House
28. Alapaha Colored School
29. Berrien County Jail
30. William G. Harrison House
31. Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church & Cemetery
32. Brooks County Jail
33. Eudora Plantation
34. Harris – Ramsey – Norris House
35. Liberty Baptist Church
36. Henry Gray Turner House & Grounds
37. Floyds Island Hammock
38. John M. Hopkins Cabin
39. William Mizell Sr. House
40. Clinch County Jail
41. 63rd Army Air Forces Contract Pilot School
42. Lonnie A. Pope House
43. Union Banking Company Building
44. SOWEGA Building
45. US Post Office – Adel, GA
46. Corbett Farm
47. Statenville Consolidated School
48. Jefferson Davis Capture Site
49. Ocilla Public School
50. Lanier County Auditorium & Grammar School
51. Barber – Pittman House
52. Carnegie Library of Valdosta
53. Converse – Dalton House
54. The Crescent
55. Crestwood
56. Dasher High School
57. Ewell Brown General Store
58. First Presbyterian Church
59. Sunset Hills Cemetery
60. Blackshear Depot
61. Pierce County Jail
62. Turner County Jail
63. Wesleyan Methodist Campground and Tabernacle
64. Obediah Barber Homestead
65. First African Baptist Church & Parsonage
66. Lott Cemetery
67. Manor School
68. Phoenix Hotel
69. US Post Office – Waycross, GA

Historic Courthouses
70. Atkinson County Courthouse
71. Bacon County Courthouse
72. Ben Hill County Courthouse
73. Berrien County Courthouse
74. Brantley County Courthouse
75. Brooks County Courthouse
76. Charlton County Courthouse
77. Clinch County Courthouse
78. Cook County Courthouse
79. Irwin County Courthouse
80. Lowndes County Courthouse
81. Pierce County Courthouse
82. Tift County Courthouse
83. Turner County Courthouse

Legend
- Interstates
- State Routes
- US Highways
- Cities
- SGRC Counties

- 1-2 Sites
- 3-4 Sites
- 5-6 Sites
- 7+ Sites

Appendix D. Stakeholder Involvement Report

Introduction

The eighteen counties in this Region include rural counties, urban areas, internationally renowned wildlife preserves, small villages, bigger cities, interstates, and dirt roads, a nationally significant military base, along with the diverse population living in and around these areas. A down-home love for South Georgia unites all, and the desire to be the best it can be for its residents, businesses and visitors alike.

The Regional Plan has set out to capture this spirit and the diverse values through its stakeholder involvement program, which consists of three elements:
1) The identification of various stakeholders;
2) The identification of participation techniques; and
3) The schedule of completion for the Regional Plan Update.

To be able to paint an accurate picture of this Region for the Regional Plan Update, a variety of outreach efforts were employed, including face-to-face conversations, visits, workshops, e-mail campaigns, website updates, social media updates, and newspaper announcements for public hearings.

I) Identification of Stakeholders

Local Governments:

Atkinson County
  City of Pearson
  City of Willacoochee
Bacon County
  City of Alma
Ben Hill County
  City of Fitzgerald
Berrien County
  Town of Alapaha
  Town of Enigma
  City of Nashville
  City of Ray City
Brantley County
  City of Hoboken
  City of Nahunta
Brooks County
  City of Barwick
  City of Morven
  City of Pavo
  City of Quitman
Charlton County
  City of Folkston
  City of Homeland

Clinch County
  City of Argyle
  Town of DuPont
  City of Fargo
  City of Homerville
Coffee County
  City of Ambrose
  City of Broxton
  City of Douglas
  City of Nicholls
Cook County
  City of Adel
  City of Cecil
  Town of Lenox
  Town of Sparks
Echols County
Irwin County
  City of Ocilla
Lanier County
  City of Lakeland

Lowndes County
  City of Dasher
  City of Hahira
  City of Lake Park
  City of Remerton
  City of Valdosta
Pierce County
  City of Blackshear
  City of Patterson
  City of Offerman
Tift County
  City of Omega
  City of Tifton
  City of Ty Ty
Turner County
  City of Ashburn
  Town of Rebecca
  City of Sycamore
Ware County
  City of Waycross

<u>Other Participating Stakeholders:</u>

Airport Authorities   *Housing Authorities*
Boards of Education   *Main Street Organizations*
Chambers of Commerce   *Moody Air Force Base*
Citizens   *Police Departments*
Councils on Aging   *Southern Georgia Regional Commission*
Development Authorities   *State and Federal Agencies*
EMA/EMS   *Universities/Colleges*
Fire Departments   *Valdosta/Lowndes MPO*
Historic Preservation Boards   *Workforce Development Boards*
Hospitals/Medical Centers

ii) Identification of Participation Techniques

a) Stakeholder Involvement Summary:

Several strategies and techniques were utilized to obtain and broaden stakeholder input and keep all participants actively involved throughout the process.

1. **Email Notifications**: All stakeholders and participants regularly and continuously received email updates on any workshops, surveys, feedback, revisions, and links to where to download the documents. Stakeholders and participants were also able to remit comments and input via email and also submitted surveys via Constant Contact.

2. **Facebook**: The Regional Plan survey was posted weekly on Facebook to encourage participation.

3. **Regional Plan Webpage**: All dates for open houses, contact information, documents, and revisions were continuously updated on the Regional Plan webpage under the following link: http://www.sgrc.us/regional-plan.html.

4. First public hearing: the initial "kick-off" public hearing was held on August 25, 2023, in Pearson, GA. The location was chosen due to its centrality within the Region.

5. **Open Houses**: The Regional Commission held three open houses throughout the Region:

   Session 1: October 13, 2022, in Valdosta, GA
   Session 2: November 16, 2022, in Waycross, GA
   Session 3: January 31, 2023, in Tifton, GA

   Each Open House session provided attendees with the opportunity to comment on the previous plan and to provide input into the development of the proposed plan. Fact sheets which included the required elements of a regional plan update were provided to attendees. A laptop was also set up in each library where the open houses were held to enable attendees to complete the Constant Contact survey during the open house. Large versions

of maps from the previous plan (ARSA, Conservation and Development, and Regional Land Use) were available for attendees to mark up and provide suggestions for the revision of the maps.

