

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION



REGIONAL PLAN 2018

PHOTO CREDIT: MICHAEL RIVERA

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Clinch County Courthouse, Douglas Veterans Park, J.S. Shingler Building – Ashburn Heights Historic District, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (Charlton County)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
a) Stakeholder Involvement Summary	5
b) General Vision and Regional Goal Summary	6
c) Priority Needs & Opportunities	8
d) Specific Actions to Be Pursued	10
e) Other Plans Consulted.....	10
(2) Regional Goals and Policies	11
1. Economic Development	11
2. Natural and Cultural Resources	12
3. Community Facilities and Services.....	13
4. Housing	14
5. Land Use and Transportation.....	15
6. Intergovernmental Coordination	16
7. Education	16
8. Senior Services and Aging	17
(3) Regional Development Maps	19
I. Regional Land Use Map	19
II. Conservation and Development Map	22
III. Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map	25
(4) Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Narratives	27
I. Threatened Regionally Important Resources	27
Second Magnitude Springs in Brooks County, Georgia	28
Withlacoochee River from Valdosta to Florida State Line	29
Floridan Aquifer	30
Satilla River on Pierce County Line	31
II. Areas of Rapid Development	32
Douglas Perimeter.....	33
Bacon County Blueberry Plantation	34
Ben Hill County Airport/Industrial area and South Corridor	35
Troupville Community	36
Western Lanier County/Banks Lake NWR.....	37
Cook County I-75 Interchange Areas and Outlet Mall	38
Lowndes County North/South Corridors	39
Tift Highway 82 West Corridor	41
Pierce/Ware County Line.....	42
Military Installation – Moody Air Force Base and Surrounding Area	43
Eastern Brantley County	45
Southern Charlton County/Florida State Line	47
III. Areas for Redevelopment.....	48
Cook County Industrial Park	49
Downtown Waycross	50
Oak Park Subdivision	51
(5) Regional Needs and Opportunities	52
1. Economic Development (ED).....	53
2. Natural and Cultural Resources (N/C).....	55
3. Community Facilities & Services (CFS).....	57

4. Housing (H)	59
5. Land Use (LU) & Transportation (T).....	61
6. Intergovernmental Coordination (IC)	63
7. Education (EDU).....	65
8. Senior Services/Aging (SA).....	67
(6) Implementation Program.....	69
(I) Performance Standards	69
Local Government Performance Standards Report	73
(ii) Strategies and Regional Work Program	75
Report of Accomplishments (as of FY2018)	76
Regional Work Program 2019 – 2024	83
Appendices.....	90
Appendix A. SWOT Analysis.....	90
Appendix B. Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives	107
Appendix C. Data and Maps	111
I) Population	111
ii) Economic Development	119
iii) Housing	127
iv) Community Facilities and Services	138
v) Transportation System.....	150
vi) Water Trails Map.....	162
vii) Historic Resources.....	164
Appendix D. Stakeholder Involvement Report.....	166
Sign-in sheets and meeting invitations	169
Public Hearing Advertisements	185
Photos from Meetings	187
Regional Plan Survey.....	192

(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 2017 Census Bureau population estimate of 412,891, 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 2018 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 regularly and continuously 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 and submit surveys via email.

2. Facebook: All listening session dates were published on the SGRC Facebook page where it was also possible to submit comments.
3. Regional Plan Webpage: All dates for listening sessions, 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 24, 2017, in Pearson, GA. The location was chosen due to its centrality within the Region.
5. Listening Sessions: The Regional Commission held four listening sessions throughout the Region:
 - a. Session 1: September 21, 2017, in Valdosta, GA. The purpose of the meeting was to familiarize the participants with the regional plan update process and undertake the SWOT analysis for the plan.
 - b. Session 2: October 19, 2017, in Waycross, GA. The SWOT analysis was completed at this listening session and needs and opportunities were prioritized. Draft policies were developed on how to approach addressing needs and opportunities over the planning period.
 - c. Session 3: December 7, 2017, in Tifton, GA. Policies were discussed further including implementation activities to advance the policies and address priority needs and opportunities.
 - d. Session 4: January 18, 2018, in Douglas, GA. Areas requiring particular attention were reviewed, defined and discussed at this listening session.
6. Further stakeholder involvement opportunities were provided at the Kick-off Public Meeting at the Regional Commission Board Meeting on August 24, 2017, 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.

A final public hearing to conclude gathering public input was held at the Regional Commission office on May 22, 2018.

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: To encourage growth in skilled population and economic prosperity that will advance the Region's workforce, job opportunities, and quality of life for all segments of the community.**
- 2. Natural and Cultural Resources Goal: To preserve and grow the Region's cultural and natural resources and protect historically essential and environmentally sensitive areas from development pressures.**
- 3. Community Facilities and Services Goal: To provide sufficient facilities and services which will direct economic and lifestyle growth through sustainable land use and transportation.**
- 4. Housing Goal: To provide a safe and adequate supply of good quality housing in rural and urban areas for all sections of the population.**
- 5. Land Use and Transportation Goal: To efficiently use the existing infrastructure (broadband, transportation, water, sewer, etc.) by steering the development or redevelopment of land onto sites adjacent to the existing infrastructure.**
- 6. Intergovernmental Coordination Goal: To unite communities to identify needs and develop strategies to move the entire Region forward over next ten years including projects for shared resources, such as regional greenspace, and broadband access, where the unity of support and action across the Region will improve the future for all citizens and businesses.**
- 7. Education Goal: To 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: To 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 was conducted through listening 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. Appendix C, the age distribution table, clearly shows the out-migration of the younger generation.

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-7: 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-8: 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.

4. Housing:

Priority Needs:

- H-1: More housing in downtown areas is needed.
- H-2: Loss of historic landmark homes due to lack of investment in renovating historic housing.

Priority Opportunities:

- H-8: 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-9: Develop a regional public transportation plan including incentives for private investment to increase public transportation.
- LUT-10: 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 significant opportunities to integrate land use planning, transportation, and economic growth.

6. Intergovernmental Coordination

Priority Needs:

- IC-1: Insufficient coordination and information sharing between local governments

Priority Opportunities:

- IC-6: Provide regional intergovernmental leadership training to provide a consistent knowledge base and forge connections.
- IC-7: Take advantage of the resources available through the Regional Commission for joint regional projects.

7. Education

Priority Opportunities:

- EDU-10: Increase accessibility of schools.
- EDU-11: More coordination with businesses and industries to establish workforce training programs.

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-10: Increased regional coordination with public, private, and non-profit agencies; 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
- 2018 – 2022 Southern Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Valdosta-Lowndes MPO 2040 Transportation Vision Plan
- Regional Plan of Coastal Georgia
- Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional Plan
- River Valley Regional Plan
- Southwest Georgia Regional Plan

(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:

To encourage growth in skilled population and economic prosperity that will advance 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:

To preserve and grow the Region's cultural and natural resources and protect historically essential 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 that members continually protect and enhance 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. 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, 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.

3. Community Facilities and Services

Goal:

To provide sufficient facilities and services, which will direct economic and lifestyle growth through sustainable land use and transportation.

(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 is 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:

To provide a safe and adequate supply of good quality housing in rural and urban areas for all sections 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:

To efficiently use the existing infrastructure (broadband, transportation, water, sewer, etc.) by steering the development or redevelopment of land onto sites adjacent to the existing infrastructure.

(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:

To unite communities to identify needs and develop strategies to move the entire Region forward over the next ten years including projects for shared resources such as regional greenspace, broadband access, 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:

To provide the foundation for a highly skilled, thriving and engaged workforce through educational 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

Goal:

To 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.)

Senior Services and Aging Policies

- 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, and the remaining two-lane section between Homerville and Waycross is being expanded to four lanes as of the writing of this Plan. 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.

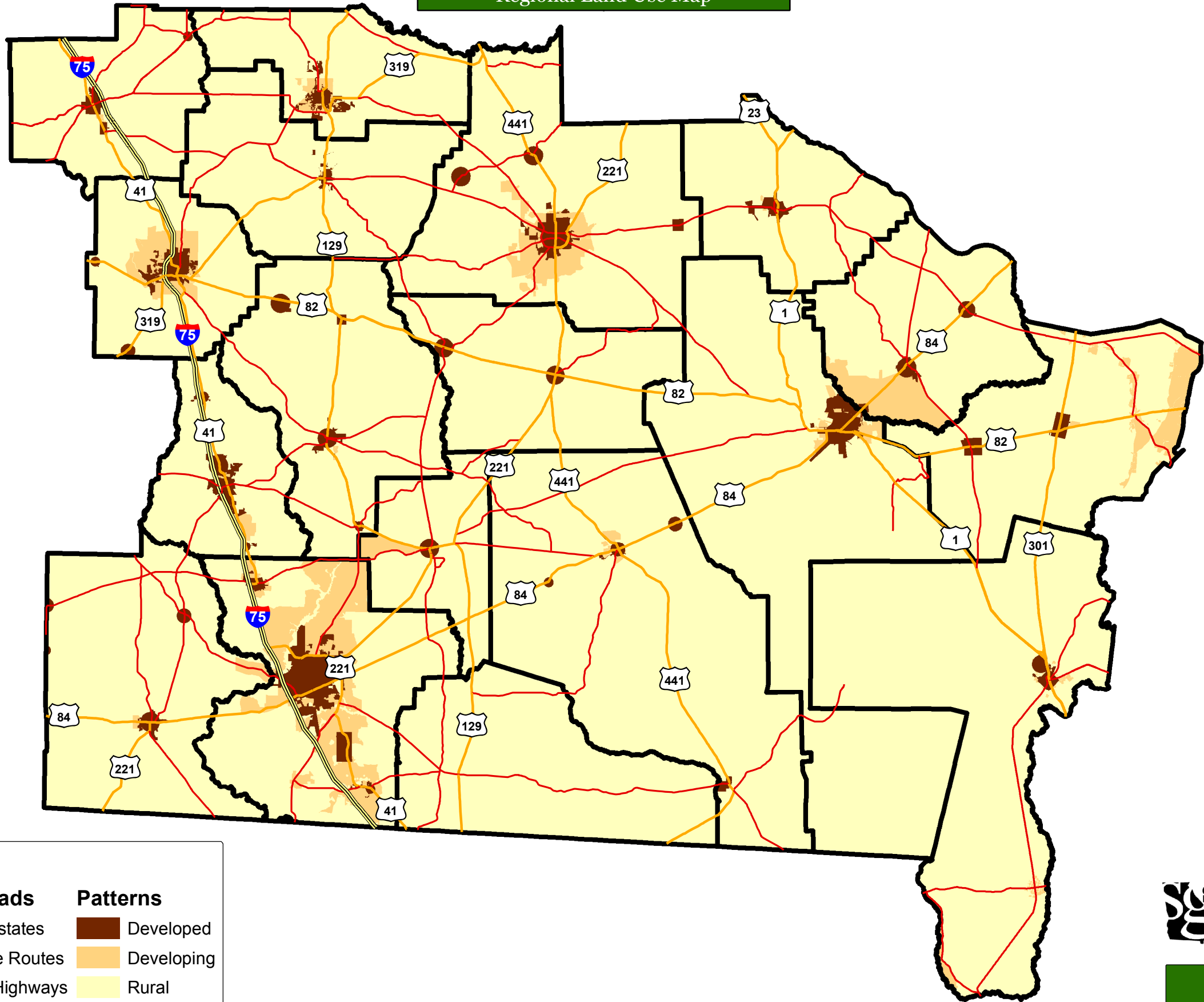
2. Developing

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 recent construction and expansion of a perimeter road around the City.

3. Rural

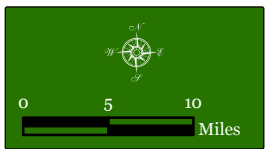
The remainder of the Region falls into the “Rural” category due to mainly agricultural/silviculture uses and properties holding agricultural property tax conservation designations, the absence of central utilities including broadband, and relatively low-density residential and farming uses. Very little 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.

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
Regional Land Use Map



Legend

Major Roads	Patterns
Interstates	Developed
State Routes	Developing
US Highways	Rural
Counties	



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. In the previous Regional Plan, Echols County was shown as 100% conservation, which was due to a scrivener's error in the GIS layers. This is corrected in the current Regional Plan update, and only portions of Echols County are now shown as conservation.

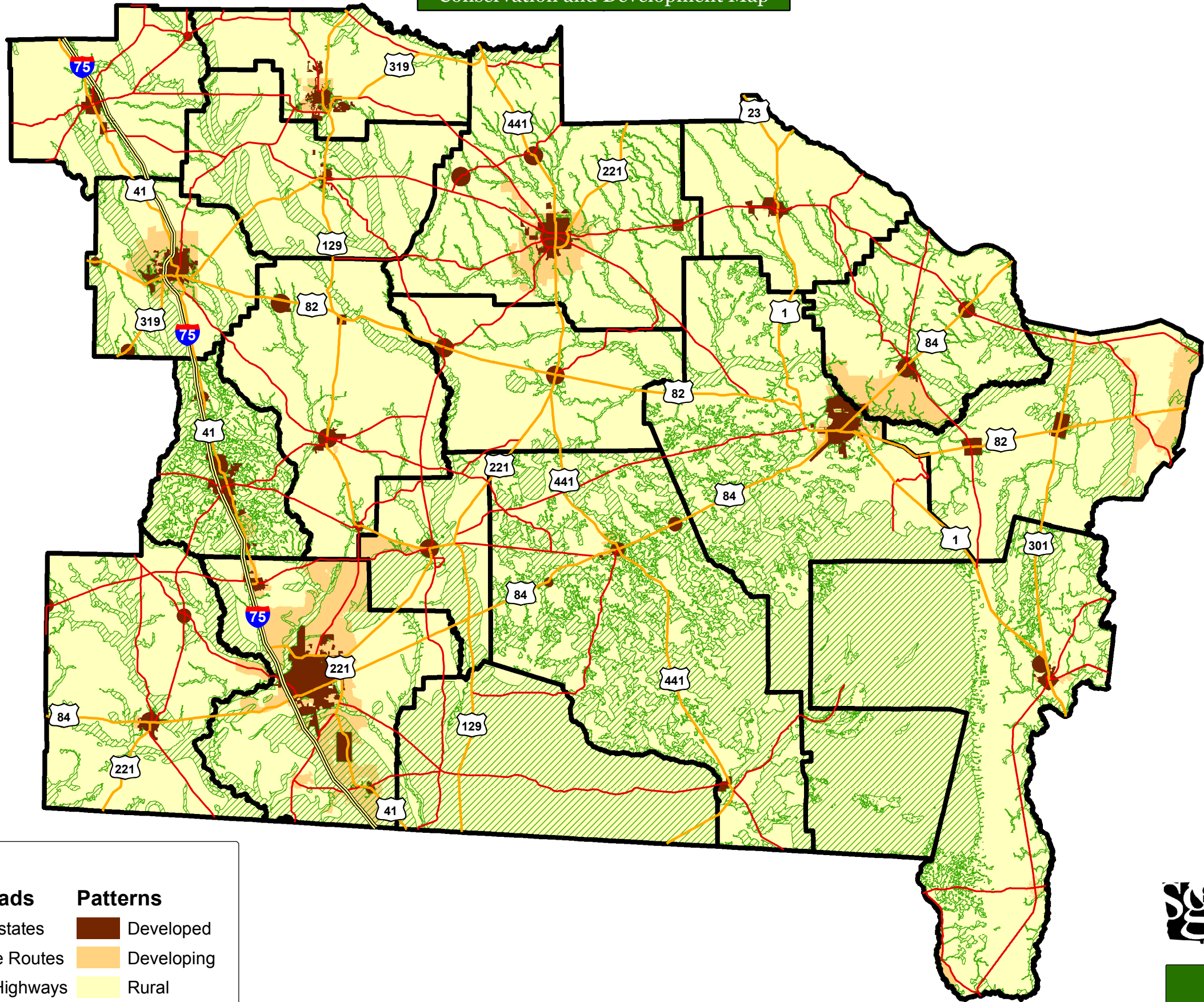
One of the region's most rapidly developing areas, the Troupville area in eastern Brooks County, is near to two of the region's most vulnerable natural resources: the Withlacoochee River and the second magnitude springs in Brooks County. In recent years, heavy rains have caused the City of Valdosta's sewage system to overflow, causing frequent spills of raw sewage into the Withlacoochee (recent spills include 12.9 million gallons in March 2013, 1.5 million gallons in April 2016, 2.2 million gallons in January 2017, and 300,000 gallons in June 2018). 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 the rapid 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 rapid development nearby, this section of the river is considered a threatened RIR.

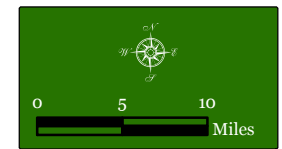
There are other areas where conservation lands and areas of rapid development overlap or are near to each other; however, these environmental resources are protected from development by federal, state, and local regulations and ordinances. For example, Banks Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Lanier County,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

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
Conservation and Development Map



Legend

Major Roads	Patterns
Interstates	Developed
State Routes	Developing
US Highways	Rural
Counties	Conservation



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. 22), 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
- 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
-  Areas of Rapid Development
-  Threatened Regionally Important Resources
-  Areas of Redevelopment
-  SGRC Counties
-  Floridan Aquifer

Areas of Rapid Development

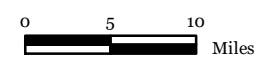
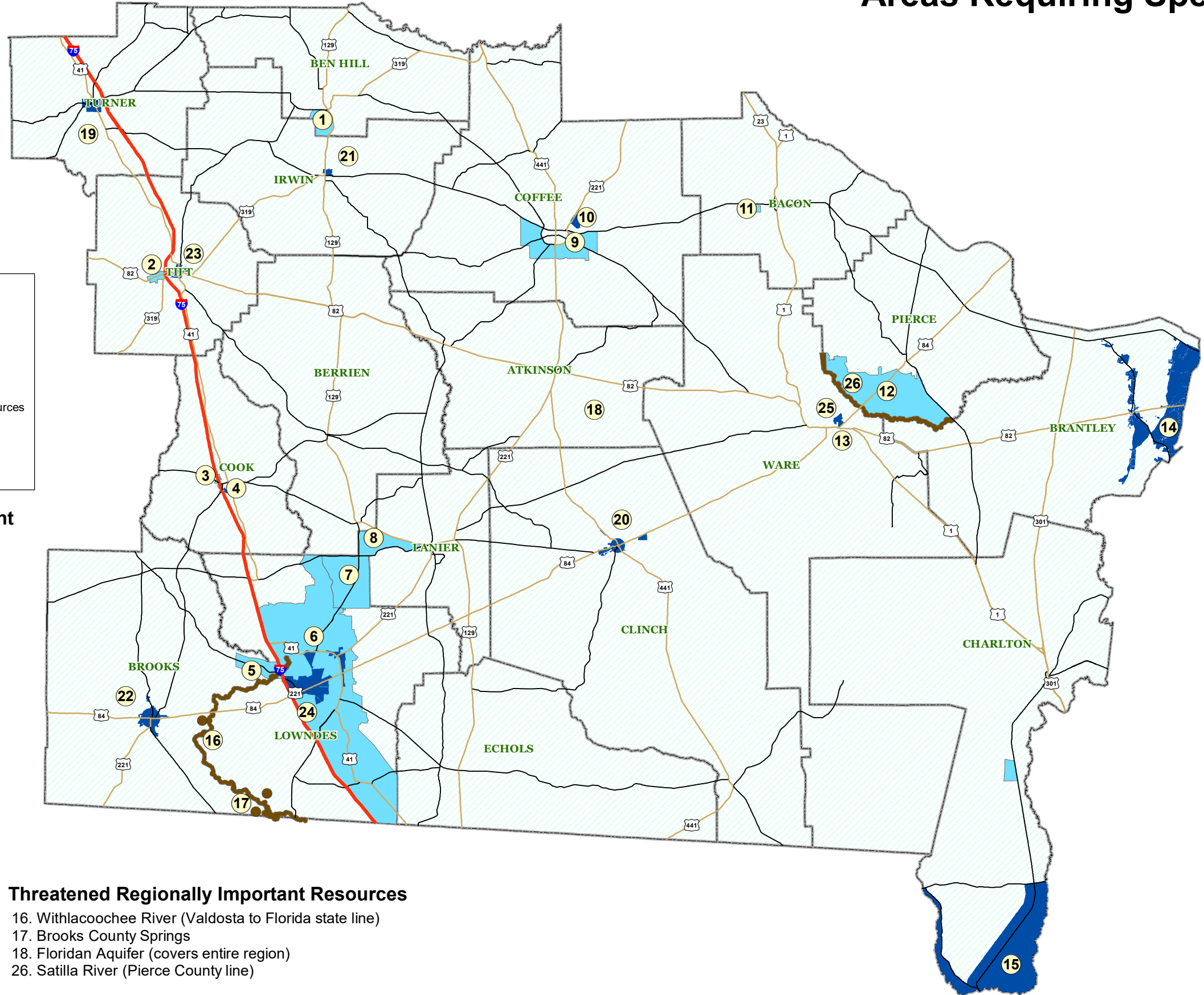
- 1. Ben Hill Industrial Airport Area
- 2. Highway 82 West
- 3. Cook County Interchanges
- 5. Troupville
- 6. Lowndes North - South Corridor
- 7. Moody AFB Area
- 8. Western Lanier
- 9. Douglas Perimeter
- 11. Blueberry Plantation
- 12. Pierce / Ware County Line
- 14. Eastern Brantley County
- 15. Georgia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

Areas for Redevelopment

- 4. Cook County Industrial Park
- 10. Oak Park RAS
- 13. Downtown Waycross
- 19. Ashburn EZ/URA
- 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

- 16. Withlacoochee River (Valdosta to Florida state line)
- 17. Brooks County Springs
- 18. Floridan Aquifer (covers entire region)
- 26. Satilla River (Pierce County line)



(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



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.

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.

Douglas Perimeter



Photo by Michael Rivera

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 9*)

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.
- 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.
- 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.