6. **Steering Committee**:
   a. Updates on the Regional Plan progress were provided during Council meetings beginning with the Kick-off on August 25, 2022. Steering Committee workshops were held on September 22, 2022, December 8, 2022, and January 26, 2023 following the Council meetings held on those dates. The September meeting was used to inform participants of the requirements and their role within the plan update process. SWOT Analysis was held during the Steering Committee workshop in September, during the three public Open Houses, and during the Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council meeting. The survey also influenced the SWOT analysis as did the SWOT completed during the recent update of the CEDS. The December meeting was utilized to encourage participation in the survey and to update members on the progress of the plan update. Lastly, the January meeting was utilized to discuss updates to the Local Government Performance Standards and to request assistance in data gathering for some of the Community Facilities and Services maps. Subsequent updates on the plan progress were provided to Steering Committee members in attendance during SGRC Council meetings on February 23, 2023 and March 23, 2023.

7. Further stakeholder involvement opportunities were provided at the Kick-off Public Meeting at the Regional Commission Board Meeting on August 25, 2022, and monthly updates at each Regional Commission Board meeting as the entire Regional Commission Board also functioned as the steering committee providing feedback and suggestions. Instagram postings were released to inform social media users of the Regional Plan as it was underway and once the draft was available to review.

8. Additional public outreach was provided via the monthly SGRC newsletters and through an article in the Georgia Planning Association (GPA) e-newsletter. Planning staff discussed the update during Comprehensive Plan Updates and Plan Implementation Assistance meetings. The update was mentioned during presentations made to Valdosta State University (VSU) and to the Youth Leadership Lowndes Fall 2022 class and to the adult Leadership Lowndes 2023 class. Lastly, SGRC staff attended and provided an update to the quarterly meeting of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Advisory Council meeting on February 22, 2023 in Nashville, GA.

Steering Committee Members:

Diane Westberry	Ronnie Gaskins	Elmer Thrift
Chris Wright	Parker Liles	Willie Hardee
Keith Brooks	Robbie Stone	Jason Rubenbauer
Mike Walker	Buddy Willis	Horace Hudgins
Audie Rowe	Jaclyn James	Joe Saxon
Neal Bennett	Roger Metts	Larry Taylor

Barbara Maefield	Lisa Smart	Gene Thomas
Barbara King	Larry Taylor	James Shubert
Robert Griner	Shane Taylor	Dustin Minchew
Jimmy D. Littleton	Ted O'Steen	Scott Blount
Vivian Miller-Cody	Patti Bass	Charles Styer
Scott James Matheson	Neil Ginty	Donald Morgan
JD Dillard	Tony McBrayer	Chris Bertrand
Matt Martin	Jim Carter	John Quarterman
Tommy Cox	Hampton Raulerson	Buddy Dukes

SGRC staff who participated in the Regional Plan Update:

- Elizabeth Backe, Planning & Transportation Director
- Loretta Hylton, Senior Planner
- James Horton, Senior Planner
- Amy Martin, Senior Transportation Planner
- Michael Rivera, Regional GIS Project Manager
- Ashley Spradley, GIS Specialist

KICK-OFF MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Council Meeting - The Venue in Pearson, GA
August 25, 2022

COUNCIL

Atkinson
✔	Buddy Willis
	Robert Johnson
✔	Robbie Stone

Bacon
✔	Richard Foskey
	Larry G. Taylor
	Lisa Coley

Ben Hill
✔	Steve Taylor [EC]
✔	Jason Holt
✔	Jason Dunn

Berrien
✔	Ronnie Gaskins
	John Clayton
✔	Lisa Smart

Brantley
✔	Skipper Harris
✔	Barbara Maefield [EC]
	Vacant

Brooks
	Patrick Folsom
✔	Don Morgan
✔	Zurich Deshazior

Charlton
✔	James Everett
✔	Lee Gowen [EC]
	Vacant

Clinch
✔	Roger Metts
	Brooks Blitch IV
✔	Willie Hardee

Coffee
	AJ Dovers
✔	Tony Paulk
	Adam Smith

Cook
	Dwight Purvis
	Buddy Duke [EC]
	Derry Bennett

Echols
	Bobby Walker
✔	Cheryl Garner

Irwin
	Scott Carver
✔	Horace Hudgins
	Mona Paulk

Lanier
	Dennis Fender [EC]
✔	Bill Darsey
	John Fitton

Lowndes
✔	Joyce Evans [EC]
✔	Vivian Miller-Cody
✔	Anthony Payton

Pierce
✔	Neal Bennett [EC]
✔	Keith Brooks
✔	Steven Paul

Tift
	Tony McBrayer
	Julie Smith
	Vacant

Turner
	Dana Whiddon
	Sandra Lumpkin
	Brandi Giddens

Ware
✔	Elmer Thrift
	Michael-Angelo James
✔	Barbara King [EC]

Governor's Office
	Norman "Bo" Lovein, III
	Guy Daughtrey
	Jonathan Jones

Lt. Governor's Office
	Keith Stone [EC]

Speaker's Office
	Vacant

KICK-OFF MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Council Meeting - The Venue in Pearson, GA
August 25, 2022

Guests

BRYAN SINGLETON - BRANTLEY Co.