Example of preferred development type

Bacon County 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 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.
- Focus on corridor appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping, and other beautification measures.
- Provide for a comprehensive tourism marketing program.
- Encourage sufficient broadband coverage for the area.



Example of preferred development type

Ben Hill County Airport/Industrial area and South Corridor



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

Troupville Community



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 5*)

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

Western Lanier County/Banks Lake NWR



Photo by Michael Rivera

As a percentage of overall population, Lanier County has seen the most significant population increase in the Region between the last two censuses. The vast majority of this growth has 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 8*)

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.



Example of preferred development type

Cook County I-75 Interchange Areas and Outlet Mall



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. New shopping venues, retail services, and mixed-use opportunities could resurrect a once-popular shopping destination known as the King Frog. 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

Lowndes County North/South Corridors



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 6*)

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.
 - Identify and prioritize properties that are considered incompatible under Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) guidelines; establish method to monitor and purchase “for sale” properties designated an incompatible uses.
 - 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

Tift Highway 82 West Corridor

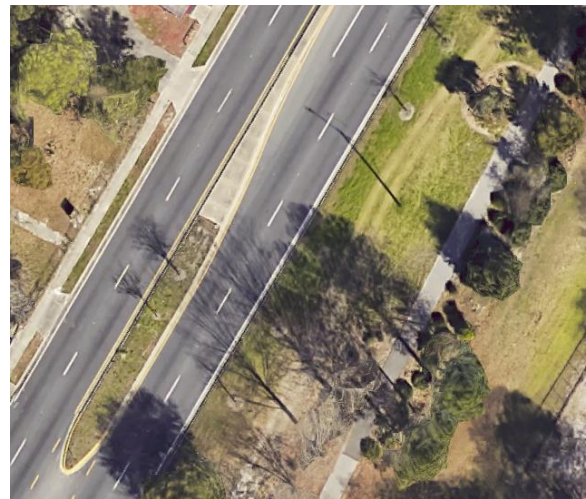


This area in Tift County near the western end of the City of Tifton has seen significant development, specifically, the area along Highway 82 west of I-75 to Carpenter Road. Concerns are that any development strategies, reviews, and approvals will need to include the provision of infrastructure (water, 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

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 12*)

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

Military Installation – Moody Air Force Base and Surrounding 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 6,000 military and civilian personnel. The presence of MAFB within the area has led to ongoing growth and development and has resulted in over \$440 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. (*Map Key 7*)

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.
 - Identify and prioritize properties that are considered incompatible under Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) guidelines; establish the method to monitor and purchase “for sale” properties designated incompatible uses; identify funding mechanisms; and program funds for acquisition of designated property.
 - 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

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.

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

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 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).

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

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 4*)

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.

Downtown Waycross



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 Key 13*)



Photos by Ariel Godwin

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.

Oak Park Subdivision



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 recently 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. (*Map Key 10*)



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.

(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 listening sessions and other group meetings including the Regional Commission Board meetings.

The Regional Commission held a series of four regional listening sessions around the Region, two of which are dedicated to identifying current regional needs and opportunities, and prioritizing those needs and opportunities. It was relevant to the stakeholders to determine the needs our communities are facing which restrict the Region from achieving its goals and then to develop policies and implementation measures that will resolve those needs and turn them into opportunities.

The first listening session, held in Valdosta, Georgia, was used to review the existing goals, needs, and opportunities. It was accomplished in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, where participants updated the list of goals, needs, opportunities, and policies to meet current needs. Copies of the sign-in sheets are provided in the appendix along with public hearing notices. Poster boards for every element were put up on the walls, sectioned into the quadrants, and participants noted their perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each component of in the respective sections of the poster board.

The second listening session, held in Waycross, Georgia, where the identified needs and opportunities are finalized into the regionally agreed upon list of Needs and Opportunities, and addressed in the Region. Those needs and opportunities deemed a Regional Commission priority and which stand in the way of achieving the full potential of the Region and its communities for the next five year planning period were also identified to be followed up with implementation measures.

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 Michael Rivera

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 and utilized to attract new industry and generate tax revenue for the communities in the Region.

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

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

Opportunities

ED-8: 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-9: 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.

ED-10: The Region should market its forestry and clean water resources as a business resource and for agri-tourism.

ED-11: The Region should market its proximity to ports and airports.

ED-12: The Region should take advantage of its business leaders' knowledge and experience to assist start-up businesses and local entrepreneurs.

ED-13: 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 Michael Rivera

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 and natural resources guide.

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

Priority Opportunities

N/C-7: 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-8: 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-9: The development of a regional purchase of development rights program should be encouraged, to encourage preservation and conservation on a connected and consistent scale.

N/C-10: A narrated Tourism Video could help to market the Region's tourism resources.

N/C-11: 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-12: Agri-tourism could help to fund and encourage education programs leading to jobs in the farming industry.

N/C-13: More community-wide clean-up events and programs for streams and rivers could help to improve the quality of those areas.

N/C-14: Regional community strengths should be marketed, such as the Peachtree State Summer Theater, Valdosta Symphony Orchestra, and the Turner Arts Center.

N/C-15: Actively pursue State and federal designations for wild and scenic rivers.

3. Community Facilities & Services (CFS)



Photo by Michael Rivera

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: Lack of rural healthcare and facilities, closures of existing facilities.

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

CFS-5: Outdated water and sewer infrastructure in many parts of the Region which cannot be repaired or updated due to the lack of funds.

CFS-6: Limited resources for water quantity and quality planning

Opportunities

CFS-7: Public/private partnerships could be developed to provide comprehensive regional broadband coverage that is consistent, reliable, and equitable.

CFS-8: Strategies should be developed to locate a regional trauma center near a population center such as Douglas.

CFS-9: Regional services need to be tied to appropriate land uses to create a network of services and accessibility.

CFS-10: Take advantage of the Community Health Program through EMS on a regional basis.

4. Housing (H)



Photo by Ariel Godwin

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: Loss of historic landmark homes due to lack of investment in renovating landmark housing.

Needs

H-3: Lack of quality affordable housing choices for all income levels.

H-4: Lack of enforcement and demolition programs for blighted areas to help encourage investment and safe neighborhoods.

H-5: Lack of balance between housing centers and essential employment/commercial centers which prevents easy access.

H-6: Too many dilapidated and older mobile homes resulting in decreased tax income for communities and ability to fund improvements. The needs are demonstrated in Appendix C. iii, Housing.

Priority Opportunities

H-8: 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-7: Regional public and public/private agreements and funding sources to address specific housing challenges.

H-9: Public/private sponsored educational workshops, seminars, and other programs including a revolving loan program for potential homeowners that will help improve homeownership rates in the community.

H-10: Develop and maintain a current housing inventory to promote housing within the Region.

H-11: Develop a demolition program to remove condemned houses.

H-12: Update, maintain and enforce zoning regulations to promote quality housing.

H-13: Develop after-school programs or afternoon programs within housing subdivisions/developments/complexes.

H-14: Pursue grants to fund senior living opportunities.

H-15: Increase the leverage of Habitat for Humanity.

H-16: Low land cost in Southern Georgia has the potential to keep housing construction cost lower.

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



Photo by Ariel Godwin

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 has 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: Lack of sufficient protection for environmentally sensitive lands.

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

LUT-4: Lack of cooperation of rail companies with communities, resulting in geographically divided communities and difficulties in communication and integrated planning.

LUT-5: Railroad overpasses increase traffic safety, but negatively impact local economies and small businesses by detouring traffic around the companies, also resulting in divided neighborhoods.

LUT-6: Lack of adequate and consistent land use regulations throughout the Region.

LUT-7: Much of the Region's aging transportation infrastructure (especially bridges) needs considerable improvements and updates, but funds are not available to do so adequately.

LUT-8: Many of the Region's communities lack the funds to implement sustainable land use.

LUT-9: The Region lacks availability and connectivity of public transportation between municipalities and to various destinations.

Priority Opportunities

LUT-9: Develop a regional public transportation plan including incentives for private investment to increase public transportation.

LUT-10: 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.

Opportunities

LUT-11: Encourage and support agricultural industry within the Region to maintain and increase economic health.

LUT-12: Preserve and enhance the strong railroad network and good airports with complementary land uses to encourage growth and connectivity.

LUT-13: Coordinate regional infill planning efforts.

LUT-14: Invest in a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan.

LUT-15: Develop consistent and adequate land development regulations encouraging urban development versus greenfield development throughout the Region.

LUT-16: Develop a right-of-way plan to improve future road construction planning.

LUT-17: Continue the regional transportation priorities list for projects in the Region.

LUT-18: Utilize advertisement by private businesses to fund public transportation.

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 and this element in the Regional Plan hope to encourage and implement more such inter-local agreements and regional partnerships for the implementation of concepts, ideas, and projects.

Priority Needs

IC-1: 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: Inconsistency of land development/zoning regulations within the Region.

IC-4: Insufficient regional tourism efforts, spot 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-6: Provide regional intergovernmental leadership training to provide a consistent knowledge base and forge connections.

IC-7: Take advantage of the resources available through the Regional Commission for joint regional projects.

Opportunities

IC-8: Develop consistent land development/zoning regulations within the Region.

IC-9: Increase regional and multi-jurisdictional cooperation especially for economic development.

IC-10: Develop a best practices workshop series.

IC-11: Ensure involvement of the medical and educational community in planning and land use.

IC-12: Break down “silos” to work with non-traditional government agencies and areas.

IC-13: Encourage mutual aid agreements for Law Enforcement and Emergency Services.

IC-14: Encourage collaboration for communities in the I-75 corridor.

7. Education (EDU)



Photo by Michael Rivera

Education planning is of importance for workforce development and job creation and is a crucial foundation of strong growth in the social-spatial development of the Region. To achieve sustained economic development, the importance of education needs to be foremost in developing young, intellectual minds. This Regional Plan as a whole intends to articulate a vision of equity, active use, and collaborative leadership to make everywhere, all-the-time learning possible including increased communication between agencies, improved accessibility to educational venues, including broadband technologies.

Needs

EDU-1: Increase graduation rates in high schools by addressing negative influences such as teen pregnancies and lack of mentors and male role models within the school system.

EDU-2: Insufficient opportunities for technical education and research in the Region overall.

EDU-3: Insufficient coordination between the education sector and other local governments and agencies.

EDU-4: Retaining students after graduation due to lack of job opportunities.

EDU-5: Inadequate literacy rate throughout the Region.

EDU-6: Inadequate Special Needs education opportunities for children.

EDU-7: Insufficient education about drug use within the school system.

EDU-8: Lack of parent involvement in education.

EDU-9: Lack of funding for supplies for all grade levels; teachers are paying for supplies.

Priority Opportunities

EDU-10: Increase accessibility to schools.

EDU-11: More coordination with businesses and industries to establish workforce training programs.

Opportunities

EDU-12: Market the quality of education system in the Region to attract new residents and businesses.

EDU-13: Support and enhance the recreation opportunities in the School System and continue to develop after-school coordinated programs.

EDU-14: Promote the Technical College System and continue to integrate technical training into the high schools.

EDU-15: Encourage degree programs in Sustainability and Wireless/Broadband Engineering.

EDU-16: Encourage and support South Georgia Consortium for Technical Education and Research.

EDU-17: Regional “Partners in Education” programs where businesses/religious institutions can “adopt” schools to help meet needs.

EDU-18: Regional incentive program for partners in education participants (i.e., property tax rebates, credits, deductions, etc.).

EDU-19: Region-wide “soft skills” training in high schools.

EDU-20: Regional “adopt-a-grandparent” program to assist with parent involvement and mentor programs.

EDU-21: Regional water quality and monitoring education programs and tours of wastewater treatment plants.

EDU-22: Regional outdoor education, wildlife, botany and geology programs.

EDU-23: Attraction of the senior population may enhance the region’s economic base to provide an experience and knowledge base for the labor market and the education system.

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, 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 of seniors.

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 in the bathrooms, that will allow them to live longer and more independently in the community.

SA-5: Some area hospitals have high readmission rates. Many, if not most, of these readmissions, are seniors due to inadequate access to health care from home including dental and vision care as well as treatment for additional needs.

SA-6: Lack of technical computer training programs geared to the senior citizen.

SA-7: Lack of continuing education programs for the senior population.

SA-8: Lack of senior mobility options specifically transportation including access to mobile libraries.

Priority Opportunities

SA-10: Increased regional coordination with public, private, and non-profit agencies; health transportation providers could provide greater access to services.

Opportunities

SA-11: Encourage additional funding streams through the development of private pay options.

SA-12: Expansion of evidence-based programs may help seniors to live more healthy and independent lives in the community.

SA-13: Regional expansion of "meals on wheels" program with advocacy efforts.

SA-14: Regional activities programs geared towards senior citizens including the development of specific programs and plans.

SA-15: Assistive technologies for healthcare, shopping, and recreation.

SA-16: Housing voucher availability for South Georgia.

SA-17: Encouragement of regional senior-friendly housing construction would provide and promote lifelong/livable communities.

SA-18: Ensure local law enforcement to take advantage of ACT (At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics) training and local banks and healthcare professionals to 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 annual CWP update or 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 annually 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 Term Work Programs.
8. Annually update the local Community Work Program in coordination with SGRC to assess progress in implementing the local comprehensive plans.
9. Active participation in Best Practices Workshops and other training sessions offered by the SGRC, and develop skills to participate in the census.
10. Participate and submit in annual surveys administered by DCA.
11. Maintain QLG by submitting all required reports, certifications, and other updates as needed by DCA.

Excellence Standards

The following Excellent Standards were chosen as part of the regional planning process as favorite 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.
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.

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 Department of Economic Development Tourism Resource Team Program.
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 on stream pollution through drains.

3. Community Facilities and Services Standards of Excellence

1. Provide broadband for 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.

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.

5. Land Use and Transportation Standards of Excellence

Land use

1. Develop an Urban Redevelopment Plan and allow for mixed-use development in your 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 and storm water management design.
6. Provide incentives for developments to pursue “green” site planning or LEED certification.
7. Obtain Plan First or Tree City or Water First or Beautiful City or similar designation.

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.

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 meetings.

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.
6. Demonstrate active coordination via 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. 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.
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 ACT (At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics) training and encourages local banks and healthcare professionals to become aware of abuse, exploitation, and neglect of senior citizens.

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 uncertified elected City and County Officials must obtain minimum certification within three years of adoption of Regional Plan by Regional Commission.	2. All-County and City Clerks obtain certification through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or equivalent Certification Program.	3. All Planning Commissioners attend planning commission training within one year of appointment.	4. Update the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) as required by law with all service agreements in place and on file for public review.	5. Update and adopt the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan	6. Upgrade all electronic communication capabilities for effective electronic communication between all local governments and furnish appropriate training in the use.	7. Develop, update, maintain and implement zoning standards or land development regulations.	8. Develop, update, maintain and implement at a minimum the mandatory building codes and fire codes including applicable administrative procedures.	9. Put a program in place to require that all building inspections be done by a Building Inspector, who, at a minimum, has been certified through the Building Official's Association of Georgia.	10. Participate in Joint Comprehensive Planning including the development of Short-Term Work	11. Annually perform an internal update the local Short Term Work Programs in coordination with SGRC.	12. Active participation in Best Practices Workshops, joint comprehensive planning meetings including STWP updates, training sessions offered by the SGRC.	Achieved Minimum Standards
Atkinson County	June 2016	IP	IP	na	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pearson		IP	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Willacoochee		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bacon County	June 2016	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	IP	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Alma		IP	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ben Hill County	Nov. 2017	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Fitzgerald		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Berrien County	Sept. 2017	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Alapaha		IP	N	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Enigma		IP	Y	na	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Nashville		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ray City		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Brantley County	Feb. 2018	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hoboken		Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Nahunta		Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Brooks County	Oct. 2017	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Barwick		Y	IP	na	Y	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Morven		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pavo		IP	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Quitman		IP	N	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Charlton County	Nov. 2016	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Folkston		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Homeland		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Clinch County	Nov. 2016	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Argyle		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
DuPont		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Fargo		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Homerville		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Government	Date of most recent assessment	1. All uncertified elected City and County Officials must obtain minimum certification within three years of adoption of Regional Plan by Regional Commission	2. All-County and City Clerks obtain certification through UGA Carl Vinson Institute or equivalent Certification Program.	3. All Planning Commissioners attend planning commission training within one year of appointment.	4. Update the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) as required by law with all service agreements in place and on file for public review.	5. Update and adopt the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan	6. Upgrade all electronic communication capabilities for effective electronic communication between all local governments and furnish appropriate training in the use.	7. Develop, update, maintain and implement zoning standards or land development regulations.	8. Develop, update, maintain and implement at a minimum the mandatory building codes and fire codes including applicable administrative procedures.	9. Put a program in place to require that all building inspections be done by a Building Inspector, who, at a minimum, has been certified through the Building Official's Association of Georgia.	10. Participate in Joint Comprehensive Planning including the development of Short-Term Work	11. Annually perform an internal update the local Short Term Work Programs in coordination with SGRC.	12. Active participation in Best Practices Workshops, joint comprehensive planning meetings including STWP updates, training sessions offered by the SGRC.	Achieved Minimum Standards
Coffee County	July 2016	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ambrose		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Broxton		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Douglas		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Nicholls		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cook County	Aug. 2016	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Adel		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cecil		Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lenox		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sparks	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Echols County	Sept. 2017	IP	IP	na	Y	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Irwin County		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ocilla	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lanier County	Feb. 2018	Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lakeland		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lowndes County	Oct. 2017	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Dasher		Y	Y	na	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Hahira		Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Lake Park		Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Remerton		Y	IP	na	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Valdosta	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	
Pierce County	Feb. 2017	Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Blackshear		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Patterson		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Offerman		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tift County	Oct. 2016	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Omega		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tifton		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ty Ty		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Turner County	Nov. 2017	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ashburn		IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Rebecca		IP	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sycamore		Y	Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ware County	Mar. 2017	IP	N	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Waycross		Y	Y	IP	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

(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 FY2018)

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT											
Collaborate on the creation of Digital Economy Incubators – request by regional leaders	P&C	Staff Time \$35,000	DCA, Local Governments	ED: I-1, I-5, I-6, O1-5, O-6				x			Discontinued (moved to Policies section)
Transportation Planning to Support Economic Development: An Exploratory Study of Competitive Industry Clusters and Transportation	P&C	Staff Time \$150,000	DCA, MPO, Local Governments	ED: I-1, I-5, I-6, O1-5, O-6		x					Discontinued due to lack of funds
Develop a Moody Air Force Base Cooperation plan on encroachment – request by regional leaders	P&C	Staff Time \$20,000	DCA, Local Governments , EDA, MPO	ED: I-1, O-1, O-4, O-5 NC: O-3, O-4, I-3, I-5; IC: I-3 E: O-1, O-2, O-3		x	x				Completed
GIS Inventory of infrastructure in the Region such as water, sewer, natural gas, and broadband – request by regional leaders	P&C	Staff Time \$30,000	DCA, EDA	I-3, I-5	x	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing as funds become available
Provide Grants Writing Assistance to local Government for grants that promote economic development	P&C R	Staff Time \$5,000 each	DCA, Local Governments , EDA	ED: I-5, I-6 LU: O-1, O-7	x	x	x	x	x	x	Completed
Review/Write Economic Development Elements for local government comprehensive plan updates: Brooks, Bacon and Pierce Counties and their Cities	P&C R	Staff Time \$5,000/element	DCA/ Local Governments	ED: I-5 LU: O-1 E: I-1	x	x					Completed

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Develop a region-wide attractions map (bicycle route map). Each year complete a different segment of the Region	P&C	Staff Time \$20,000	DCA, MPO	ED: I-1, I-5, I-6, O1-5, O-6		x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
2. NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES											
Update the Regional Important Resource Plan incl. marketing plan	P&C	\$65,000 Staff Time	DCA, Local Governments	NC: I-1, I-2, O-1, O-3, O-4			x	x			Completed
Assist Local Governments with obtaining information on Federal and State Tax Credits, Incentives & Innovative Financing for historic preservation projects	P&C R	\$2,000 each staff time	DCA, Local Governments	NC: I-5, O-5	x	x	x	x	x	x	Completed
Develop a Storm water Ordinance Template for use by local governments – request by regional leaders	P&C	\$10,000	DCA, MPO, Local Governments	NC: I-1, I-2, O-1, O-3, O-4			x	x			Completed
3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES											
Create a regional storm water master plan that addresses water quantity and quality and floodplain management – request by regional leaders	P&C	\$45,000	DCA, Local Governments				x	x			Discontinued due to lack of funding and staff
Administer grants for Local Communities on request, specifically CDBG grants, and encourage infrastructure projects for water, sewer, natural gas and broadband	P&C R	\$5,000 ea. Staff Time	DCA, EDA, Local Governments		x	x	x	x	x	x	Completed

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Develop a Post-Disaster Response Plan for Business Communities – request by regional leaders	P&C R	\$50,000	DCA, Local Governments , FEMA					x	x		Ongoing
Review/Write Community Work Programs for Local Governments as part of their Comprehensive Plan Updates: Brooks, Bacon and Pierce Counties and their cities	P&C R	\$7,500 each	DCA, Local Governments		x	x					Completed
Assist Local communities with Hazard Mitigation Plans	P&C R	staff time	DCA, Local governments		x	x					Completed
4. HOUSING											
Develop a model demolition template to remove condemned houses to improve local housing stock. – request by regional leaders	P&C	Staff Time \$20,000	DCA, Local Governments	H: I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4, O-3				x	x		Ongoing
Develop a model ordinance to assist homeowners in the maintenance and upkeep of homes and properties to avoid/minimize blight. – request by regional leaders	P&C	Staff time \$2,500	DCA, Local Governments	H: I-4, I-5, O-5		x	x				Ongoing
Develop a housing compatibility study for areas around business nodes and corridors – request by regional leaders	P&C	\$35,000	DCA, Local Governments	I-3, I-4, I-5				x			Ongoing
Review Local Government Housing Elements for local Comprehensive Plan Updates and provide technical assistance in the preparation as requested City of Valdosta	P&C R	\$5,000 each	DCA, Local Governments	I-3, I-4, I-5	x						Completed

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
5a. TRANSPORTATION											
Review/Write Transportation Elements for local comprehensive plan updates incl. ROW plans: Lowndes County and its Cities	P&C R	\$35,000 each	DCA, Local Governments , GDOT	T: I-4, O-1, O-4, O-6	x						Completed
Provide technical assistance with airport planning and marketing: Cook, Charlton	P&C	Staff Time \$15,000	DCA, Local Governments , GDOT, FAA	T: O-2 ED: O-4 LU: O-2		x					Completed
Develop 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.) – requested by regional leaders	P&C R	Staff Time \$25,000	DCA, Local Governments , GDOT, EDA	LU: I-2, O-5, O-6		x					Postponed due to lack of funding
Develop a study to determine the feasibility and strategies of enhancing railroad and airport facilities through complementary surrounding land uses. – requested by regional leaders	P&C R	Staff Time \$40,000	DCA, Local Governments , GDOT, EDA	LU: O-2			x				Ongoing
5b. LAND USE											
Develop and Implement a GIS Technical Assistance and Education Program for local governments – request by regional leaders	P&C	\$100,000 (total)	DCA, Local Governments	LU: I-4, O-3, CFS: O-2 ED: I-1	x	x					Completed

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Review/Write Land Use Elements for local comprehensive plan updates as requested: Brooks, Pierce, and Bacon Counties and their cities	P&C R	\$7,500 each	DCA, Local Governments	LU: O-4, I-5, I-3	x	x					Completed
Facilitate visioning workshops throughout the Region to develop regional & local identities – request by regional leaders	P&C R	\$5,000 each	DCA, Local Governments	I-1, O-1, O-3, IC: O-1	x	x	x	x	x	x	Completed
Develop a GIS application for Land Use to site different characteristics such as conservation, affordable housing, lots suitable for industrial development, etc. – request by regional leaders	P&C R	\$35,000	DCA, Local Governments	LU: I-4, O-3, CFS: O-2 ED: I-1	x			x			Ongoing
Provide Training workshops on planning and zoning related topics including building inspection/construction – requested by regional leaders	P&C	Staff Time \$5,000 each	DCA, Local Governments	LU: O-6		x		x		x	Completed
6. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION											
Develop/Review Comprehensive Plan and Short Term Work Programs for local Governments as required by 110-12-1-.01 or requested by Local Governments: Brooks, Pierce and Brantley	P&C R	staff time	DCA	IC: I-1, O-1, O-3	x	x					Completed

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Foster coordination with the School Boards of the Region, specifically concerning school siting, closings, conversions, and transportation needs	P&C	Staff Time \$10,000	DCA, Local Governments	IC: I-2, O-5 CFS: O-2	x	x	x	x	x	x	Completed
Maintain the Regional Information Sharing Center and enhance function as a regional clearinghouse for networking, information sharing, and project collaboration.	P&C	\$5,000	DCA, Local Governments	IC: I-1, O-4	x	x	x	x	x	x	Completed
Assist as requested with the Service Delivery Strategies – requested by regional leaders: Brooks, Pierce and Bacon County and their cities	R	Staff Time	DCA, Local Governments	IC: I-1, O-1, O-3	x	x	x	x	x	x	Completed
7. EDUCATION											
Provide one workshop a quarter to local School Boards and other community leaders on Best Management Practices including school siting, Planning & Zoning, Land Use/Transportation – requested by regional leaders	P&C	\$10,000	DCA, Local Governments	IC: O-4 E: I-2; O-2	x	x	x	x	x	x	Ongoing
Establish a Clearinghouse for exchange and dissemination of information to enhance cooperation and coordination within the Region. – requested by regional leaders.	P&C	5,000	DCA, Local Governments	IC: O-1 E: I-2; O-2			x				Completed

ACTIVITY	P&C or R	EST. ANNUAL COST	FUNDING SOURCES	NEED/ OPP. ADDRESSED	TIMEFRAME						STATUS
					2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
8. SENIOR SERVICES / AGING											
Develop and implement a sustainability initiative.	P&C	staff time	DHS, SGRC	I1 & O1	x	x	x				Completed
Develop a referral and outreach and mechanism with DFCS Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Navigator(s) in the PSA.	P&C	Staff time	DHS, SGRC	I2 & O2			x	x	x		Ongoing
Increase units of home modification (wheelchair ramps) through partnerships with the private sector	P&C	Staff time	DHS, SGRC	I3 & O3			x	x	x	x	Ongoing
Partner with area hospitals with high readmission rates to provide evidence based care transition programs	P&C	Staff time	DHS, SGRC	I4 & O4		x	x	x			Discontinued (moved to Policies section)

Regional Work Program 2018 – 2022

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 infrastructure in the region, including but not limited to broadband, water, sewer, and natural gas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ Utility companies ▪ Broadband providers ▪ GTA 	Yr. 1-5 \$30,000		X
		Develop local model ordinances or policies to encourage and facilitate the installation of broadband infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments 	Yr. 1-3 \$30,000		
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ EDA 	Yr. 3 \$50,000		

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
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	Create a GIS inventory of boat ramps, landings, public beaches, and other public water access points.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DNR ▪ Nonprofit organizations 	Yr. 1-5 \$20,000		
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 model ordinances that encourage private investment in historic properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$30,000		
		Develop an electronic Historic Resources Guide for the Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DNR ▪ GSA/NRHP 	Yr. 1-5 \$30,000		
N/C-7: 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	Develop an electronic Eco-tourism Guide for the Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DNR ▪ Nonprofit organizations 	Yr. 1-5 \$30,000		
		Develop a region-wide attractions map (bicycle route map). Each year complete a different segment of the Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VLMPO ▪ GDOT 	Yr. 1-5 \$20,000		X

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
N/C-8: 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$2,000/yr	Yr. 6-10 \$2,000/yr	
H-1: More housing in downtown areas is needed.	Increase the number of housing units in downtown areas	Develop a model ordinance for downtown housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local governments DCA 	Yr. 2-3 \$20,000		
		Develop a priority list of downtowns to be targeted for housing compatibility studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCA Local Governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$35,000		
H-2: 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	Develop a priority list of historic landmarks to be targeted for funding identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$10,000		

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
H-8: 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 model ordinance to assist homeowners in the maintenance and upkeep of homes and properties to avoid/ minimize blight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 4 \$2,500		
		Develop a model demolition template to remove condemned houses in order to improve local housing stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 3 \$20,000		
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 1-3 \$35,000		

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
LUT-9: Develop a regional public transportation plan including incentives for private investment to increase public transportation.	Increase private investment in public transportation	Develop a regional public transportation plan including incentives for private investment to increase public transportation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GDOT ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 2-3 \$30,000		
LUT-10: Location and proximity of major ports (Savannah, Brunswick, and Jacksonville), interstates (I-75 and I-10), and federal highways (US-82, US-84, and US-1) are major opportunities to integrate land use planning, transportation, and economic growth.	Produce studies and plans that integrate land use, transportation, and economic growth	Perform a study to determine feasibility and strategies of enhancing railroad and airport facilities through complementary surrounding land uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ GDOT ▪ EDA 	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	Hold quarterly meetings of City and County Managers and Clerks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$20,000	Yr. 6-10 \$20,000	
		Develop a Post-Disaster Response Plan for Business Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Governments ▪ GEMA ▪ FEMA ▪ Businesses 	Yr. 1-2 \$50,000		

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
IC-6: Provide regional intergovernmental leadership training to provide a consistent knowledge base and forge connections.	Initiate intergovernmental training events for local leaders	Provide at least 1 training workshop each year for local leaders on planning, zoning, and intergovernmental coordination. Target attendance: 10 local leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Governments ▪ Carl Vinson Institute ▪ DCA 	Yr. 1-5 \$20,000	Yr. 6-10 \$20,000	
IC-7: Local governments can take advantage of the resources available through the Regional Commission for joint regional projects.	Provide resources to local governments for joint regional projects	Conduct plan implementation assistance meetings with each local government in the region no less than once every thirty months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$20,000	Yr. 6-10 \$20,000	
EDU-10: 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GDOT ▪ Local schools ▪ Local governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$15,000		
	Increase the number of students who walk or bike to school	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ Local BOEs ▪ GDOT 	Yr. 1-5 \$10,000		X
EDU-11: More coordination with businesses and industries to establish workforce training programs.	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workforce Development Board ▪ Private sector 	Yr. 1-5 \$10,000	Yr. 6-10 \$10,000	X

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
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	Update and distribute regional Senior Walking Route Maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GDOT 	Yr. 1 \$6,000		
	Increase the number of transportation options for seniors	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.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ GDOT 	Yr. 2-3 \$25,000		
SA-10: Health transportation providers could provide greater access to services.	Increase utilization of health transportation providers	Develop a regional public transportation plan including incentives for private investment to increase public transportation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GDOT ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 2-3 \$30,000		

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 listening sessions in which stakeholder 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thriving economically with a strong agricultural base• Lots of water, aquifer• Access to ports, rail• Diverse industry base• Climate	Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs to be a region that is a livable/lifelong community – senior-friendly (senior housing, access to services, etc.)• Have an adequate and qualified workforce• More people to help attract large manufacturing• State support through various programs• Agri-tourism• Workforce training• Ag-based industry – room for growth• Available land/buildings in cities• Economically prosperous• The Region should be an attractive area for new businesses to locate to in five years
Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No jobs after college• Workforce supply• Job availability• Job opportunities• Need more training for next-generation tools• Trained workforce	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiencing population growth• Broadband accessibility• Workforce

2. Natural & Cultural Resources

Strengths

- 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
- Rivers

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
- Future development while preserving community identity
- Expanded outdoor recreation (room for growth)
- Libraries & computer accessibility

Weaknesses

- Nature & culture aren't always a priority for some
- Lack of cleanups
- Lack of access to water (boat ramps, landings)

Threats

- Protection of sensitive areas
- Public education
- Environmentalists wanting to make areas off-limits
- Flooding of streets in low-income areas
- Limited resources
- Many impaired water bodies
- No preservation of historic landmarks and downtown areas
- Limited resources, funding sources, etc.

3. Community Facilities & Services

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community support• Lots of churches (volunteer force programs)	Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services for the aging population• Equalize geographic access to active recreation• Support & encourage preservation of historical land uses in rural areas• SGRL P3 guidance report• Public/private partnerships• Better coordination with faith-based organizations/churches to assist in implementing local priorities/goals• Community health by EMS in coordination with physicians
Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need more youth activities• Lack of private/philanthropic investment in communities• Lack of youth-focused facilities• Lack of organized youth activities• Other man's grass always greener• Downtown computer lab & library needed for students and seniors	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding to maintain infrastructure• Aging infrastructure, no funding to correct problems• Lack of recreational opportunities & funding for them• Rural healthcare – lack of facilities, closures

4. Housing

Strengths

- Habitat for Humanity
- Many builders
- More downtown housing
- Large-scale forestry, less expensive wood products
- Low-cost land

Opportunities

- Grants for senior living
- Housing rehabilitation
- Ministries to benefit marginalized seniors
- Support rural communities in housing & economic development
- An area with safe, affordable, accessible housing for all

Weaknesses

- Need jobs more than new houses
- Mobile homes
- Need more affordable housing
- No local incentives for reinvestment; need model ordinances
- 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

Threats

- Loss of landmarks
- “Not In My Back Yard” attitudes
- Lack of reinvestment in housing

5. Land Use & Transportation

Strengths

- Strong DOT support
- A great MPO in the Region
- Strong support for local government
- Location close to ports, I-75, I-10, US-82

Opportunities

- Increased transportation funding
- T-SPLOST/TIA
- A transportation hub for developed highways, sea, and rail
- Support, educate, and incentivize private investment in transportation
- Region bike/pedestrian plan investment
- Have a serious discussion about transportation
- Advertisement by businesses to fund transportation
- An area with accessible services, public transit, options for all residents
- Public transit – more is an asset
- Develop better zoning regulations

Weaknesses

- Funds for land use
- Transportation for student safety
- Need new land development regulations that encourage urban development, not greenfield development
- Transportation for students
- Not enough funding
- Lack of political will for public transit
- Communities still lacking zoning regulations

Threats

- 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
- Lack of protection for agriculture/forestry land and wetlands
- Many dirt roads
- Lack of environmental protection

6. Intergovernmental Coordination

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority• Emergency management• Mutual aid agreements• Strong Regional Commission	Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not enough County/City coordination of services• Not enough collaboration between City and County• Long travel distances• City & County not working together, no input	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued good ole' boy elections• Loss of funding• County "silos"

7. Education

Strengths

- Students do water quality monitoring
- Numerous colleges, tech colleges, trade programs
- Wiregrass and other colleges/universities
- VSU

Opportunities

- Programs for youth in government
- Workforce development
- Better bridge programs (tech to university)
- Partners in education
- Businesses/churches “adopt” schools to help meet needs
- Outdoor education, wildlife, botany, geology
- Tour wastewater treatment plants
- Technical training in high schools
- Adopt-a-grandparent
- Education volunteering
- Free GED classes
- After-school coordinated programs (mentors, homework, snacks)
- Continue to develop online education
- Youth political experience
- Transportation needed to get to locations
- CTAE
- More educational facilities
- More communication with businesses & industries

Weaknesses

- 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
- Kids having kids
- Workforce not available
- Keeping the students here (no job opportunities)
- Literacy rates
- Government regulation
- Paperwork
- Teachers losing

8. Senior Services & Aging

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meals on Wheels• Activities• Good programs are in place	Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More funded projects for the elderly• Coordination of health & transportation providers
Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited transportation for area destinations, e.g., libraries• Medication funding• Freeze on LTC beds• Education for seniors• Senior understanding of younger generations	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decreasing finances for activities• Large aging population

Intergovernmental Coordination

Strengths

VLDA
I 75 corridor

Envision
Management
2050
Central AD
Commission

Strong
Regional
Commission

RDC/
coordination

Opportunities

City Council
Commission
Leadership
Partnership

Regional
Development
Auth.

- include also in
list of inter-
municipal gov't
agencies
(see map of
regional gov't)

- establishment
of regional
cooperation
to attract more
business and
industry.

Weaknesses

Diff. ↓ ↓

Not enough
County-city
coordination at service
level - e.g. County SP19

Large area
Distance to
travel

Not enough
collaboration
between
city-county

No signs of
working together
city-county

Threats

Continued
Gov. & Rep.
elections

Same ↓

loss of funding

county
"SILOS"

Other / Misfit

Strength

Opportunities

Weaknesses

Threats

Knowledge Base
of areas
to be analyzed
boards
boards

Education

Strengths

Sketch do water from 1 to 100

WIREGRASS and other colleges having children

Nearby Coll: Tech Coll

USD + Wiregrass

Several Colleges

Opportunities

Program to fight in Government

Program cost

Increase Community Involvement

* Youth Commission report to politics

Economic Dev. Programs in schools

* A region that has more educational facilities (universities)

add telecommunications

CTAE

MORE COMMUNICATION w/ BUS. + INTD

Adapt A grandparent Education Volunteer

Technical Training in High School

Free GED class

After school coordinated program (mentors, homework clubs)

Continue to Develop 80-ling education

Partners in Education

Businesses plan to adopt schools

Out door education will be better

BOE are the BOE really to increase Community Involvement

Partners in Education

Businesses plan to adopt schools

Weaknesses

Special needs for children

Ed. system fully funded provide special services for all grade levels so teachers do not have to pay for it

More education about drug use

Measures needed within the schools Model Model

Threats

* early education on opportunities what's possible (have based)

* strong partnership BOE + Cities + Counties

* Promote memory clinics

* community medicine paramedics

Funding -

Keeping the students this opportunity

LITERACY RATES

Govt Regulation

Land Use and Transportation

Strengths

Strong DOT support

A great MPO in the region

Strong from local Govt.

LOCATION TO PORTS
I 75, I 10 + US 82

Transportation (between) Metropolitan

Opportunities

Increased Transportation Funding

promote regional benefits for all local markets

promote and expedite road construction

promote access to land use

Public Transportation more to assist

Develop better zoning Regs

Capitalize on land parcels and corridors and corridors (low price compared to other cities)

region like/pc plan investment

have a serious dialog about transportation

advisement by businesses to funding support

Weaknesses

Fast for land use

need new laws or regulations and encourage more investment and growth development

Transportation into strong cities for services, then off services to other cities

Funding Dwindles

Not enough funding

lack of political will for public support

communities still lacking zoning Regs.

Threats

Region should have reliable and infrastructure connecting counties to cities to one another

Better transportation routes, more of laws to help with economic growth

increase projects

US 1 or 32 coming back to I 75 to reduced to help access to jobs

increase tax

Rail cooperation with competitors

Railroad Companies threats to Bio Dev assets but help with safety

lack of political will for public support

RP companies or threat to local business

Prohibition of Low income

MANY DIRT Roads

Housing

Strengths

Abilities
↓

many builders

Downtown housing
more of it

to family
less expensive
sound products

low land
cost

and
upside

Opportunities

Safe
both urban + rural

Re-hab
"mistake to benefit"
serious on
marginalized

Support local
Real estate
Communities in
Housing and financial

An area
with safe
affordable,
accessible
housing for all

Goals for
Sebring
(1)

access to all services

Weaknesses

Need jobs
more than
new houses

Mobile
homes

Housing
Need non-subsidized
housing

no local incentives
for investment and
local build solutions

Need grants
for elderly
housing

of housing opportunities

Land with local
strategies
Sustainable to
keep local
property up

Investment
on housing
Complete and
open. End paper
in the house

Threats

Loss of land
in Sebring

More
in Sebring
2010

More
Not in my
home yard

Lack of resources
in housing

Senior Services + Aging

Strengths

- meals
- activities

ment on wheels

Good programs in place

Opportunities

More targeted projects for the elderly

Coordination of health care services

Exp of road funding
Self housing
advertise + educate what's available

Weaknesses

- Transportation
- medication funding

freeze on LTC Reals

Subsidized car services

limited Transportation services
take advantage of by families

Mobile library
Computer knowledge
don't know the service
low income families

Screening
understand of younger generations

Threats

- Funding for Activities

↓ Funding

- Large aging population
- budget for program

Expense

Natural & Cultural Resources

Strengths

Pack State Science Theme
Wildlife, Geology, Ordovician
Fossil, Air, Ocean
Agriculture

Okefenokee
Swamp,
rivers,
Historic
downtowns

Reed Bigham

Ag Endowments
Economic
Driver

Echo
Tourism
Swamp Park
Swamp

Opportunities

Focus on
Echo
Tourism

Marketing program
Stewardship program
+ incentives
educate
promote

A good steward of
its abundant natural
resources

Red
Liberty + Captain
Missy
small part of
LA visit area

expanded
out door
recreation
Crown for
growth
trail, etc

Education
& Stream +
Water quality
clean-up

State + Fed
grants

Water Trail

Agriculture

Historic
development
infrastructure
identity of
community

Weaknesses

Need
Natural + cultural
not always
a priority
for some

Challenges

lack of
access to
water (boat
ramps, landings)

Strategies

Protection of
Sensitive areas
Public education
& Access

Environmentally
friendly to
market + areas
off limits

Stop waste, overfish
over
stock in low
salinity areas
such as Helling St
Wetlands, etc

Hot springs (water)
water quality
studies

Land
Resource
Water quality +
quantity

the
preservation
of historic
landmarks/
downtown
area

limited resources -
funding sources,
etc

Economic Development

STRENGTHS

OPPORTUNITIES

Jobs Water Rail, Ports, Workforce

Thriving economically with a strong agricultural base

Diverse Industry base

CLIMATE

Needs to be a report that is a revitalizing community - center broadly (Senior housing, more access to buses, etc.)

Have adequate and qualified workforce for industrial and service jobs

MAKING PLANS TO REDEVELOP AND TO UPGRADE AREAS
low education for worker
change structure

CONSOLE OF ASSOCIATING MID TO LARGE MFG. GROWING FROM 500-1000 JOBS
skilled wages

Financially programs

Expanding population growth

I would like to see our entire region have a boom in Economic Development. Increased jobs and higher wages for our citizens
Mentor Volunteer

South Dakota Region should be an attractive area for new businesses to locate in five years.
Promotional video campaign

Workforce Training

State of South Dakota

Ag Based Industry - room for growth

AVAILABLE LAND / BEDDINGS (Rural) in city

Weakness

No Jobs growth

Job's Ministry

Workforce supply

Need More Training for next generation
tools
slow

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Trained Workforce little

Volunteer
Mentor
increase skills
bring higher wages
program to expand
job seekers to region
incentives
PPP

WORKFORCE

Rural Care (Home services)
local private without services

BROADBAND ACCESSIBILITY

Community Facilities + Services

Strengths

Community Support

Lots of Churches (Volunteer Force Programs)

Opportunities

Services for aging service transportation

equitable geographic access to active recreation

State of 43 grants from Public Health Partner included

reducing grants
 reducing areas
 + early education
 + professional
 + health
 + health for

Support Encouraged between Preservation of Historical Landmarks in Rural Areas

opportunity
 - other...
 in...
 area...
 +...
 +...
 +...

Community Health by EMS (in coordination with Physicians)

Weaknesses

Good one youth activities

lack of youth focus facilities

young adults are...
 +...
 +...

lack of private...
 +...
 +...

Other...
 +...
 +...

Donation...
 +...
 +...

Threats

public...
 +...
 +...
 +...
 +...
 +...

Funding +...
 +...

aging...
 +...
 +...

Rural Healthcare
 lack of facilities
 closures

lack of...
 +...
 +...

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 Southern Georgia Region has made great strides since the last Regional Plan was developed. Job growth has been relatively robust, and income has grown above the State average in at least 50% of the counties. The high school and technical college system have also developed several partnerships and programs to assist students in developing job education and job skills which are helping to meet the needs of industry.

As the Region is moving away from an agricultural and manufacturing base to service industries, care has to be taken to ensure that 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.

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 overall meeting this objective of resource conservation and management to the maximum intent feasible. The many lakes, rivers and other natural resources are well recognized, and steps are being taken to protect those from development pressure, improve environmental quality and preserve and protect regional water resources. Of course, there are setbacks in river contamination through wastewater treatment plant spills, and the lack of available funding to implement programs makes progress a lot slower than often desired.