Brianna Dillis, Wiregrass

Jauin Hamn

King Cooker

Kelly Lane, DCA

Sheola Darsy

Jody Redding

Staff

Lisa Gibb

Scott Cour

Lan Wish

Elizabeth Barker

C Stern

Kim Vining

Kimberly Hobbs

Wes Highsmith

Regional Plan Update
Steering Committee Meeting #1
Date: 9/22/22
Time: 12:30 PM
Waycross SGRC Office

AGENDA

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

2. Role of Committee

3. Proposed Timeline

4. Regional Plan Components:

   a. Vision
   b. Goals
   c. Policies
   d. Needs and Opportunities
   e. Implementation Program
      i. Local Government Performance Standards (Minimum/Excellent)
      ii. Regional Work Program (RC Activities)
      iii. Data Appendices
   f. Evaluation and Monitoring Program
   g. Stakeholder Involvement
5. Needs and Opportunities/SWOT Analysis
6. Regional Vision Input
7. Next Meeting
   a. Thursday, December 8, 2022, Valdosta SGRC Office, 12:30 pm

SGRC SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Regional Plan and Regional TIA 2 Meeting
September 22, 2022
SGRC Waycross Office

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Megan Fowler	SGRC	229-333-5277	mfowler@sgrc.us
Jaclyn James	Clinch County	912-487-2067	jjames@clinchcountyga.gov
Roger Metts	Clinch County	"	"
Elmer Thrift	Waye county	912-548-7253	
Willie Hardee	Hville City	912-497-5-735	williehardee@word stream.net
Jason Rubenbauer	Pierce County	912-449-2022	county, manager @ piercecountyga.gov
Hillare Huffim	Ocilla	229-425-0948	
Joe Saxon	Ocilla	229 1168 5741	
Lonny Jayhy	City of Alma	912/388-133	1st@byrt.com
Ronnie Gaskin	Berrien Co. Comm.	229/445-0804	rgaskins57@gmail.com
Barbara Marfield	Nahuta Blt	912-276-2124	mahutacityga.ct @city.hta.us
Keith Brooks	Blackshear	912-614-7190	Pbrooks 2430@Icloud.com
Chris Weight	Buckshorl	912.449.700	Cwright@blacksheargaluc.org
Barbara King	Waycross	912-592-3471	idkmbsn40@gmail.com
Robert Grinner	Nashville Co. Comm. 229-686-8634 Berrica Co. Comm. TIA member		RBGrinner@windstream.net

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Regional Plan and Regional TIA 2 Meeting
September 22, 2022
SGRC Waycross Office

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Jimmy D. Littleton	City of Braxton	(W) 912-542-6394 (C) 912-359-2060	Jimmy.littleton@city of Braxton.Com
Elizabeth Backe	SGRC	229.333.5047	ebacke@sgrc.us
Amy Martin	SGRC	229 333 5077	amartin@sgrc.us

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
2023 REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE &
TIA 2 INFORMATION SESSION
Steering Committee Meeting #2
Date: December 8, 2022

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Diane Duesberry	City of Lakeland	2294983100	dduesberry@lakelandga.gov
Chris Weight	City of Blackshear	912-449-7011	cwright@blacksshearpolice.org
Keith Brooks	City of Blackshear	912-614-7190	pbrooks2430@icloud.com
Megan Fowler	SGRC	229-333-5277	mfowler@sgrc.us
Mike Walker	TIFT CO	229 386-7850	mwalker@tiftcounty.org
Audie Rowe	Cook County	229.356.1732	rrowelott@yahoo.com
Neal Bennett	Pierce County	912-281-6600	knealbennett76@gmail.com
Ronnie Gaskins	Berrien Co	229-445-0504	rgaskins57@gmail.com
Parker Liles	Atkinson County	912-307-9359	p.liles@atkinson-ga.org
Robbie Stone	Atkinson county	912-422-4538	rstone@atkinson-ga.org
Bradly willis	Atkinson ct	912-592-0005	dcwillisd1@gmail.com

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
2023 REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE &
TIA 2 INFORMATION SESSION
Steering Committee Meeting #3
Date: January 26, 2023

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Curt Clem	SGLC-AAA	(912)285-6097	ccomun @sgrc.us
Rick Currie	City of Waycross	(912) 337-8828	rcurrie @ waycross ga.com
Tonny Cox	City of Waycross	(912)218-0597	tcox @waycrossga.com
LiSA Smart	Berrien County	229-646-6371	berrienchamber.lisa @windstream.net
LARRY TAYLOR	CITY OF ACMA	912-388-1439	lgt @byrt.com
Shane Taylor	Bacon County BOC	912-614-1255	staylor@baconcounty.org
Ted O'Steen	CoffeeCounty Commssin	912-343-5497	elect, tedosteen@gmail.com
Patti Poss	Lanier Co. BOC	229-482-2688	boardofcomm@lanircountyboc.com
Neil Griffin	'' '' ''	'' '' ''	Lanicerboc @ ''
Tony McBrayer	Tift Co. BOC	229-339-3042	tony.mcbrayer @tiftcounty.org
Jim Carter	Tift Co. BOC	229-356-7852	Jim.carter @ tiftcounty.org
Robbie Stone	Atkinson County Emd/Fire	912-422-4538	r.stone @ atkinson-ga.org
PARKER LILES	Atkinson Co. Chairman	912-327-0359	p.liles @atkinson-ga.org
Hampton Raulerson	Charlton County	912-496-2549	hraulerson@charltoncountyga.gov
Gene Thomas	Ware County	912-287-4480	gthomas @ ware-county.com

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SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Council Meeting - The Venue in Pearson, GA
February 23, 2023

COUNCIL

Atkinson
✓	Parker Liles
	Robert Johnson
✓	Robbie Stone

Bacon
✓	Shane Taylor
✓	Larry G. Taylor
	Lisa Coley

Ben Hill
	Steve Taylor [EC]
	Jason Holt
✓	Jason Dunn

Berrien
✓	Robert Griner
✓	Travis Brown
✓	Lisa Smart

Brantley
	Skipper Harris
✓	Barbara Maefield [EC]
	Vacant

Brooks
	Patrick Folsom
✓	Don Morgan
✓	Zurich Deshazior

Charlton
✓	James Everett
	Lee Gowen [EC]
	Vacant

Clinch
	Henry Moylan
	Brooks Blitch IV
✓	Willie Hardee

Coffee
✓	Ted O'Steen
	Tony Paulk
	Adam Smith

Cook
✓	Debra Robinson
✓	Buddy Duke [EC]
	Derry Bennett

Echols
✓	Stanley Corbett
✓	Cheryl Garner

Irwin
	Scott Carver
	Horace Hudgins
✓	Mona Paulk

Lanier
✓	Dennis Fender [EC]
✓	Bill Darsey
	Vacant

Lowndes
✓	Joyce Evans [EC]
✓	Vivian Miller-Cody
✓	Anthony Payton

Pierce
✓	Neal Bennett [EC]
✓	Keith Brooks
	Steven Paul

Tift
✓	Tony McBrayer
	Julie Smith
	Vacant

Turner
	Dana Whiddon
	Sandra Lumpkin
	Brandi Giddens

Ware
✓	Elmer Thrift
	Michael-Angelo James
✓	Barbara King [EC]