Regarding alternative energy technology, several communities in the Region are exploring especially solar in partnership with the solar industry. While this, of course, is a benefit to the solar

industry, it also helps to provide jobs in other alternative energy industries and decreases, if ever so slightly at this point, the Region's dependence on traditional fuel sources.

Lack of funding is also a significant hurdle for the preservation of many of the valuable historical resources in the Region from historical downtowns, to buildings and parks. Taking a regional approach to cultural and historical preservation may help to find and subsequently 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 pressures 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 humane-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.

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 in the 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 at times 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 has been named and is willing and able to assume the lead role in working with the communities to foster ever 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.

In both the data analysis and work sessions, it has been recognized that there is still a need for proper affordable quality housing in the Region that is not made up of mobile homes. While there are no severely cost-burdened counties in the Region, eight counties have a segment of the population that 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 housing of subpar and unsafe conditions. Funding is an issue as with most other needs to be addressed, but steps are taking 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.

The Region's communities, in general, are doing a great job in managing transportation needs within their boundaries and some regional connectivity projects are underway. While no significant needs with the roadways were identified in the analysis, during the work sessions, it was discussed that several of the bridges in the Region were in need of upgrades due to their age, but that the funding wasn't available for this task. Continued attention should be given to this issue/need to be addressed before it will become a safety issue.

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 due to its quality and the growth of cooperation between high schools and technical colleges to offer many excellent vocational programs. The graduation rate has been identified in the analysis and work sessions as a need to be addressed. The underlying causes vary from teen pregnancies, the need to earn an income, or lack of access to broadband at home, which would help with additional studies and homework. Individual communities have started mentor programs to increase the number of male role models for students and a regional approach to this issue might be of significant advantage. Lack of funding for any 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 positive 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.

Appendix C. Data and Maps

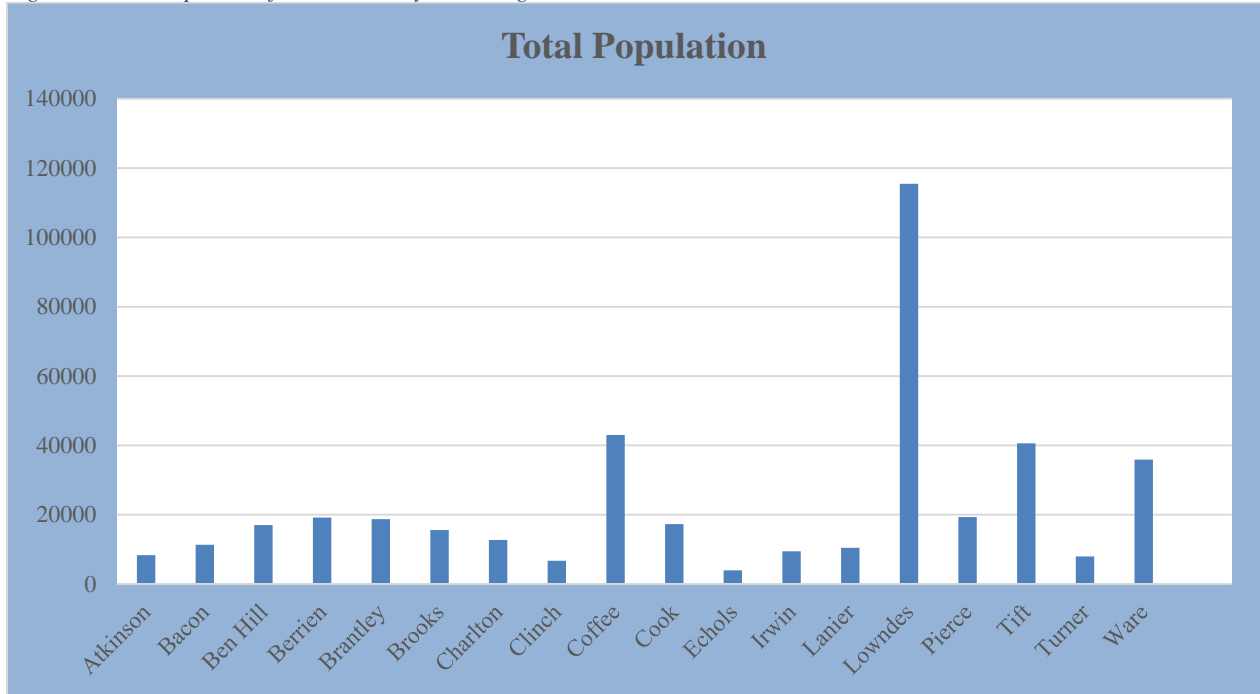
Regional Data Assessment

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 and easily understood format for consideration by the stakeholders involved in the subsequent development of the Regional Needs and Opportunities, Goals, Policies, and Activities.

I) Population

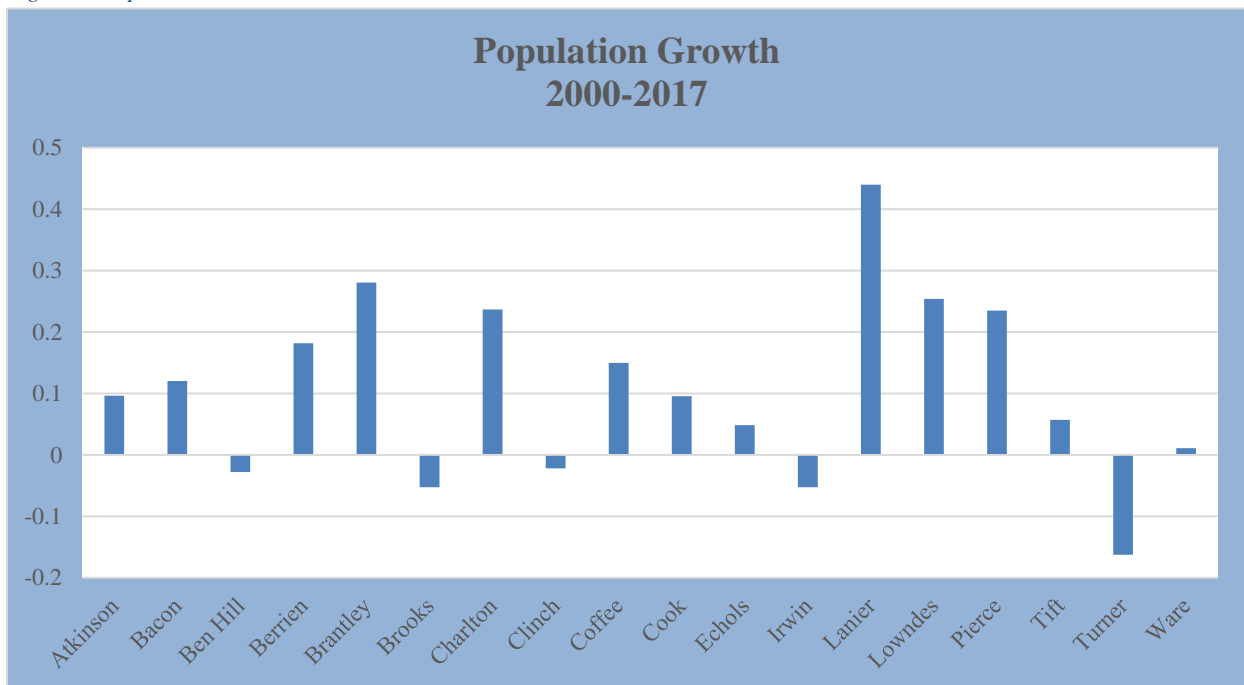
- The total population for the Southern Georgia Region increased from 364,925 in 2000 to 412,891 in 2017, a 13.1% population change. The State of Georgia's population grew by 27.4 percent during the same period.
- Growth centers within the Region account for much of the population increases. Lanier County had a 44% percent increase in population (2000 to 2017), the most substantial increase in the Region.
- Five of the eighteen counties in the Region experienced a loss in population between 2000 and 2017. Turner County suffered the highest loss (16.2%). The lack of job opportunities in these particular counties, especially for the population that is between 18 and 24 years of age, has forced this age group to move outside of these counties to work and live. Other counties with population loss from 2000 to 2017 were Ben Hill, Brooks, Clinch, and Irwin. The highest population growth, other than Lanier County (see above), occurred in Lowndes (25.4%), Pierce (23.5%), Brantley (28%), and Charlton (23.7%).

Figure 1. Total Population for each County in the Region



Source: 2017 Population Estimates. United States Census Bureau: https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml#

Figure 2. Population Growth



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Lowndes, Pierce, Bacon, Cook, and Brantley Counties have had the highest population growth. The most population loss has been in Turner and Charlton Counties. Overall, the regional population is quite steady.

Regional Population Ranking 2017

County	Rank in Region 2015	Year 2015 Population	Rank in Region 2017	Year 2017 Population	Rank in State 2014	Rank in State 2015	Rank in State 2017	% Growth 2000-2017
Atkinson	15	8,202	15	8,505	140	139	136	9.6%
Bacon	12	11,348	12	11,380	121	121	120	12.0%
Ben Hill	8	17,450	8	16,996	99	100	100	-2.8%
Berrien	6	18,573	6	19,186	91	93	92	18.2%
Brantley	7	18,436	7	18,731	95	94	96	28.0%
Brooks	10	15,236	10	15,747	107	107	107	-5.2%
Charlton	11	12,936	11	12,734	115	115	115	23.7%
Clinch	17	6,853	17	7,015	145	145	145	-2.2%
Coffee	2	42,901	2	43,178	46	47	47	15.0%
Cook	9	17,240	9	17,310	101	101	101	9.5%
Echols	18	4,004	18	4,072	153	153	153	4.8%
Irwin	14	8,999	14	9,013	130	132	130	-5.2%
Lanier	13	10,461	13	10,222	125	125	126	44.0%
Lowndes	1	114,691	1	115,489	20	21	22	25.4%
Pierce	5	19,071	5	19,307	92	91	90	23.5%
Tift	3	40,888	3	41,006	49	49	49	5.7%
Turner	16	7,979	16	8,113	142	142	141	-16.2%
Ware	4	35,364	4	35,871	51	52	53	1.1%

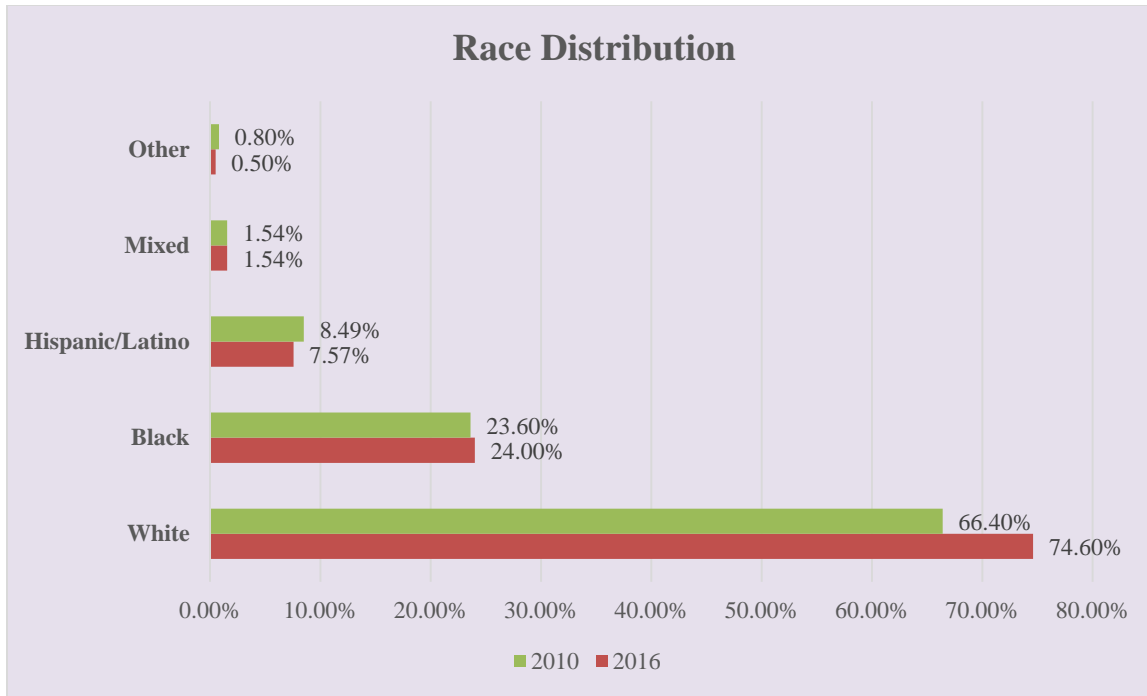
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age Distribution 2016 2016 ACS 5-year Estimates QT-P1														
County	Under 5	%	5-14	%	15-24	%	25-44	%	45-64	%	65-84	%	85 and over	%
Atkinson	628	8.6	1,281	31.0	1,053	12.7	2,264	27.3	2,064	24.9	874	10.6	66	0.5
Bacon	699	6.2	1,576	41.1	1,612	14.3	2,859	25.5	2,906	26.5	1,393	12.4	177	1.6
Ben Hill	1,369	7.8	2,492	14.1	2,262	12.9	4,186	24.0	4,580	26.2	2,221	12.7	379	2.2
Berrien	1,187	6.2	2,641	13.8	2,448	12.9	4,735	24.9	5,014	26.4	2,731	14.3	263	1.4
Brantley	1,219	6.6	2,842	15.1	2,387	13.0	4,336	23.5	5,154	27.9	2,302	12.5	265	1.4
Brooks	952	6.5	1,966	12.6	1,997	12.6	3,513	22.5	4,394	28.1	2,572	16.4	243	1.6
Charlton	662	6.1	1,464	11.1	1,621	12.2	4,182	21.9	3,534	26.9	1,473	11.2	205	1.6
Clinch	625	9.0	991	14.6	692	10.2	1,793	26.4	1,692	25.0	892	13.1	106	1.6
Coffee	2,991	6.8	6,042	14.0	6,709	15.6	11,534	26.8	10,631	24.7	4,675	10.9	501	1.2
Cook	1,173	6.9	2,614	15.3	2,087	12.2	4,393	25.8	4,325	25.4	2,202	12.1	239	1.4
Echols	185	4.6	695	17.2	603	14.9	1,079	26.7	1,006	24.9	462	11.4	18	0.4
Irwin	552	5.9	1,256	13.3	1,154	12.2	2,540	27.0	2,371	25.2	1,380	14.7	155	1.6
Lanier	864	8.3	1,518	14.6	1,051	10.2	3,285	31.6	2,469	23.7	1,069	12.5	147	1.4
Lowndes	8,190	7.2	15,446	14.5	25,102	22.2	28,916	25.5	23,701	21.0	10,587	9.4	1,261	1.1
Pierce	1,273	6.7	2,631	13.9	2,574	13.6	4,703	24.8	4,918	26.0	2,541	13.4	294	1.6
Tift	2,749	6.7	5,795	16.4	6,691	16.4	10,303	24.7	9,704	23.8	4,856	11.9	689	2.5
Turner	483	5.8	1,282	15.4	1,072	12.9	1,952	12.9	2,088	25.0	1,253	15.1	208	2.5
Ware	2,462	6.9	4,692	13.1	4,720	13.2	8,919	25.0	9,306	26.0	4,726	13.3	898	2.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age Distribution

- In the Southern Georgia Region, people aged 65 years and older are 13% of the population.
- In the Region, the 18- to 24-year-old population group also averages about 12% of the population, except for Lowndes County, which due to the presence of Valdosta State University has a percentage of 18% in that population group.
- The age group between 25 and 64 averages about 50% of the population across all counties.
- These percentages highlight one of the significant needs confronting the Region: that there is a lack of local jobs to encourage the younger population (college graduates and young families with young children) to stay in the area after they have graduated high school or college. The majority of the local youth leaves the area to pursue a college education and careers in their chosen fields. Therefore, the population of the post-high school age group drops significantly and remains low until retirement age. The population numbers for the older age groups only starts to increase at about middle age, reflecting a trend for those populations to return to retire or care for aging parents. As a result, the older population groups in the Region are increasing. Consequently, there is an ever-increasing need to plan for the provision of senior services.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The Region's 2010 White/Caucasian population was 66.4%, and the 2016 White/Caucasian population was 74.6%. The Region's 2010 Black/African American population was 23.6%, and 2016 Black/African American population was 24.0% of the total population. The 2010 population of two or more races was 1.54%, and 2016 was 1.54% of the total population. The 2010 population of other races was 0.8% and in 2016 was 0.5% of the total population. Overall, the Region shows a stable picture in the race distribution which no change in trend in the foreseeable future. As of 2010, 8.49% of the Region's population was Hispanic/Latino (of any race), and as of 2016, that figure was 7.57%.

Income Characteristics 2015 Census 2006-2010 ACS B17010; S1701; B19301; B19113								
County	Median Household Income \$	Medium Family Income \$	Families Below Poverty Level	%	Individuals Below Poverty Level	%	Labor Force	Unemployment Rate %
Atkinson	30,933	38,011	201	24.6	2,370	26.9	3,872	7.3
Bacon	37,162	48,555	176	12.9	1,919	17.7	5,033	4.4
Ben Hill	29,994	36,250	363	30.3	6,024	35.3	5,318	9.7
Berrien	31,835	42,017	408	21.5	4,923	26.2	7,010	6.9
Brantley	37,206	44,396	440	14.8	3,812	21.0	6,918	10.9
Brooks	32,663	44,031	394	21.3	4,265	27.6	6,740	17.0
Charlton	42,778	52,587	265	10.4	2,010	17.2	4,789	13.8
Clinch	24,015	40,863	183	32.1	2,339	35.0	2,843	10.7
Coffee	33,965	41,968	1,000	17.9	9,975	25.5	17,395	8.3
Cook	35,683	41,553	451	20.6	4,244	25.1	7,252	6.6
Echols	32,959	42,955	118	22.9	4,044	29.0	1,840	10.1
Irwin	34,156	46,055	216	19.5	2,300	26.0	3,058	6.8
Lanier	37,605	48,713	350	22.0	2,675	26.6	3,783	14.6
Lowndes	36,834	48,391	2,947	18.8	28,907	26.5	50,355	13.0
Pierce	40,247	48,180	457	18.9	4,455	23.7	8,106	8.9
Tift	37,653	47,346	760	22.8	11,372	29.2	18,001	5.8
Turner	31,806	38,177	189	18.8	2,027	25.4	3,243	12.5
Ware	34,909	42,029	1,269	23.4	9,686	29.2	14,747	7.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Per Capita Income Comparison – Georgia Trend April 2017

County	Rank in Region 2015	Year 2015 Per Capita Income \$	Rank in Region 2017	Year 2017 Per Capita Income \$	Rank in State 2014	Rank in State 2015	Rank in State 2017	% Average Annual Growth 2011-2017
Tift	1	34,410	1	40,156	57	45	21	4.89
Lowndes	2	34,200	2	35,263	68	50	48	2.54
Turner	3	33,620	3	33,572	27	57	69	2.14
Brooks	4	33,158	4	33,445	21	65	71	1.33
Pierce	5	32,003	5	32,615	86	81	87	1.88
Ware	6	31,207	6	32,395	120	98	92	2.66
Bacon	7	30,633	7	30,327	124	101	117	2.80
Clinch	10	29,072	8	30,254	141	123	119	1.93
Coffee	8	29,333	9	29,910	131	118	120	2.60
Berrien	9	29,187	10	29,526	76	120	123	2.11
Irwin	12	28,534	11	29,001	50	128	125	0.34
Ben Hill	11	28,895	12	28,728	121	125	129	1.49
Cook	14	26,998	13	27,600	129	139	139	1.19
Atkinson	13	27,892	14	27,086	144	133	143	2.72
Charlton	16	24,843	15	26,709	157	151	147	4.36
Brantley	18	24,172	16	25,578	148	154	149	2.67
Lanier	17	24,558	17	25,036	133	152	152	2.01
Echols	15	26,045	18	24,586	123	147	154	2.76

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Income

- **Regional Income Figures 2015:**

- Average median household income = \$34,578
- Average median family income = \$45,067
- Per Capita Income average = \$22,186
- Charlton County has largest median family income at \$52,587, in spite of having a -0.85% population loss between 2011 and 2017. Bacon, Lanier, Lowndes and Pierce Counties also have higher median family incomes, even if counties like Charlton, Lanier, and Lowndes lost some population over that ten year period.

- **Regional Poverty Figures 2015:**

- Average poverty rate = 22.6%
- The Highest rate of Families below Poverty Level = Clinch County, 32.1%
- The Lowest rate of Families below Poverty Level = Charlton County, 10.4%
- 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 Bacon and Charlton Counties.

- **Regional Unemployment Figures 2015:**

- Average unemployment rate = 11.8%
- Highest unemployment rate = Brooks County, 17.0%
- Lowest unemployment rate = Bacon County, 4.4%

ii) Economic Development

Even though the population has held relatively steady in the Region, job growth has been more robust, and most of our counties have seen an increase in employment. The highest job growth has been in Atkinson County, with an annual average 9.85 percent employment increase as reported by Georgia Trend. Bacon and Lanier Counties have also seen some strong employment growth. Among the counties that have seen a decrease in employment, the decline has fortunately been reasonably small, with nothing below -2.79 percent.

Job growth in Georgia has been occurring at a faster rate than population growth, with an average of 2.54 percent per year. Likewise, personal income statewide has been growing at an average of 2.33 percent per year. The top and bottom counties in the state haven't changed; Fulton County is still number one in terms of population, number of jobs, and per capita income; Taliaferro County still has the smallest population and smallest employment, ranking #159 in the state; and Wheeler County still has the lowest per capita income in the state. In our Region, the rankings of our counties within the state have shifted around slightly, but not by very much.

Business Summary

- The majority of businesses in the Region are classified as **Other Services** such as Insurance, Banking, etc. (41%) or **Retail Trade** (18%). **Construction** and **Manufacturing** are the next largest industry sectors, constituting 8.7% and 8.0% of all businesses respectively. The “other” category captures all businesses that are not mentioned specifically in the main groups in the table.
- The **Information Technology** and **Healthcare Industries** are the smallest industries in all counties. Given the aging of the population, more attention should be focused on providing quality healthcare throughout the Region. The focus should also be given to the Information Technology Sector which is attractive to college graduates and encourages home-based start-up businesses that do not require a significant amount of capital, but significantly increases the skilled workforce.
- It is interesting to note that although most of our region is rural, only three counties Echols (55.5%), Lanier (22.8%) and Clinch (15.7%), have higher percentages in **Agriculture** than in either of the two largest industries of **Other Services** and **Retail Trade**. These numbers would support the idea that the Region is moving from an agricultural and manufacturing base to the service industries.

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Business Summary 2015 GDOL, Area Labor Profiles

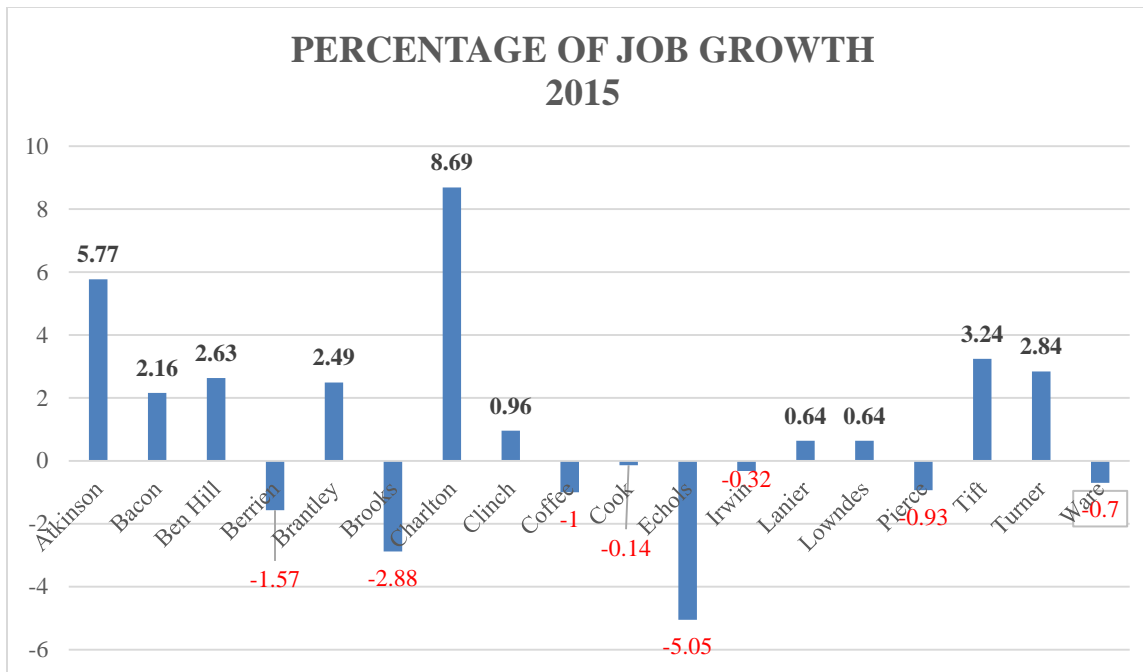
	Total # Businesses	Agricultural & Mining	%	Construction	%	Manuf/ Transp Wareh use	%	Retail Trade	%	Info rma tion	%	He alth Car e	%	Other Servic e	%	Gov t	%	Othe r	%
Atkinson	125	12	3.4	2	.06	19	27.8	25	6.8	0	0	6	4.5	36	37.3	20	20.09	5	.09
Bacon	267	36	10.7	12	0.9	40	35.8	45	9.8	2	.5	15	4.3	89	27.0	23	14.5	12	1.3
Ben Hill	376	13	0.8	17	0.8	38	30.0	74	14.0	4	0.6	32	5.9	147	29.27	25	17.7	26	1.7
Berrien	285	19	7.9	21	2.2	23	0.4	53	11.3	4	0.4	16	5.7	107	44.9	28	26.1	17	1.1
Brantley	238	18	4.6	44	7.7	25	11.2	33	9.6	2	1.2	10	5.7	63	23.5	29	36.5	14	1.2
Brooks	297	46	14.2	23	2.6	14	7.5	42	7.5	3	0.3	18	9.8	96	26	29	22.2 26	26	9.9
Charlton	175	18	9.5	18	2.4	16	14.5	28	9.1	2	0.8	5	3.9	59	37.2	19	22.2	10	1.2
Clinch	181	37	15.7	7	1.1	15	33.7	25	6.7	4	2.1	11	5.4	49	13.7	23	20.09	10	0.7
Coffee	958	44	2.9	67	6.3	87	25.8	200	11.7	9	0.5	93	11.7	335	24.5	58	15.1	65	1.5
Cook	390	27	12.0	34	5.6	41	12.0	61	15.2	3	1.0	29	4.7	133	20.03	39	28.7	23	1.5
Echols	56	18	55.5	5	6.0	5	2.0	5	1.1	0	0.0	2	5.0	10	7.3	10	28.1	1	2.0
Irwin	155	12	10.4	14	8.0	8	6.4	31	10.1	2	1.6	10	6.5	44	38.5	21	33.9	13	0.6
Lanier	130	11	22.8	15	1.6	10	8.9	19	7.3	1	0.7	6	2.1	11	20.1	22	37.2	5	1.8
Lowndes	2,970	33	0.6	264	5.0	182	13.8	495	13.7	25	3.6	368	9.6	1,264	30.5	11 2	21.1	227	2.1
Pierce	383	25	4.5	62	8.1	30	16.8	58	12.5	4	0.6	25	7.8	127	29.0	22	19.0	27	1.7
Tift	1,192	46	2.5	85	2.9	74	11.4	222	14.4	9	0.9	106	7.2	510	31.1	72	27.6	68	2.0
Turner	194	15	702	6	0.6	17	16.9	33	12.5	1	1.1	12	6.9	99	31.0	24	24.2	11	0.7
Ware	982	25	1.5	68	2.9	66	14.0	194	15.7	9	0.9	118	16.9	360	23.5	67	20.0	75	4.6

Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor

Employment Comparison– Georgia Trend April 2017

County	Rank in Region 2015	Year 2015 Employment	Rank in Region 2017	Year 2017 Employment	Rank in State 2014	Rank in State 2015	Rank in State 2017	% Average Annual Growth 2011-2017
Lowndes	1	48,169	1	49,612	17	17	17	1.39
Tift	2	18,685	2	19,596	37	37	38	1.49
Coffee	4	15,691	3	16,933	41	42	42	2.66
Ware	3	14,589	4	15,186	45	45	45	0.95
Ben Hill	5	5,549	5	5,336	86	87	88	-1.15
Bacon	6	4,180	6	4,412	99	98	97	4.49
Pierce	7	3,915	7	4,126	101	99	99	2.29
Cook	8	3,909	8	4,072	98	100	100	0.66
Berrien	9	3,412	9	3,195	104	104	109	-2.64
Brooks	10	3,018	10	2,900	111	111	114	-1.66
Clinch	11	2,483	11	2,509	121	119	118	0.42
Atkinson	15	1,953	12	2,414	130	128	119	9.85
Brantley	12	2,125	13	2,241	124	124	124	1.68
Turner	13	2,109	14	2,137	127	125	127	0.33
Charlton	14	2,005	15	1,974	126	127	128	-1.34
Irwin	16	1,769	16	1,711	129	130	134	-2.79
Lanier	17	1,580	17	1,648	137	137	136	3.56
Echols	18	755	18	692	150	152	152	-2.01
State Total				4,370,882	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.54

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Georgia Trend* magazine



Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor

Employment Comparison

- Seven of the eighteen counties experienced a loss of employment for the period 2011 – 2015.
- Six of the eighteen experienced a loss in 2017. Ten counties gained employment; Lanier (3.56), Bacon (4.49), Atkinson (9.85), Pierce (0.95), Brantley (1.68), Cook (9.85), Lowndes (1.39), Tift (1.49), Ware (0.95), and Turner (0.33).
- Of the eight counties that lost employment, five had a larger loss percentage than that of the State of Georgia.

		Less than 9 th Grade		9 th to 12 th 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	5935	517	376	340	364	1183	1024	349	503	102	228	132	143	39	94
Bacon	8454	357	195	534	562	1812	1484	532	678	169	400	264	369	124	231
Ben Hill	10087	278	327	803	896	2734	2716	971	1149	326	633	411	415	120	308
Berrien	14372	338	295	921	831	2718	2788	1050	1359	655	860	453	464	314	361
Brantley	13634	379	178	1095	881	3119	2975	1014	1189	1304	440	208	398	103	347
Brooks	12151	303	303	902	851	2144	2444	1222	1067	333	417	392	591	77	207
Charlton	10588	720	262	932	459	2199	2277	878	879	249	297	245	307	138	245
Clinch	4958	209	201	356	437	905	815	484	395	64	148	200	181	39	233
Coffee	32230	857	810	2695	1813	6985	5717	1997	2639	876	1234	1109	1254	445	926
Cook	12521	447	378	960	984	2296	2669	859	1005	297	390	389	524	238	298
Echols	2963	177	216	181	156	588	473	273	252	36	132	58	106	11	35
Irwin	7265	77	148	425	312	1629	1676	824	568	161	395	160	160	158	208
Lanier	7772	404	250	479	512	1127	1209	930	733	314	339	325	210	59	291
Lowndes	85294	1505	1629	3950	3363	12263	11347	8186	2543	2331	3176	4217	4949	2989	2968
Pierce	14094	452	325	777	954	3066	1223	1137	1406	246	491	520	438	273	541
Tift	30558	928	955	1679	1641	4587	5234	2392	2382	963	1741	1069	1148	951	1126
Turner	6220	240	308	504	372	1169	953	476	505	136	342	153	282	58	148
Ware	27306	728	625	1729	1375	5393	5270	2191	2679	639	1089	833	910	614	718

Source: US Census Bureau, 2016 estimates

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.
- As these numbers begin to decrease, however, a definite increase can be observed in the percentage of the 45-64 age group with a Bachelor's Degree or Graduate or Professional Degree, especially among women. This seems to indicate that more people are going back to school later in life after rearing their families or retiring from work.
- 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. This supports the above referenced idea that more people are returning to school, particularly post-secondary educations, after rearing their families.
- 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 for many of the counties in the Region.
- Farming and manufacturing businesses have been on the decline in Southern Georgia but opportunities in the medical field, retail trade, offices, education, and restaurants have been on the rise. The smaller communities have seen the greatest decline in businesses.

Economic Resources and Trends

The 2018-2022 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 FACTS

Southern Georgia, Region 11

POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
406,586

2015 Estimate
410,902

Male
49.7%

Female
50.3%

Minority
43.6%

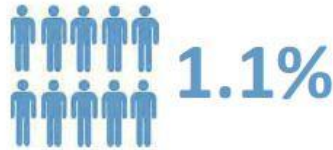
Average Median Age
37

Age 65+
54,299

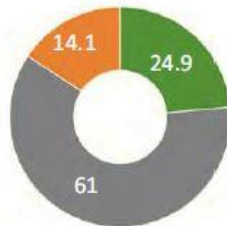
Under 18
97,306



POPULATION PERCENTAGE INCREASE 2010-2015 ¹



TOTAL POPULATION %



• <18
 • 18-64
 • 65+

LARGEST EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Moody AFB
2. Georgia Power Company
3. South Georgia Medical Center
4. Valdosta State University
5. Mayo Clinic Health System

HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$84,306

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
 1.8%

Rental Vacancy Rate
 5.2%

Occupied Housing Units
 145,484

% of Units with No Vehicle Available
 8.5%

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$34,578

Per Capita Income
\$18,008

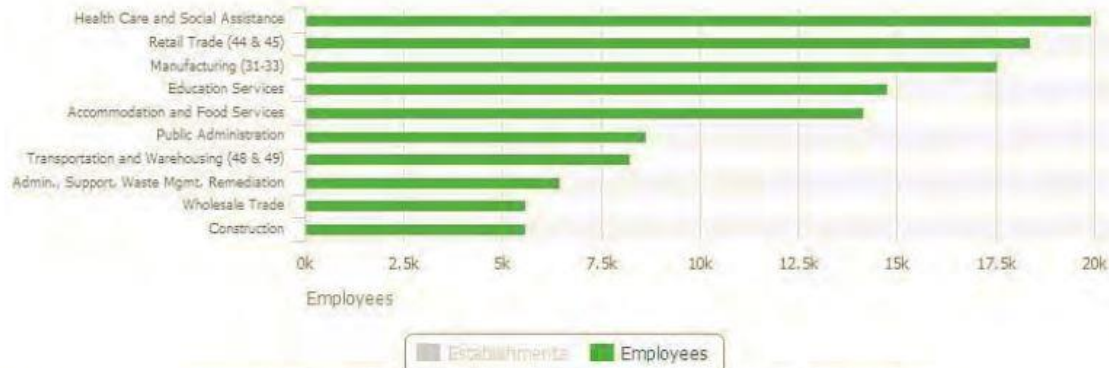
Per Capita Living Wage ³
\$20,306

% of Families Below Poverty Level
20.75%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁴
 Region—**17.3%**
 Georgia—**16.2%**
 National—**14.6%**

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁵

Employee Comparison



Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program
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1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
 2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 year Data
 3. www.livingwage.mit.edu
 4. www.teachingamerica.org
 5. Georgia Labor Market Explorer

iii) Housing

- Regional Housing Statistics:
 - Family = 58.77% of total housing units
 - Multi-Family = 8.93% of total housing units
 - Manufactured Homes = 32.91% of total single-family housing units are manufactured homes
- A large number of manufactured 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 and population centers.
- There is a shortage of accessible, affordable housing throughout the Region for independent living. Section 8 Housing 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, 13.3% of the regional population has a disability. Section 8 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.

Value of Housing Stock 2015 US Census B25075

	Total	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000- \$100,000	\$100,000- \$200,000	\$200,000- \$500,000	\$500,000- \$1,000,000	Above \$1,000,000
Atkinson	1,985	671	582	431	246	0	55
Bacon	2,723	1,243	582	550	320	20	0
Ben Hill	4,101	1,095	1,631	1,060	277	9	29
Berrien	5,074	1,512	1,484	1,423	610	43	2
Brantley	5,258	2,027	1,456	1,359	350	12	54
Brooks	4,550	1,255	1,143	1,674	438	22	18
Charlton	2,776	736	979	873	188	0	0
Clinch	1,781	802	455	324	200	0	0
Coffee	9,555	2,989	2,637	2,687	1,148	31	61
Cook	4,190	1,201	1,164	1,195	534	71	25
Echols	932	319	305	197	106	4	1
Irwin	2,450	813	762	668	192	15	0
Lanier	2,364	556	617	913	238	40	0
Lowndes	20,190	2,627	4,178	8,403	4,450	487	45
Pierce	5,149	1,355	1,292	1,619	767	94	22
Tift	8,202	1,745	1,997	2,874	1,442	83	61
Turner	2,117	744	666	530	139	32	6
Ware	8,936	2,565	2,966	2,621	683	71	303

Source: US Census Bureau, 2015

Value of Housing Stock

General Housing Stock Values:

- 26.26% are less than \$50,000
- 26.96% are \$50,000 - \$100,000
- 31.84% are \$100,000 - \$200,000
- 13.35% are \$200,000 - \$500,000
- 0.1% are \$500,000 - \$1,000,000
- 1.2% are above \$1,000,000

Coffee and Tift counties have 61 structures valued above \$1,000,000, and Atkinson County has 55 structures.

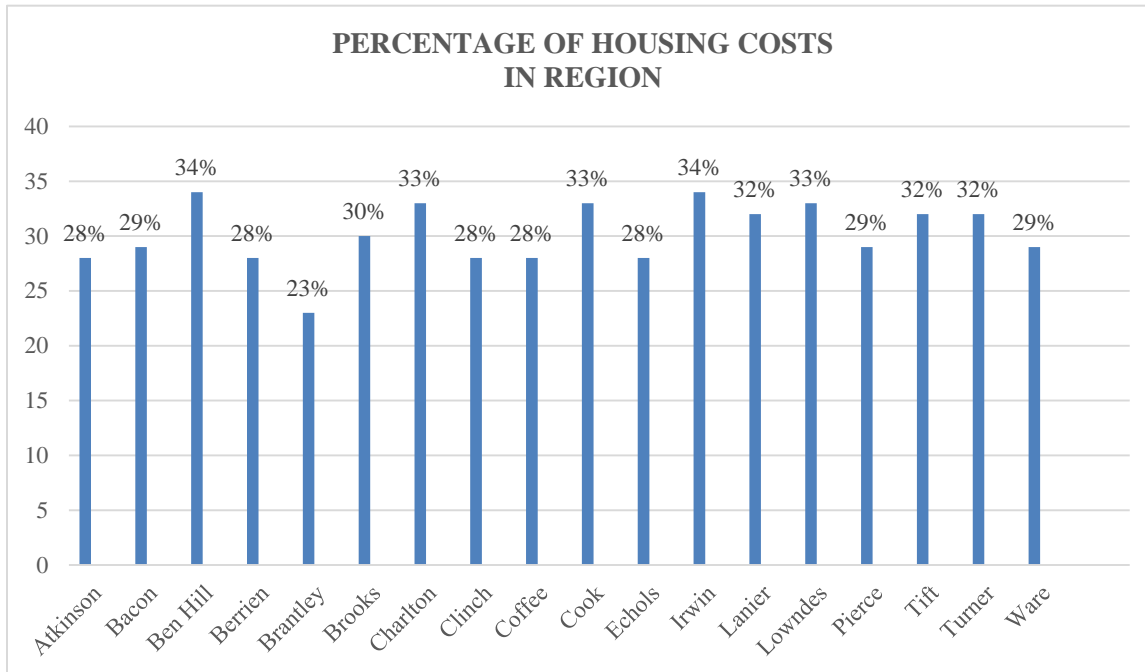
Housing Characteristics 2015 US Census B25024; B25034; B25075							
County	Total Units	Single Family	%	Multi-Family	%	Manufactured Homes	%
Atkinson	3,476	1,714	49.3	237	6.9	1,515	43.6
Bacon	4,758	2,781	58.4	306	6.2	1,671	35.1
Ben Hill	7,914	4,942	62.4	1,069	13.5	1,903	24.0
Berrien	8,650	5,229	60.4	434	5.0	2,987	50.8
Brantley	7,963	3,642	45.7	509	2.8	4,048	49.0
Brooks	7,660	4,754	62.1	509	6.7	2,391	31.2
Charlton	4,436	2,453	55.3	88	2.0	1,869	42.1
Clinch	2,974	1,799	60.0	319	10.7	856	28.8
Coffee	16,974	9,562	56.3	1,356	8.4	5,964	35.1
Cook	7,247	4,326	59.7	448	6.1	2,473	34.1
Echols	1,665	836	50.2	141	5.8	732	44.0
Irwin	4,024	2,571	63.8	270	6.8	1,183	29.4
Lanier	4,298	2,488	57.9	396	11.0	1,414	32.9
Lowndes	45,399	30,426	67.0	10,112	22.2	4,822	10.6
Pierce	7,964	5,024	63.1	450	5.7	2,463	30.0
Tift	16,414	9,632	58.7	2,666	16.2	4,116	25.1
Turner	3,827	2,347	61.4	504	13.2	976	25.5
Ware	16,394	10,853	66.2	2,086	11.6	3,452	21.1

Source: US Census Bureau, 2015

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 Ware County both contain the highest number of older structures (those built in 1939 or earlier).