Governor's Office
	Vacant
	Vacant
	Vacant

Lt. Governor's Office
✓	Keith Stone [EC]

Speaker's Office
✓	Matt Seale

Guests

Debra Robinson - on council

Celestine Hayes

Hayden Hancock

Kelly Lane

Diane Westberry

King Cone

Veronica Clark

_____ - on council

Charles White

Staff

Kim Vining

Commissioner Cook County

Council Member - Adel

Ron Oler

Eliz. Backe

Megan Fowler

Rachel Strom

C.

Tonia Hendricks

Ella Lahman

Wes Highsmith

Brittney

Greg Nasworthy

SGRC SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Council Meeting - SGRC Waycross Office

March 23, 2023

Guests   # Staff

Guests	Staff
Katelyn Poppell	Kim Vming
Diane Westbary	Scott Cevm
Kelly Peacock	Chris Strom
Franke Brockngym	Eliz. Backe
Jaclyn James	Tonia Hendricks
Lissi Chism (+ 6 students)	
Charles White	

![SGRC Southern Georgia Regional Commission logo]

Council Meeting - SGRC Waycross Office
March 23, 2023

COUNCIL

Atkinson
✓	Parker Liles
	Robert Johnson
✓	Robbie Stone

Bacon
	Shane Taylor
	Larry G. Taylor
	Lisa Coley

Ben Hill
	Steve Taylor [EC]
✓	Jason Holt
	Jason Dunn

Berrien
	Robert Griner
✓	Travis Brown
	Lisa Smart

Brantley
	Skipper Harris
✓	Barbara Maefield [EC]
	Vacant

Brooks
	Patrick Folsom
	Don Morgan
✓	Zurich Deshazior

Charlton
✓	James Everett
✓	Lee Gowen [EC]
	Vacant

Clinch
✓	Henry Moylan
	Brooks Blitch IV
	Willie Hardee

Coffee
	Ted O'Steen
	Tony Paulk
	Adam Smith

Cook
	Debra Robinson
	Buddy Duke [EC]
	Derry Bennett

Echols
	Stanley Corbett
	Cheryl Garner

Irwin
	Scott Carver
	Horace Hudgins
✓	Mona MacKenzie

Lanier
✓	Dennis Fender [EC]
✓	Bill Darsey
	Vacant

Lowndes
✓	Joyce Evans [EC]
✓	Vivian Miller-Cody
✓	Anthony Payton

Pierce
✓	Neal Bennett [EC]
✓	Keith Brooks
✓	Steven Paul

Tift
	Tony McBrayer
	Julie Smith
	Vacant

Turner
✓	Dana Whiddon
	Sandra Lumpkin
	Brandi Giddens

Ware
✓	Elmer Thrift
✓	Michael-Angelo James
✓	Barbara King [EC]

Governor's Office
	Vacant
	Vacant
	Vacant

Lt. Governor's Office
✓	Keith Stone [EC]

Speaker's Office
✓	Matt Seale

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
2023 REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE
VALDOSTA OPEN HOUSE
Date: October 13, 2022

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Scott Cowan E	SGRC	—	scowan@sgrc.us
Vivian Miller-Cody	City Valdosta		Vmiller-cody@valdostacity).com
J.D. Dillard	Lowndes Co.		jdillard@lowndescoty.com
Elizabeth Backe	SGRC	229.333.52ff	ebacke@sgrc.us
James Horton	SGRC	229 333 597	jhorton@sgrc.us
Ariel Godwin	GTS	229-305-2231	ariel.godwin@gentecsol.com
James E. Everett	Chulton Co.	912-389-7701	evins 2457@gmail.com
Loretta Hughin	SGRC		
Scott Matheson	City of Vald.	(229)561-7547	smatheson@valdostacity.com

SGRC SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

November 16, 2022 * Waycross, GA

Please Sign In

James Shubent, Ware Co.

Dustin Minchew, Ware Co

Scott Blount, All   sblount@abac.edu   www.ruralga.org

Elizabeth Backe, SGRC

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE DROP-IN OPEN HOUSE

INVITATION

FOR THE FIVE-YEAR REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE

LOCATION: Ware/Waycross Library

Large Program Room

401 Lee Ave. Waycross, GA

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2022
3PM - 6PM

FOR QUESTIONS, EMAIL
EBACKE@SGRC.US
OR CALL 229.333.5277

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
2023 REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE
TIFTON OPEN HOUSE
Date: January 31, 2023

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Elizabeth Backe	SGRC	209.333.5077	ebacke@sgrc.us
James Dorton	SGRC	229-333-5277	jhorton@sgrc.us
David Styr	TTCPL	229-889-1265	dstyer1@gmail.com
Thomas Tuff	TTCPL	229-392-4263	thomaskg1999@gmail.com
Charlie L. Styer	President	229-382-5589	chstyer@gmail.com

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE DROP-IN OPEN HOUSE

INVITATION

FOR THE FIVE-YEAR REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE

LOCATION: Tifton Library
245 Love Ave. Tifton, GA

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2023
3PM - 6PM

FOR QUESTIONS, EMAIL
EBACKE@SGRC.US
OR CALL 229.333.5277

Regional Plan Update

Steering Committee Meeting #5
Date: 2/23/23
Time: 11:00 AM
Pearson, GA
AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Presentation covering:

    a. Proposed Timeline
        i. Steering Committee Meeting #6: March 23, 2023 11am at Waycross
        ii. Transmittal Hearing: April 25, 2023 11am at Pearson
    b. Regional Plan Components:
        i. Vision
        ii. Goals
        iii. Policies
        iv. Needs and Opportunities
        v. Implementation Program
            1. Local Government Performance Standards (Minimum/Excellent)
            2. Regional Work Program (RC Activities)
            3. Data Appendices
        vi. Evaluation and Monitoring Program
        vii. Stakeholder Involvement
    c. Next Steering Committee Meeting: Waycross, March 23, 2023 at 11:00 am