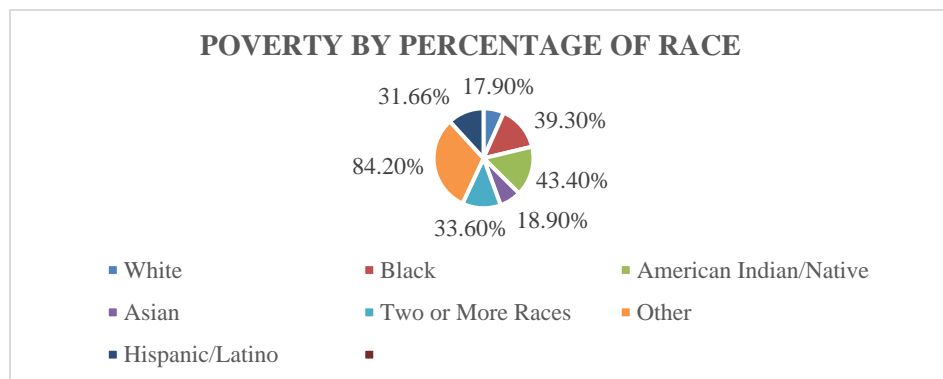
Number of Residential Structures by Age and County 2010 US Census B25034									
County	Built 2010 or later	Built 2000 to 2009	Built 1990 to 1999	Built 1980 to 1989	Built 1970 to 1979	Built 1960 to 1969	Built 1950 to 1959	Built 1940 to 1949	Built 1939 or earlier
Atkinson	21	318	877	581	721	221	296	149	348
Bacon	142	434	999	658	1,362	469	364	197	417
Ben Hill	4	1,068	1,433	1,245	1,860	1,070	501	454	726
Berrien	134	1,502	2,424	1,507	1,224	602	623	398	1,052
Brantley	125	1,771	2,430	2,437	1,055	433	287	198	299
Brooks	96	1,204	2,175	1,205	1,237	650	584	282	882
Charlton	136	653	1,121	729	619	516	447	195	395
Clinch	22	212	571	431	555	395	244	119	183
Coffee	128	2,721	4,148	3,568	2,863	1,572	972	521	1,209
Cook	153	1,021	1,883	1,101	1,361	788	494	187	673
Echols	5	147	435	349	56	215	215	12	18
Irwin	7	322	800	754	586	488	467	186	451
Lanier	244	1,302	977	990	473	367	406	95	198
Lowndes	1,403	9,638	8,847	7,192	6,808	3,569	4,087	1,494	2,005
Pierce	175	1,692	2,995	3,495	2,686	1,851	1,531	919	853
Tift	293	2,107	2,995	3,495	2,686	1,851	1,531	919	853
Turner	38	615	609	720	689	484	374	179	517
Ware	50	1,822	2,850	1,745	2,457	2,223	2,630	1,135	2,004

Source: US Census Bureau



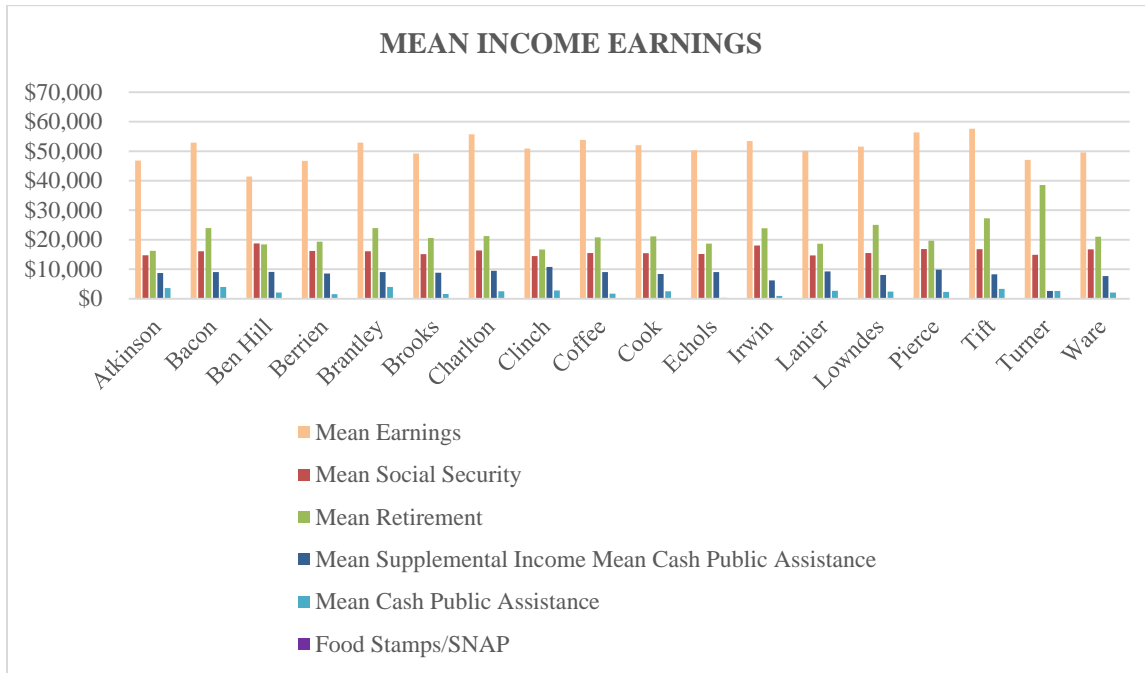
Source: US Census Bureau, 2016

There are currently 8 of the 18 counties cost-burdened with paying 30% or more of net income on total housing costs. Ben Hill County and Irwin County are paying 34% total housing costs. Brantley County is paying the least amount at 23% of total housing costs. There are 10 counties paying less than 30% of their net income for housing. At the present time, there are no counties severely cost-burdened- paying 50% or more of total net income. It has been recommended that no household pay more than 30% of net income on housing. There is a need for more affordable housing throughout the Region, especially for the 8 counties with the burdened of 30% or more being spent on housing. The average age of householder in the Region is 33.



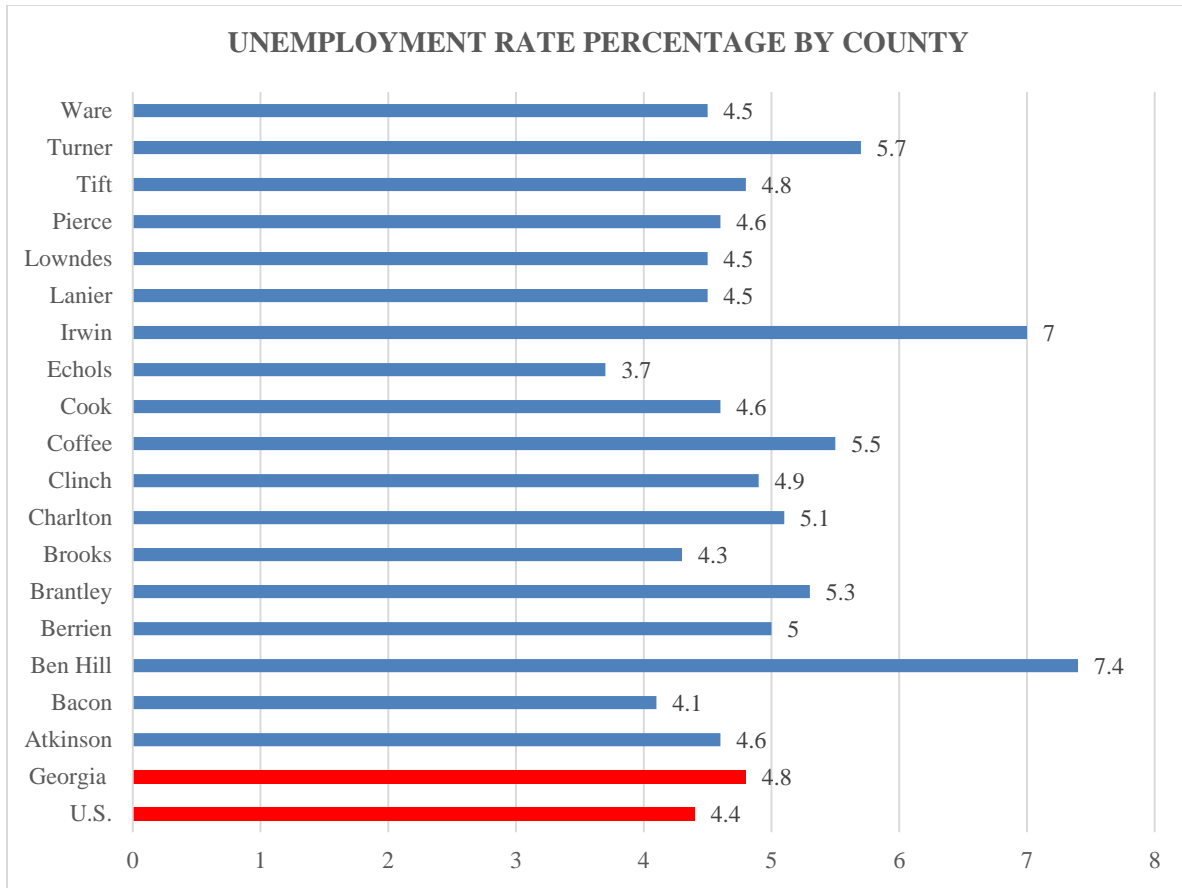
Source: US Census Bureau, 2016

There is 26.8% of the Region’s total population of 411,606 living in poverty. Of that population, 39.30% of the Black/African American population are living in poverty, 33.60% of the White/Caucasian population are living in poverty, 31.66% of the Hispanic/Latino population are living in poverty, 43.40% of the American Indian/Native are living in poverty, 18.90% of Asian are living in poverty, 33.60% of two or more races are living in poverty, and 84.20% of other races are living in poverty. The poverty is due in part to those who are depending on Social Security and other supplements and those who are unemployed.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2016

The Mean Dollars earned in the Region is averaged out at \$51,032 on an annual basis. Tift County has the highest earned income of \$57,642. The lowest is Ben Hill County at \$41,436. There are a total of 47,224 with Social Security Income, which averages \$15,957 for the Region. There are 22,786 people within the Region receiving retirement benefits at an average of \$21,945. There are 11,515 within the Region receiving a supplemental income (SSI), averaging out at \$8,738. There are a total of 2,494 within the Region receiving cash public assistance, averaging at \$2,463. A total of 29,085 within the Region receive food stamps/SNAP assistance.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The unemployment rate from June 2016-June 2017 averaged 4.8% in Georgia and 4.4% in the US. The unemployment average for the 18 county Southern Georgia Region is currently at 4.73%. Of the 18 counties, Irwin County has the highest unemployment rate at 7.0%. This is due to lack of jobs within the community and people consequently have to travel outside of the county for employment.

HOUSING TYPES Censu.Gov/American FactFinder								
COUNTY	TOTAL	SINGLE-FAMILY	DUPLEX	APARTMENTS	MOBILE HOMES	BOAT, RV, Van, ETC.	AVERAGE PERSONS LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD RENTD	AVERAGE PERSONS LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD OWNED
Atkinson	3476	1691	23	237	1515	10	2.44	2.37
Bacon	4758	2781	153	153	1671	0	3.1	2.68
Ben Hill	7914	4942	2527	812	1903	0	2.62	2.71
Berrien	8650	5229	124	310	2987	0	2.79	2.68
Brantley	7963	3642	121	103	4048	49	2.54	2.86
Brooks	7660	4754	83	426	2391	6	2.38	2.37
Charlton	4436	2453	21	67	1869	26	3.24	3.35
Clinch	3476	1714	51	186	1515	10	2.68	2.41
Coffee	16974	9654	439	917	5964	0	2.73	2.72
Cook	7247	4326	53	395	2473	0	2.95	2.64
Echols	1665	836	22	75	732	0	2.92	2.83
Irwin	4024	2571	156	114	1183	0	2.87	2.66
Lanier	4928	2488	107	289	1414	0	2.74	2.71
Lowndes	45399	30426	1686	8426	4822	39	2.7	2.86
Pierce	7964	5024	121	329	2463	27	2.76	2.71
Tift	16414	9632	814	1852	4116	0	2.84	2.7
Turner	3827	2347	168	336	976	0	2.71	2.6
Ware	16394	10853	745	1341	3452	3	2.44	2.37

Source: US Census Bureau, 2016

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.

HOUSEHOLDS BY RACE Censu.Gov/American FactFinder								
COUNTY	TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC/LATINO	AMERICAN INDIAN/NATIVE	ASIAN	2 OR MORE RACES	OTHER
Atkinson	3476	5721	1574	2010	36	5	120	1167
Bacon	4758	8883	1809	879	0	137	135	101
Ben Hill	7914	10862	6490	1081	72	0	317	237
Berrien	8650	16002	2174	930	82	141	415	205
Brantley	7963	17440	588	390	6	205	173	14
Brooks	7660	9436	5545	863	21	117	201	614
Charlton	4436	9541	3391	1489	126	27	129	178
Clinch	3476	4685	5721	1914	84	33	141	201
Coffee	16974	28740	12228	4672	194	284	264	1792
Cook	7247	11843	4846	1000	185	59	167	267
Echols	1665	3497	106	1036	53	73	118	437
Irwin	4024	6668	2832	95	45	8	217	77
Lanier	4298	7636	7649	550	33	84	107	102
Lowndes	45399	67836	42571	6061	850	2617	2935	2341
Pierce	7964	16915	1888	970	123	172	566	422
Tift	16414	26625	12316	4414	298	679	529	1342
Turner	3827	4712	3466	356	33	96	75	106
Ware	16394	23749	10810	1300	241	389	268	793

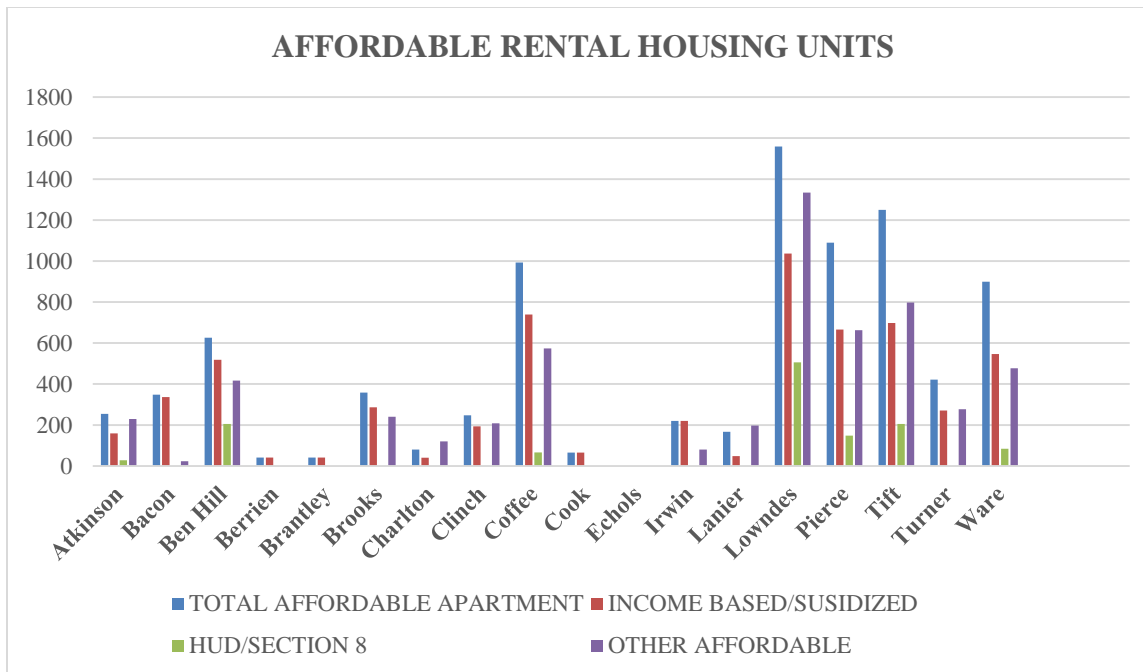
Source: US Census Bureau, 2016

There is a total of 173,169 households within the Region. Of those households, there are 272,791 persons who are White, 126,004 who are Black, 30,010 Hispanic/Latino, 2,482 American Indian/Native, 5126 Asian, 6,877 that are 2 or more races and 10,396 other.

OCCUPATION BY HOUSEHOLDS						
COUNTY	TOTAL EMPLOYED	MANAGEMENT, BUSINESS, SCIENCE, & ARTS	SERVICE (MANUFACTURING, WHOLESALE)	SALES AND OFFICE	NATURAL RESOURCES, CONSTRUCTION, & MAINTENANCE	PRODUCTION, TRANSPORTATION, AND MATERIAL MOVING
Atkinson	3389	630	462	807	688	802
Bacon	4598	1320	501	1000	906	871
Ben Hill	6019	1619	1238	1169	577	1416
Berrien	6457	4680	1316	1456	1050	955
Brantley	6702	1834	1239	1473	1221	935
Brooks	5703	1414	895	1433	912	1049
Charlton	4705	1320	1055	641	763	926
Clinch	2309	693	288	444	348	536
Coffee	15358	4854	2473	3280	1298	3453
Cook	7043	1787	1322	1568	721	1645
Echols	1675	363	221	321	484	286
Irwin	3158	976	475	686	222	799
Lanier	3476	987	535	1107	349	498
Lowndes	45595	13314	9767	12718	4002	5794
Pierce	7262	2322	1027	1577	1046	1290
Tift	16038	4747	3017	3914	2167	2193
Turner	2900	951	405	741	437	366
Ware	13022	3996	2183	2894	1641	2308

Source: US Census Bureau, 2016

There are 152,279 people employed within the Region. 31.39% are employed in management/business/science/arts, 18.66% are employed within the field of service (manufacturing, wholesale), 24.44% are employed in sales and office, 11.71% are employed are employed in natural resources and 17.1% are employed in production/transportation/material moving.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2016

There are a total of 1,796 low-income housing apartment complexes in the State of Georgia, which contain 167,696 apartments for rent. 84,215 of units have income-based assistance and 25,927 are Section 8 (HUD) units. There are an additional 109,554 of other low-income units, which don't have rental aid but still considered affordable. Income-based units are based on 30% of a renter's adjustable gross income. There is an indefinite waiting list in all the counties with housing assistance. Income-based housing is available for families, senior citizens, disabled individuals and single-parents. (Affordable Housing in Georgia)

Echols County does not have affordable housing because more than 90% of its land is forested and under contracts with private companies. Echols County is one of Georgia's least populated counties.

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, 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 Southern Georgia Region to the counties of Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Brantley, Brooks, Clinch, Coffee, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, and Ware. 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.

Travel Time to Work 2016 US Census

	Total	<5 minutes	5-9 minutes	10 – 14 minutes	15 – 19 minutes	20 – 24 minutes	25-29 minutes	30 – 34 minutes	35 – 39 minutes	40 – 44 minutes	45 – 59 minutes	60 – 89 minutes	90+
Atkinson	4.3%	8.4%	14.2%	17.4%	14.1%	9.6%	17.8%	0.8%	1.9%	5.4%	3.3%	2.8%	4.3%
Bacon	4.4%	12.7%	28.9%	16.7%	9.7%	3.7%	12.1%	1.6%	1.2%	7.0%	0.3%	1.7%	4.4%
Ben Hill	4.0%	18.8%	23.2%	24.4%	9.4%	2.8%	6.6%	3.2%	1.3%	3.9%	1.7%	0.6%	4.0%
Berrien	3.2%	8.9%	14.8%	18.8%	14.6%	5.7%	14.9%	4.1%	2.9%	6.9%	2.6%	2.6%	3.2%
Brantley	2.5%	6.9%	8.1%	14.9%	14.5%	3.3%	14.3%	4.0%	5.5%	15.4%	8.6%	2.0%	2.5%
Brooks	3.9%	9.6%	12.9%	14.8%	18.1%	6.6%	18.4%	3.2%	0.5%	8.0%	2.3%	1.7%	3.9%
Charlton	10.1%	17.8%	11.7%	5.4%	6.9%	1.4%	9.9%	1.4%	2.5%	16.0%	10.6%	6.3%	10.1%
Clinch	8.3%	30.2%	19.7%	15.3%	4.5%	1.7%	5.2%	1.3%	3.4%	6.4%	1.4%	2.6%	8.3%
Coffee	3.6%	10.3%	22.0%	28.5%	11.3%	2.9%	10.2%	0.7%	1.7%	4.4%	3.2%	1.0%	3.6%
Cook	2.6%	10.0%	12.2%	17.8%	14.2%	11.2%	14.7%	2.5%	3.0%	5.2%	3.1%	3.4%	2.6%
Echols	1.1%	3.6%	14.4%	8.0%	26.0%	9.4%	23.9%	3.2%	2.3%	5.2%	2.5%	0.4%	1.1%
Irwin	7.5%	6.8%	20.2%	23.9%	9.2%	7.6%	15.2%	1.9%	2.1%	1.8%	0.5%	3.3%	7.5%
Lanier	7.2%	8.6%	10.5%	10.6%	11.0%	12.0%	19.9%	2.4%	5.9%	6.7%	2.8%	2.3%	7.2%
Lowndes	3.8%	13.6%	20.2%	27.0%	15.8%	4.8%	6.6%	1.0%	0.9%	2.6%	1.4%	2.4%	3.8%
Pierce	2.3%	10.3%	16.7%	17.8%	16.5%	4.4%	11.1%	2.1%	1.2%	4.7%	6.3%	6.5%	2.3%
Tift	3.3%	17.4%	23.3%	25.1%	10.8%	2.6%	4.9%	1.1%	1.2%	4.9%	3.0%	2.4%	3.3%
Turner	6.3%	11.9%	9.9%	17.3%	8.0%	8.7%	18.4%	2.6%	2.0%	11.0%	3.4%	0.3%	6.3%
Ware	3.4%	17.0%	26.6%	19.7%	14.1%	3.0%	5.9%	0.8%	1.6%	2.9%	2.7%	2.5%	3.4%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2016

Travel Time to Work

- Residents have to travel further to find work as evident by the high spikes in 30 minute and 6 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).

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 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. Some areas of the Region (such as Echols County) have only one broadband provider, while others have multiple providers. Not all broadband technologies are available in all areas. For example, many parts of the Region do not have cable broadband access (see Broadband Map 2) and only a few pieces of the Region have fiber broadband (see Broadband Map 3). Fixed wireless broadband is not available anywhere in the Region. Broadband Map 4 shows mobile broadband signal strength in the Region.

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.

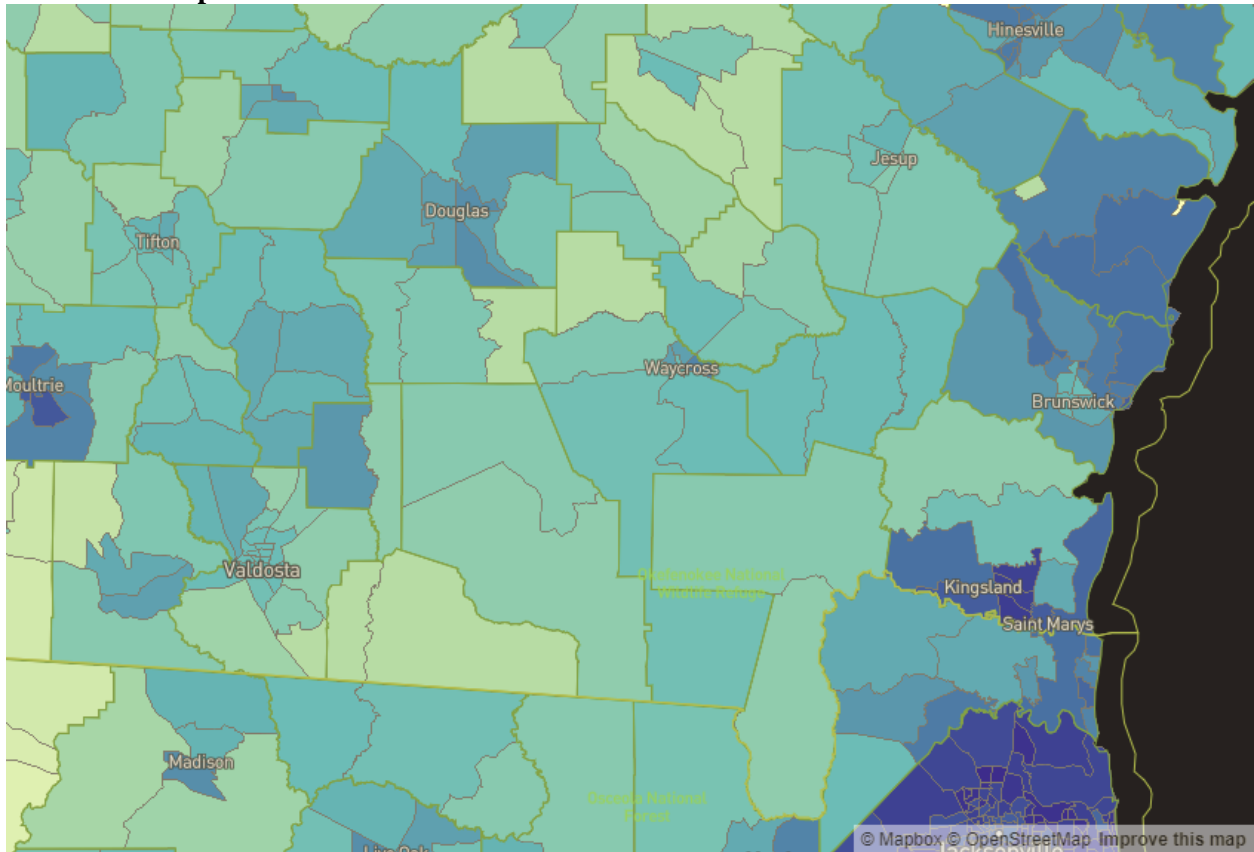
The infrastructure through which broadband is provided, and the condition of that infrastructure, is widely varied throughout the Region. DSL service is provided through telephone lines. Cable broadband is delivered through cable lines that often share poles with telephone and electric wires. As such, cable and DSL broadband infrastructure is vulnerable to damage from storms. While fiber optic lines are typically buried, fiber optic broadband service is available only in a few areas of the Region (see Broadband Map 3).