Survey Link:
https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sv/ELzTTuV/2023RegionalPlan

Please forward comments and questions to Elizabeth Backe, ebacke@sgrc.us

Good morning,

Thank you for attending the update workshop yesterday following the SGRC Council meeting. Attached you will find the presentation slides from yesterday and below is the link to the survey. We encourage all who live, work, and play in our 18-county region to complete the survey to assist with the development of the regional plan. I will be happy to share the results of the survey and it will be included in the regional plan update as well. Feel free to share the link below via social media and on your county/city websites and Facebook pages:
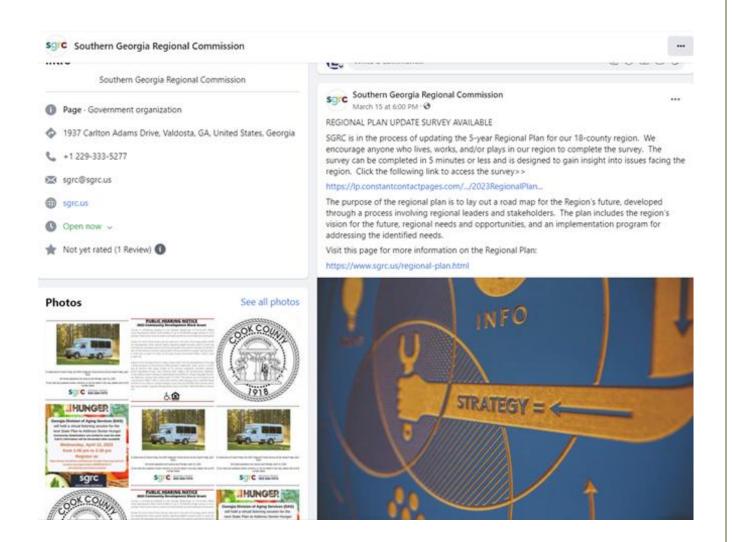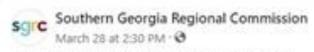
Regional Plan 2023 Survey (constantcontactpages.com)

Kind regards,
Elizabeth

Elizabeth Backe, AICP
Southern Georgia Regional Commission
Planning and Transportation Director
1937 Carlton Adams Dr.
Valdosta, GA 31601
229-333-5277 ext. 146
ebacke@sgrc.us

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission is here to help our local governments – with Planning, Zoning, IT, GIS, Grants, Economic Development, and more. How can we assist your local government? Contact us today!
----

sgrc Southern Georgia Regional Commission   ...

Southern Georgia Regional Commission

🛈 Page · Government organization

📍 1937 Carlton Adams Drive, Valdosta, GA, United States, Georgia

📞 +1 229-333-5277

✉ sgrc@sgrc.us

🌐 sgrc.us

🕐 Open now ⌄

⭐ Not yet rated (1 Review) 🛈

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sgrc Southern Georgia Regional Commission
March 15 at 6:00 PM · 🌐   ...

REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE SURVEY AVAILABLE

SGRC is in the process of updating the 5-year Regional Plan for our 18-county region. We encourage anyone who lives, works, and/or plays in our region to complete the survey. The survey can be completed in 5 minutes or less and is designed to gain insight into issues facing the region. Click the following link to access the survey>>

https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/.../2023RegionalPlan...

The purpose of the regional plan is to lay out a road map for the Region's future, developed through a process involving regional leaders and stakeholders. The plan includes the region's vision for the future, regional needs and opportunities, and an implementation program for addressing the identified needs.

Visit this page for more information on the Regional Plan:

https://www.sgrc.us/regional-plan.html

Photos   See all photos

Kick Off – Public Hearing
Southern Georgia Regional Commission
Regional Plan 5-Year Update

A public hearing will be held at **11a.m.** on **August 25, 2022** at **The Venue 319 Albany Ave., West Pearson, GA 31642** to announce the beginning of the 2023 Southern Georgia Regional Commission 5-Year Update for the Regional Plan. The purpose of this hearing is to brief the communities on the process to be used to develop and update the Regional Plan, announce opportunities for public participation in development of the plan, and obtain input on the proposed planning process.

Persons with special needs relating to disability access or foreign language should contact Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Office at 229-333-5277. Persons with hearing disabilities may consider using the Georgia Relay Service, at 1-800-255-0135.

All persons are invited to attend the public hearing. If you would like more information, please contact Elizabeth Backe at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, (229) 333-5277.

https://www.valdostadailytimes.com/news/local_news/regional-commission-sets-meeting/article_941f9dd5-a4c3-5818-80f0-dd168287e531.html

Regional commission sets meeting

Aug 19, 2022

PEARSON – A meeting of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission Council and a public hearing for the regional plan five-year update are scheduled for 11 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 25.

The SGRC Council meeting will begin immediately following the public hearing. For additional details, visit www.sgrc.us.

The meeting will be held at The Venue, 319 Albany Ave. W.

The meetings are open to the public, council representatives said in a statement.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND MAKE PLANS TO
ATTEND THE

SGrc SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

COUNCIL
MEETING

and Public Hearing for the Regional Plan
Five-Year Update

AUGUST 25, 2022

beginning at 11:00 am

Meeting will be held in person at:
The Venue
319 Albany Ave., West
Pearson, GA 31642
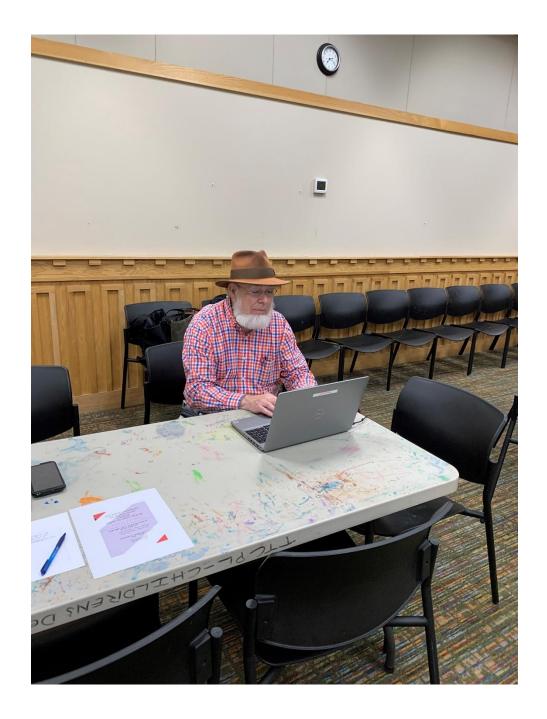
Photos from Meetings and Open Houses

Lowndes County/City of Valdosta Open House

Ware County/City of Waycross Open House

Tift County/City of Tifton Open House

Steering Committee Workshop 6
Waycross SGRC Office

Regional Plan Survey

This section presents the survey that was distributed to stakeholders via Constant Contact and located on the SGRC's website. There were 213 responses received. The following is summary of survey responses received:

<u>Overall Appearance of County/City:</u>
The highest percentage of respondents answered that the overall appearance of their county/city is well-maintained public land with occasional pocket of private property blight (31%). A smaller percentage found both that roadside right-of-way's are in need of increased mowing and tree trimming (21%) and that pockets of private property blight are common and seem to be growing (21%). A smaller percentage found that litter along roadside is a common sight (19%). Lastly, the smallest percentage (6%) found that the overall appearance is well-maintained and welcoming.

<u>Access to internet at home:</u>
A majority of respondents (57%) found that access to internet is available at their homes and the speed is adequate for their needs. A smaller percentage (35%) responded that they do have access to the internet, but that the speed is too slow for their needs. Lastly, the smallest percentage (7%) answered in the negative, that they do not have access to internet at their home. It should be noted that 29% of locations in the Region are identified as not having adequate access to broadband (defined as fixed, terrestrial broadband with a minimum of 25 megabits per second down and 3 megabits per second up).

<u>Historic Preservation:</u>
The majority of respondents (62%) relied in the affirmative, that it is "Very Important" and that "funds should be budgeted for historic and natural area preservation in my county". A lesser percentage (34%) indicated that preservation of historical and natural assets is "Somewhat Important". Lastly, very few (2%) answered that preservation is "Not Important".

<u>Housing Issues:</u>
A multitude of issues were selected as the most relevant issue related to housing. The greatest majority (28%) identified "Blighted properties that discourage new development" as the area of most need. Another relevant issue selected by many respondents (27%) is "Lack of high-quality rental units for those who choose to rent". "Lack of blue-collar workforce housing" was identified by 19% as the most relevant issue to housing while "Lack of senior housing and assisted living facilities" was identified by 10% of respondents. Lastly, "Dated housing stock" identified by 7%, "Lack of public water and sewer availability that limits new development" identified by 4%, and "The need for urban housing in downtowns and city center" identified by 2% were the three least identified issues. Zero respondents identified "Lack of high-end housing" as the most relevant issue related to housing.

<u>Public Transit:</u>
Rural transit is offered in fifteen (15) of the eighteen (18) counties within the Southern Georgia Region. Additionally, there is an Urban Transit system in the City of Valdosta and Valdosta

State University has a student shuttle. Of the 213 respondents to the survey, only 3% responded that they had used public transit in their county before.

Open Questions Summary:
Below are some viewpoints mentioned in the open survey questions:

Is there another region in the country you'd like to move to and why?
- The outskirts of town because of the utility cost. Lack of adequate rental houses and too many unkept houses that need to be torn down in the city limits. People not maintaining their property correctly.
- I love this place. It is a good place to live and retire. It is an urban area but close to other larger cities within a reasonable travel distance for shopping and entertainment.
- Florida, because there are a lot more opportunities for outdoor recreation, more public land, and more trails.
- Anywhere to get away from trains.
- If I were to move, it would be back "home" to north Georgia (Haralson, Carroll, or Paulding Counties) so that there would be more options for leisure activities within a half hour drive.
- Athens, GA - more to do there such as more restaurants that offer a variety of different cuisines, busy and well-maintained downtown, more stores to shop (Target, Bed, Bath, & Beyond, Pier 1), outdoor activities, and more rental housing.
- Possibly somewhere in northern America to the mountains. The condition of Ware County is not affecting this desire, but it sure would be nice to get away from the trains that are constantly blocking our intersections.
- No, I like the rural area where I own a home and the commute to work is reasonably close.
- I would love to move to a coastal region where there are many activities for people my age.

Is there a reason you may not wish to live in this region anymore?
- No, I like this area. Lowndes County is growing and changing and I think that's great. It brings more jobs to the area, more new developments. We do need more affordable housing options and senior housing as well.
- Lack of development and a rise in crime.
- There is a lot of poverty in this area. No one wants to work or try to better themselves. Our city looks trashy and rundown. The streets have potholes and are not maintained. The trains are a MAJOR issue.
- I actually love this region just need more resources for housing such as Habitat for Humanity, HUD and senior living.
- Lack of opportunities for outdoor recreation, specifically cycling and long-distance running.
- There is not a lot of opportunity for young professionals in the workforce, a lack of nice rentals or entry-level homes, and not much recreation for my age group.
- TRAINS!!!!! Trains are CONSTANTLY blocking crossings for hours at a time causing people to have to drive 20 minutes longer to get somewhere that should have taken 5.