Mobile (3G/4G) broadband access is provided via cell phone towers throughout the Region, with varying levels of coverage (see Broadband Map 4); 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 areas of the Region are still without mobile coverage, including populated areas.

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 an economic toll.

Broadband Map 1 – Overall Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers

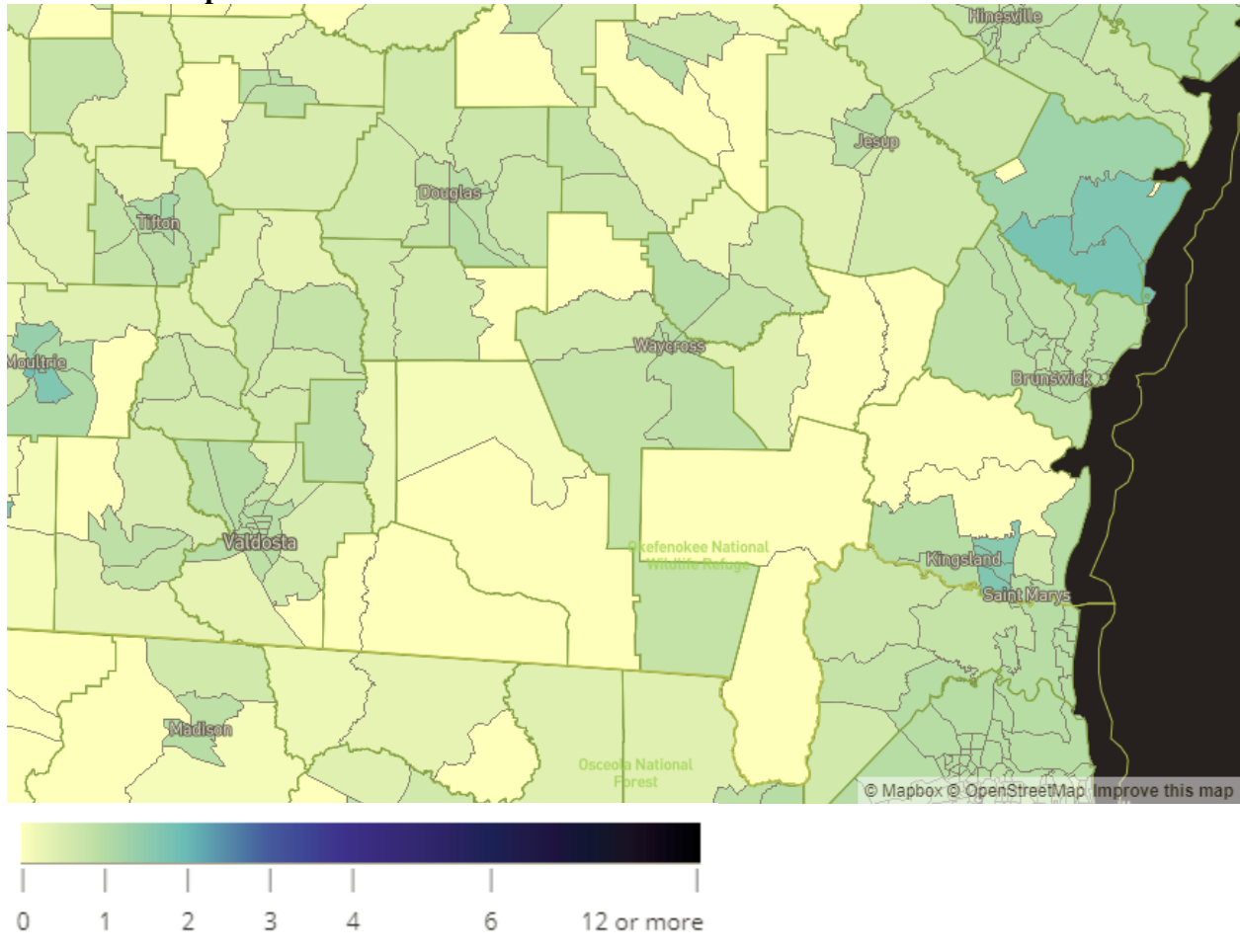


Number of Fixed Residential Broadband Providers



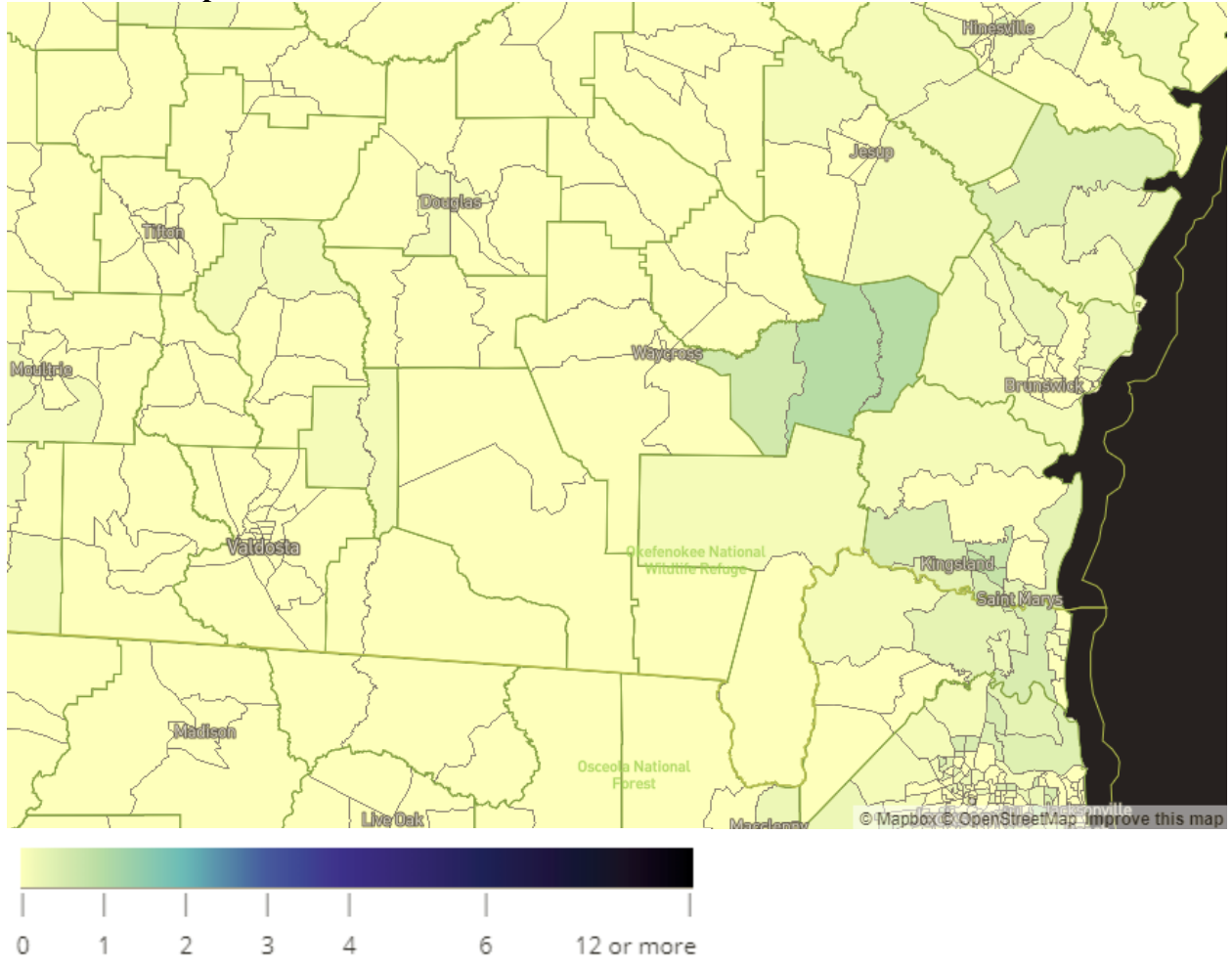
Source: FCC (<https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov>)

Broadband Map 2 – Number of Cable Broadband Providers



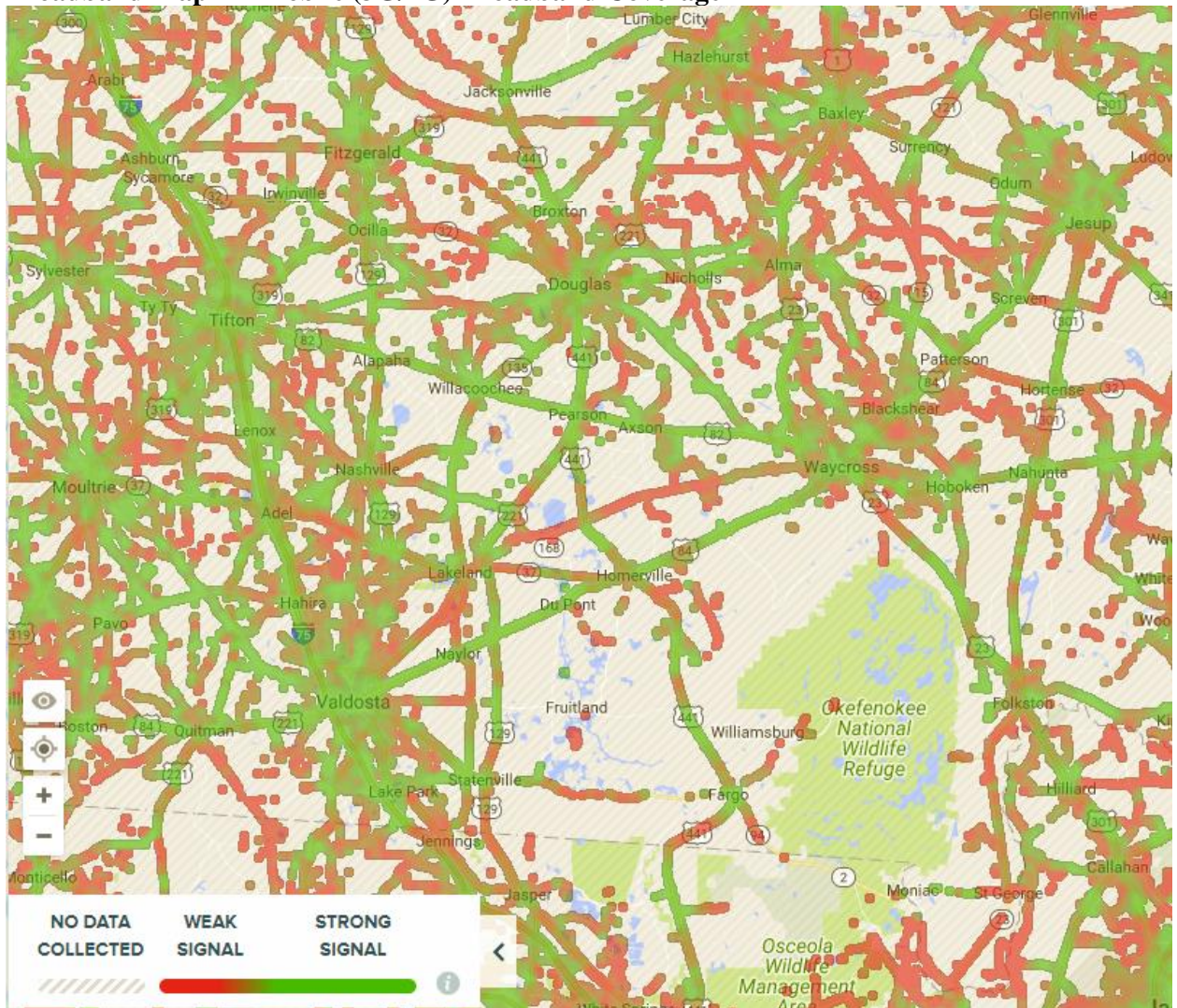
Source: FCC (<https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov>)

Broadband Map 3 – Number of Fiber Broadband Providers



Source: FCC (<https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov>)

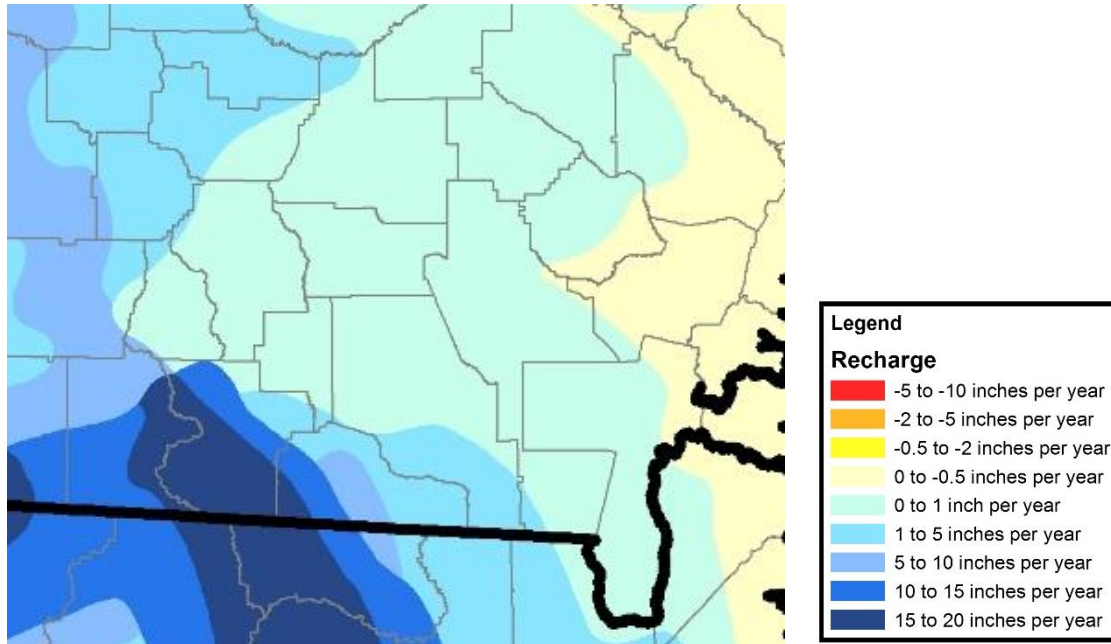
Broadband Map 4 – Mobile (3G/4G) Broadband Coverage



Source: OpenSignal (<https://opensignal.com/>)

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, which serves approximately 13,440 people in unincorporated areas of Ware and Brantley Counties. 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 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.

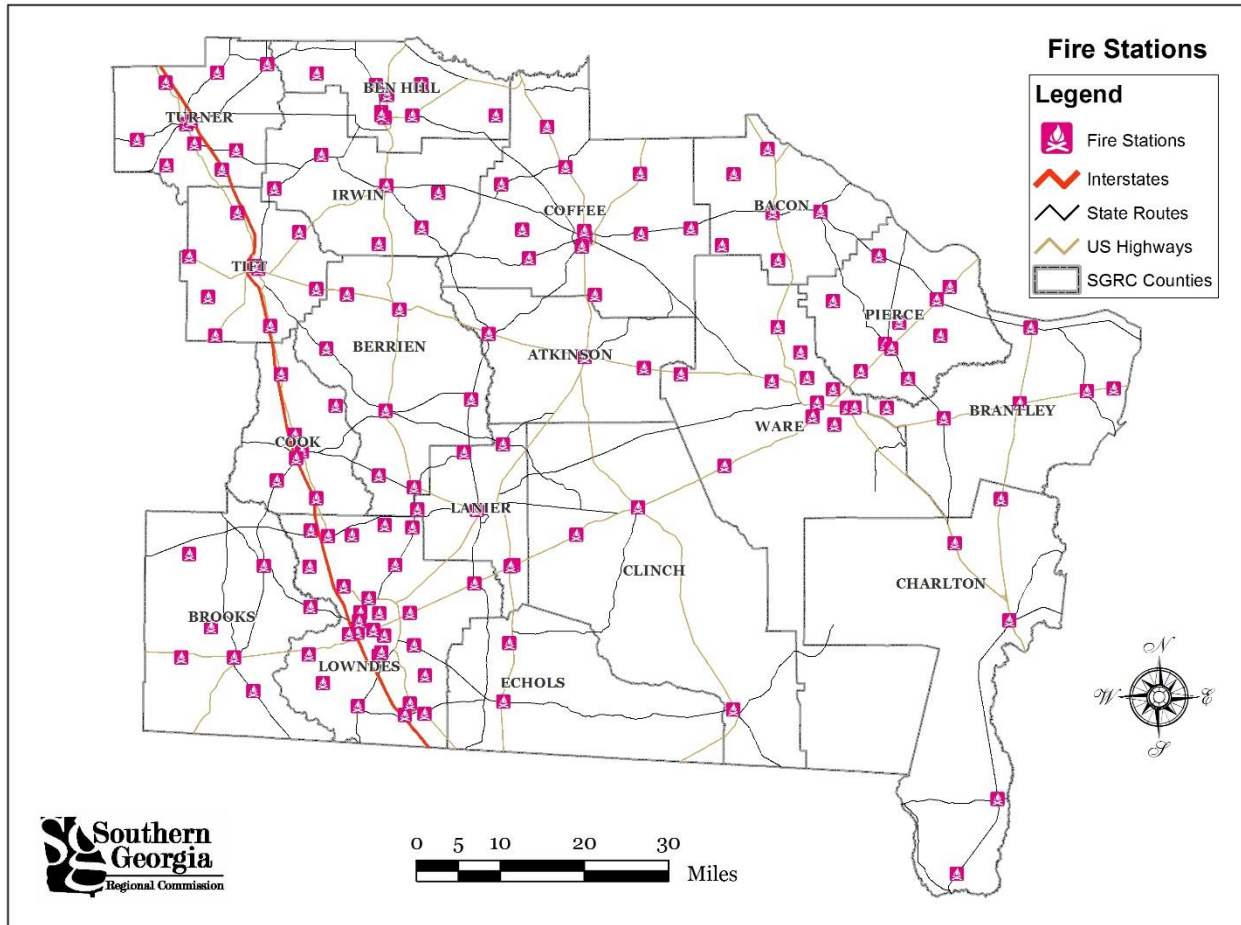
Storm-water Management

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. The City of Tifton has debated the creation of a storm-water utility since 2017, and other communities in the Region are doing the same. 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

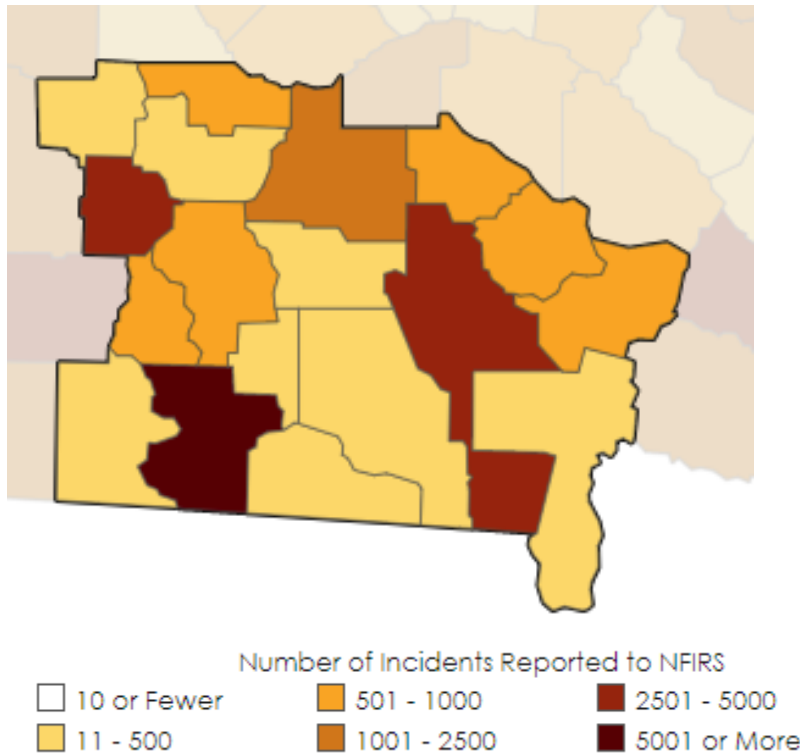
While most of the incorporated municipalities in the Region have their own distinct fire departments, there are also some joint fire departments in the Region that serve both the County and Cities (for example, the Alma-Bacon County Fire Department, which serves Bacon County and the City of Alma). Many 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 departments in the Region.