- Trains! If overpasses could be built the problem would be much better... or if they didn't come to a complete stop blocking traffic! I'm fine with having trains all throughout the day, but they should never be stopped in the middle of the city!!!
- Nothing other than the TRAINS that literally stop at every crossing during busy times of the day and they gridlock our traffic patterns. You can count on trains during the morning rush and lunch. It's dangerous for EMS to not be able to get around it
- Valdosta and the Lowndes County area is having rapid growth and development, but the other counties near it, are not having the same growth and development. I love living in Brooks County, but the area is not striving. Lots of blighted storefronts.

Is there something lacking in the region?
- Better paying jobs.
- There is a lack of services and support available for our children & adults with disabilities.
- industrial development with good paying jobs.
- Competitors for garbage pick-up, internet services, cable tv, etc. There is no competition therefore the consumer has no choice.
- Lack of safe spaces to walk/bike/lack of sidewalks.
- Overpasses for railroad crossings and better downtown developments.
- It would be nice to have a venue location for large events for more concert and theater opportunities.
- A tiny house community for our homeless population possibly.
- A lot, it would be great to see townhomes for young working professionals they may be looking to buy a home that does not have a yard.
- Higher internet speed, less dirt roads, better water system in Douglas.
- Employment opportunities for growth, community activity areas, walkability, and new overall development.
- Code enforcement for blight properties needs to be addressed.
- Well maintained roads, better transportation options around trains so that people do not have to drive through slow neighborhoods making it dangerous for those living in it.
- public transportation. accountability for CSX railroad disruptions.
- Places to walk and bike. Lowndes County has vast neighborhoods with no sidewalks. The Azalea Trail is nice but only a couple miles long. How about extending the bike trail from Madison, FL all the way to Valdosta and beyond?

What are some things you would miss from this region if you moved elsewhere?
- Arglass, Wild Adventures, Movie Theater, Theater Guild, Turner Center for the Arts, Unity Park, On-demand taxi - although I wish they would increase the areas they travel.
- The space and country-living lifestyle.
- The Okefenokee Swamp, Banks Lake, Laura S Walker, General Coffee State Park.
- Light traffic, slower pace of life, limited corporate congestion.
- Nature, the quiet, being able to see the stars at night. Animals. Feeling safe. The balance of being able to live in the country but still have access to a Walmart.

- If I moved away from this region, I would miss the quiet sereneness of the county I currently live in. I would also miss the friendliest of the people and being able to sit outside in my yard and feel safe.
- I would miss the availability of parking, driving down uncrowded streets and no traffic headaches. I would also miss the small-town vibes.
- Small town connections
- I love the small-town environment where I know all my neighbors.
- The people and the small-town compassion
- Wonderful countryside, hands-on public officials.
- I enjoy the walking/biking trail that goes through the city of Douglas. I enjoy the down town business shopping area they have created in Douglas.
- I would miss the rural aspect of living here. Slow paced, everyone knows their neighbors type of life style.
- Access to fresh and saltwater fishing. Hunting. Access to mineral mining for fun within a few hours. Access to shopping for food and other essentials.
- Ability to get to town and work within a few minutes. Ability to get to the beach in an hour.
- The clean air and skies.
- The wide-open spaces

Please leave any additional remarks you may want to mention:
- We have a world of opportunity in southeast Georgia. We need a shared vision to make opportunity a reality.
- Concern over the loss bricks and mortar stores due to so much being ordered and shipped online.
- This is a great region. There needs to be more activities for kids. Local businesses need support.
- We have TOO MANY Dollar stores!!! There are four within two miles of each other, with low-income housing in the middle. People need access to healthy food when they do not have transportation! They need grocery stores, NOT dollar stores.
- More mental health resources (counseling, living centers with job opportunities) vs. jail time.
- We live in a great place with so much potential. I hope companies will consider coming to our community to provide more opportunities for our folks.
- CSX transportation's lack of accountability to the communities within the region is the largest problem facing multiple counties within the SGRC. Trains are constantly stopped on tracks for extended periods of time, causing motorists to have significantly increased travel times, often rerouting through neighborhoods at unsafe speeds, and causing difficulty accessing businesses and residences. CSX detracts others from moving to or visiting our community.
- Please do not add roundabouts everywhere!!!!!
- There are so many abandoned private properties that seem to be left to rot and fall down. There should be enforcement of owners to repair, sell, or demolish these blighted properties. There should be tax breaks and other incentives provided to private and

commercial owners to purchase rundown properties and refurbish them. There should be tax breaks for small business owners who rent/purchase historical properties.
- I realize that CSX is a large contributor for our communities, but the trains blocking intersections has gotten increasingly worse over the last 2 years.
- Affordable student housing for the college is also important. The college has the capacity for growth, but not the ability to sustain because of limited living arrangements.

REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE SURVEY AVAILABLE

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Click the following link to access the survey:

https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/.../2023RegionalPlan...

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Visit this page for more information on the Regional Plan:

https://www.sgrc.us/regional-plan.html

sgrc

SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Regional Plan Update 2023

* Which county do you live in?

0/50

What is your age?

0/50

* How do you feel about the overall appearance of your county or city?

○ Well-maintained and welcoming

○ Well-maintained public land with occasional pocket of private property blight

○ Roadside right-of-ways in need of increased mowing and tree trimming

○ Litter along roadside is a common sight

○ Pockets of private property blight are common and seem to be growing

* Do you have access to internet at your home, other than satellite provider options?

○ Yes, and the speed is adequate for my needs

○ Yes, but the speed is too slow for my needs

○ No

* Southern GA is home to many historical structures, monuments, and natural areas that are under constant risk of decay or demolition. These assets, once lost, are irreplaceable. How important to you is the preservation of your country's historic and natural assets?

○ Very important (funds should be budgeted for historic and natural area preservation in my county)

Constant Contact Survey Results

Campaign Name: Regional Plan 2023 Survey Created 2022/08/08, 1:59:40 PM EDT

Survey Starts: 684

Survey Submits: 213

Export Date: 04/06/2023 09:59 AM

OPEN QUESTION

Which county do you live in?

Baconn
Berrien
Lowndes
213 Response(s)

OPEN QUESTION

What is your age?

64
51
38
211 Response(s)

MULTIPLE CHOICE

How do you feel about the overall appearance of your county or city?

| Answer Choice	0%　　　　　　　　　　　　100%	Number of Responses	Responses Ratio
Well-maintained and welcoming		14	6%
Well-maintained public land with occasional pocket of private property blight		67	31%
Roadside right-of-ways in need of increased mowing and tree trimming		45	21%
Litter along roadside is a common sight		41	19%
Pockets of private property blight are common and seem to be growing		46	21%
	Total Responses	**213**	**100%**

MULTIPLE CHOICE
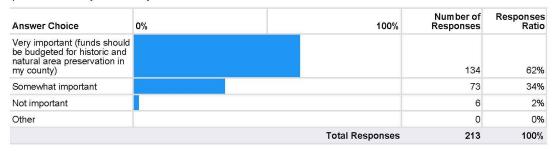
Do you have access to internet at your home, other than satellite provider options?

Answer Choice	0%　　　　　　　　　　　　100%	Number of Responses	Responses Ratio
Yes, and the speed is adequate for my needs		122	57%
Yes, but the speed is too slow for my needs		75	35%
No		16	7%

		Total Responses	213	100%

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Southern GA is home to many historical structures, monuments, and natural areas that are under constant risk of decay or demolition. These assets, once lost, are irreplaceable. How important to you is the preservation of your country's historic and natural assets?

Answer Choice	0%	100%	Number of Responses	Responses Ratio
Very important (funds should be budgeted for historic and natural area preservation in my county)			134	62%
Somewhat important			73	34%
Not important			6	2%
Other			0	0%
		Total Responses	213	100%

MULTIPLE CHOICE

What do you consider to be the most relevant issues related to housing in your county?

Answer Choice	0%	100%	Number of Responses	Responses Ratio
Lack of senior housing and assisted living facilities			22	10%
The need for urban housing in downtowns and city centers			5	2%
Dated housing stock			16	7%
Lack of public water and sewer availability that limits new development			9	4%
Blighted properties that discourage new development			61	28%
Lack of high quality rental units for those who choose to rent			58	27%
Lack of blue collar workforce housing			42	19%
Lack of high-end housing			0	0%
		Total Responses	213	100%

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Have you used public transit in your county?

Answer Choice	0%	100%	Number of Responses	Responses Ratio
Yes			7	3%
No			206	96%
		Total Responses	213	100%

OPEN QUESTION

Is there another region in the country you'd like to move to and why?

Yes Lakeland at our family farm on Ruching road

North, for cooler summers

I haven't found one but I would like to move somewhere, where the part of the state in which I live is not ignored by the capital of the state as far as sending money for road improvements and other infrastructure problems.

116 Response(s)

OPEN QUESTION

Is there a reason you may not wish to live in this region anymore?

No

Work opportunities

Yes, because the lack of leadership and the attitude of the people is about as bad as it gets. Nobody wants any improvements if it is going to be in their back yards.

120 Response(s)

OPEN QUESTION

Is there something lacking in this region?

No

Jobs; cultural clubs and organizations

Sidewalks; And not enough places for outdoor recreation.

142 Response(s)

OPEN QUESTION

What are some things you would miss from this region if you moved elsewhere?

6 miles from town versus 20

Warm winters

Nothing that I can think of, other being stopped by trains every time I go somewhere in this town.

120 Response(s)

OPEN QUESTION

Please leave any additional remarks you may want to mention

Preserving history is ok, but Confederate monuments should be removed or at least placed in context. The monuments bear slogans saying the Confederacy was in the right (e.g. "The impartial enlightened verdict of mankind will vindicate the rectitude of our conduct.") This refers to a regime that fought to enslave people based on their race. Our local governments shouldn't endorse that by maintaining the monuments at taxpayer expense. There should be some context and some apology.

Atlanta does not distribute the money in this state like they should. There are two Georgias. One from Macon north and one from Macon south and it is evident which one gets the money.

litter along roadside

60 Response(s)

ACRONYMS AND ABREVIATIONS

AAA – Area Agency on Aging
ACT – At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics
AICUZ – Air Installation Compatible Use Zone
ARSA – Areas Requiring Special Attention
BMP – Best Management Practices
BOE – Board of Education
CDBG – Community Development Block Grant
CFS - Community Facilities & Services
DCA – Department of Community Affairs
DCSS – Division of Child Support Services
DHS – Department of Human Services
DNR – Department of Natural Resources
ED – Economic Development
EDA – Economic Development Authority
EDU – Education
EMS – Emergency Medical Services
EPD – Environmental Protection Division
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
FY – Fiscal Year
GDOT – Georgia Department of Transportation
GEMA – Georgia Emergency Management Agency
GICH – Georgia Initiative for Community Housing
GSA – General Services Administration
GTA – Georgia Technology Authority
H – Housing
IC – Intergovernmental Coordination (IC)
LU – Land Use
LUT – Land Use and Transportation
MAFB – Moody Airforce Base
MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization
N/C – Natural and Cultural Resources
NRHP – National Register of Historic Places
NWR – National Wildlife Refuge
ONWR – Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
QLG – Qualified Local Government
SA – Senior Services/Aging
SGRC – Southern Georgia Regional Commission
SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities
TND – Traditional Neighborhood Design
VLMPO – Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization

REGIONAL PLAN 2023 UPDATE COMPLETION SCHEDULE												
	AUG 22	SEPT 22	OCT 22	NOV 22	DEC 22	JAN 23	FEB 23	MAR 23	APR 23	MAY 23	JUN 23	JUL 23
KICK OFF PUBLIC HEARING	25th											
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS	25th	22nd			8th	26th	23rd	22nd				
SURVEY DISTRIBUTION	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE WORKSHOPS			13th Valdosta, Lowndes County	16th Waycross, Ware County			2nd Tifton, Tift County					
TRANSMITAL PUBLIC HEARING									25th			
DCA REVIEW PERIOD										x	x	
ADOPTION & PUBLIC HEARING												x