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

As can be seen from the map, some areas in the Region—albeit areas of lower population—are a considerable distance from any fire station, and response times may be long for some residents. Needed improvements to firefighting equipment, infrastructure, and other needs are documented and planned for in local Comprehensive Plans and Hazard Mitigation Plans, each of which **is** updated every five years.

The map below shows the number of incidents reported to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) between 2007 and 2016.



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

Due to the significant portion of the Region that 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; 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.

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 operates over 40 parks in the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County and is guided by the Valdosta-Lowndes Parks and Recreation Master Plan. 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 Water Trail 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.

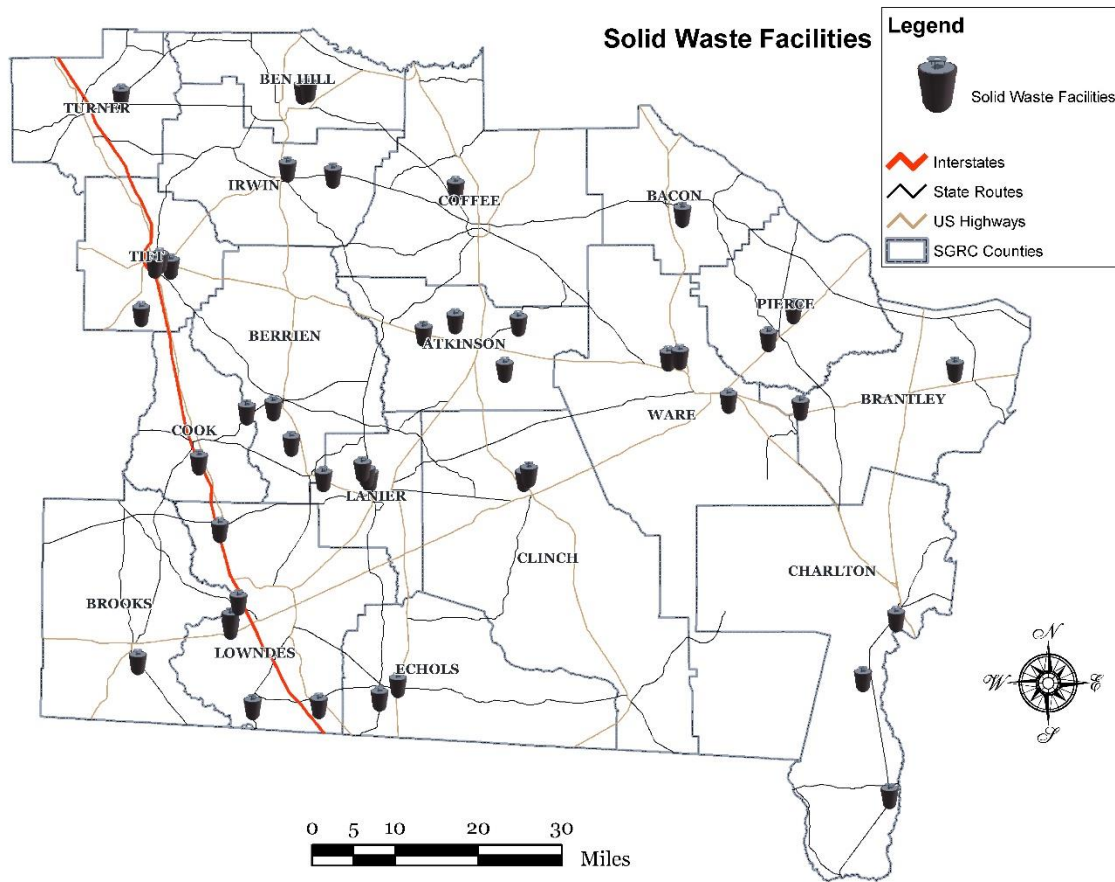
Many of the Region's outdoor recreational facilities suffer from the impact of littering; community clean-up events have been organized in many areas, but are often inadequate to keep facilities clean. Infrastructure such as boardwalks (for example, at Grand Bay Wildlife Management Area) is in need of 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 pickup 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. 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.



Solid 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 do 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 2011-2016. 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 Region concerning the 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. Eleven of the eighteen counties operate a local "on-demand" bus service that can be used by the general public; rides 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 LogistiCare), 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.

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. A fixed-route shuttle bus service was conducted as a pilot program in the City of Valdosta during 2016 but was subsequently canceled due to lack of funding.

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.

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. However, 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.

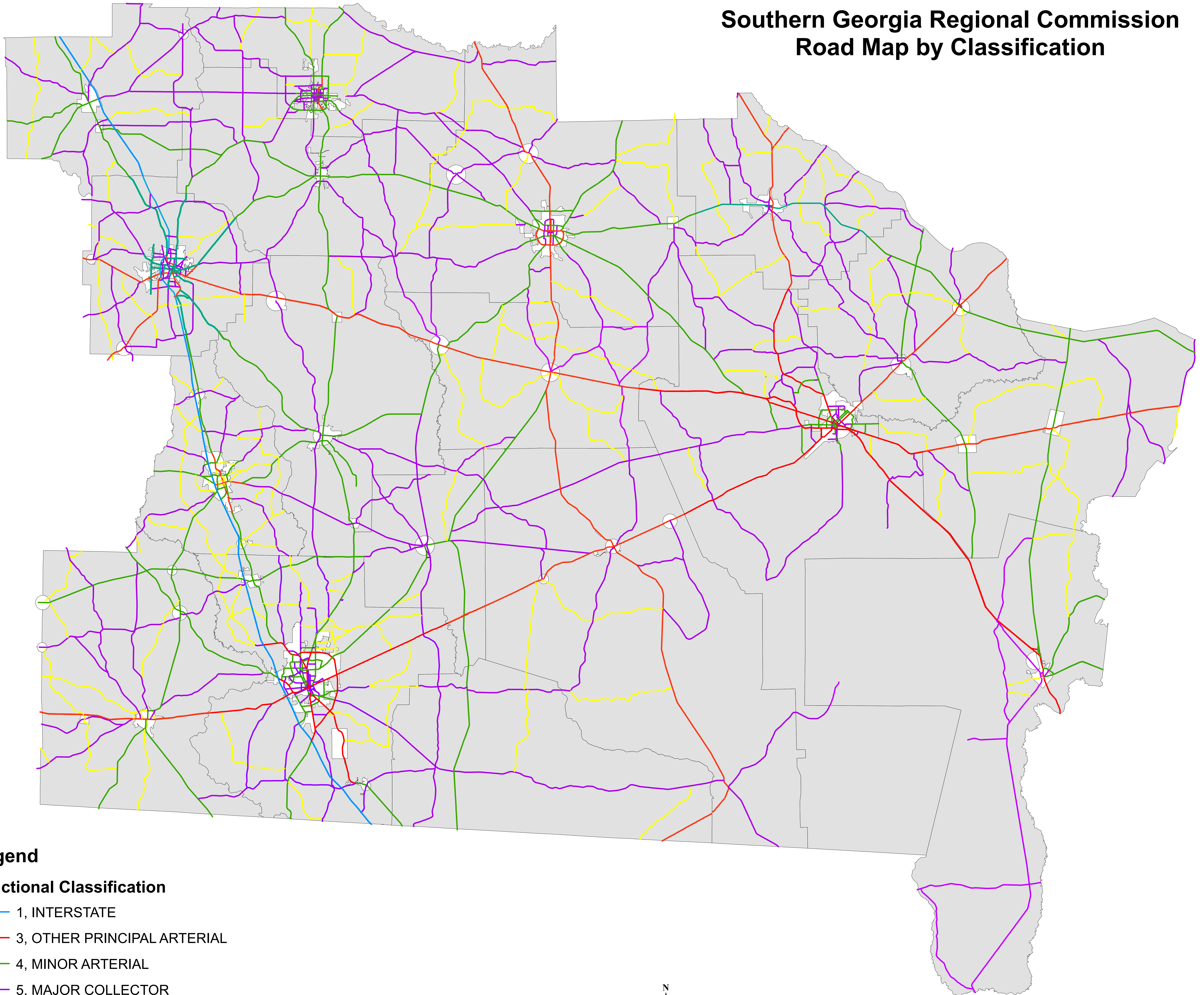
Transportation Map 9 shows designated non-rail freight corridors in the Region, as well as seaports and freight rail yards.

Transportation Map 10 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.

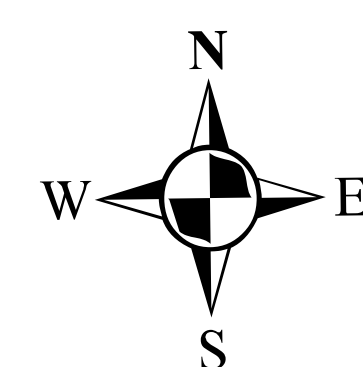
Southern Georgia Regional Commission Road Map by Classification



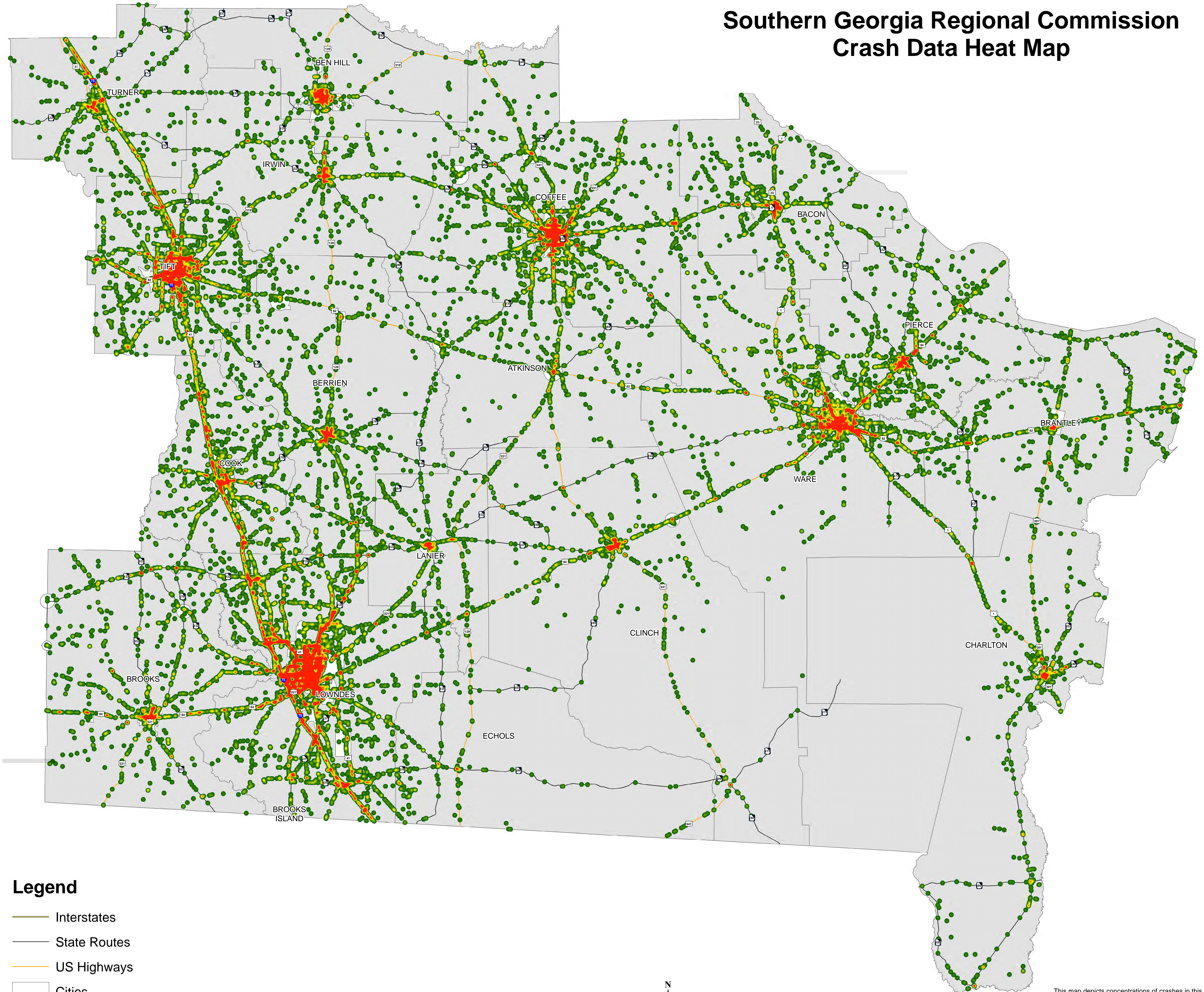
Legend

Functional Classification

- 1, INTERSTATE
- 3, OTHER PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL
- 4, MINOR ARTERIAL
- 5, MAJOR COLLECTOR
- 6, MINOR COLLECTOR

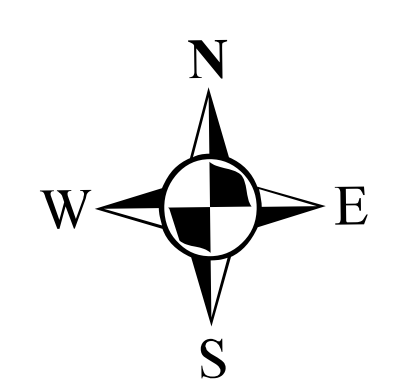


Southern Georgia Regional Commission Crash Data Heat Map



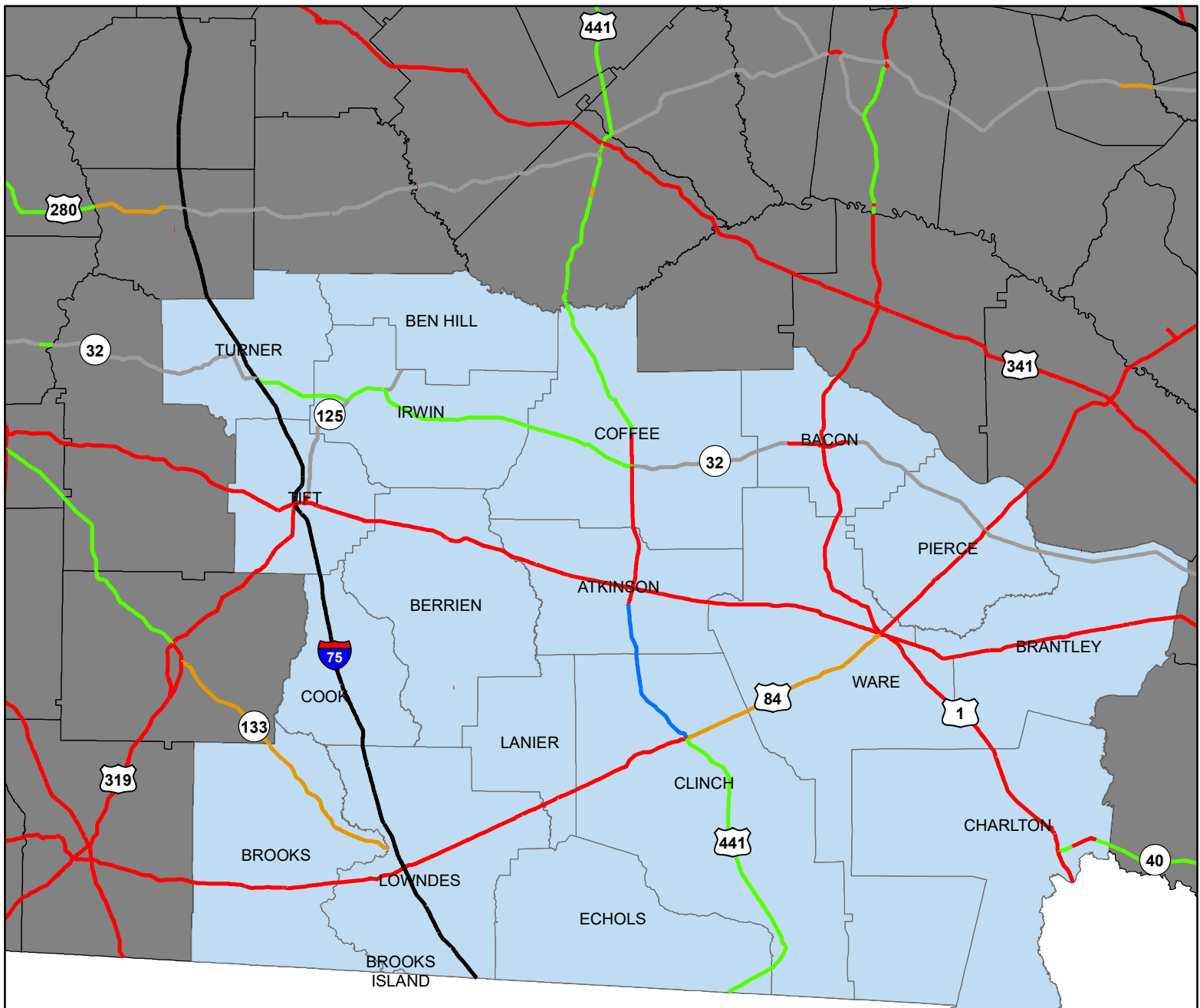
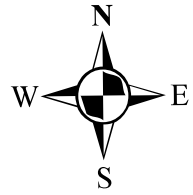
Legend

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









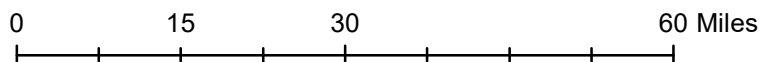
This map depicts concentrations of crashes in this community. This information can be used to identify high crash locations in this community, however, a detailed review of crash reports and analysis should be completed to recommend any improvements at these locations. Detailed crash reports and analysis are available from the Southern Georgia Regional Commission upon request.

Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP) Current Status January 2017



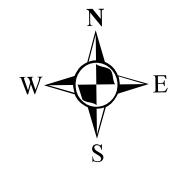
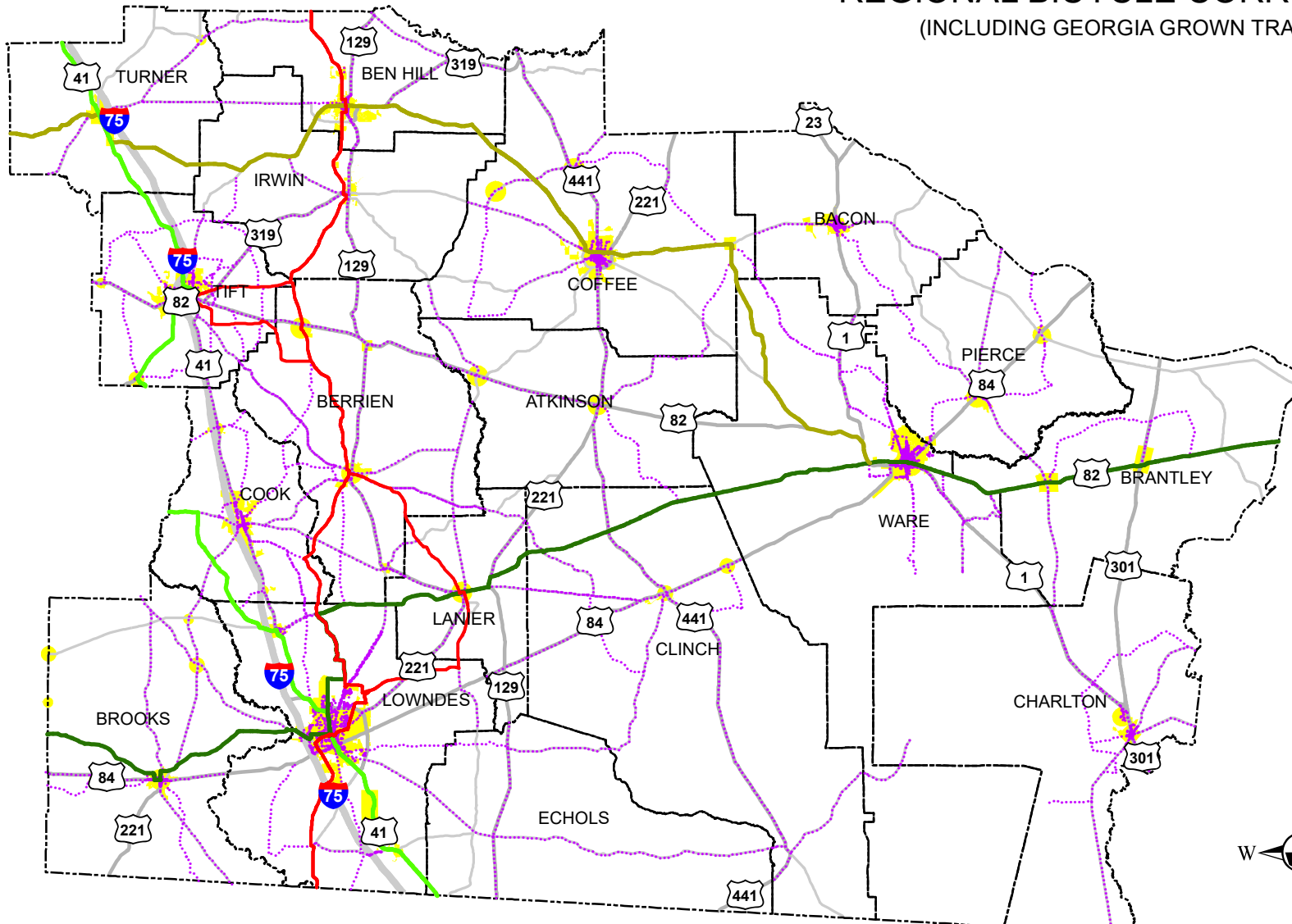
Legend

-  Interstates
-  Open
-  Under Construction
-  Preliminary Engineering
-  No Activities
-  Right of Way



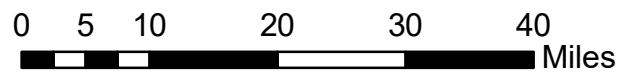
REGIONAL BICYCLE CORRIDORS

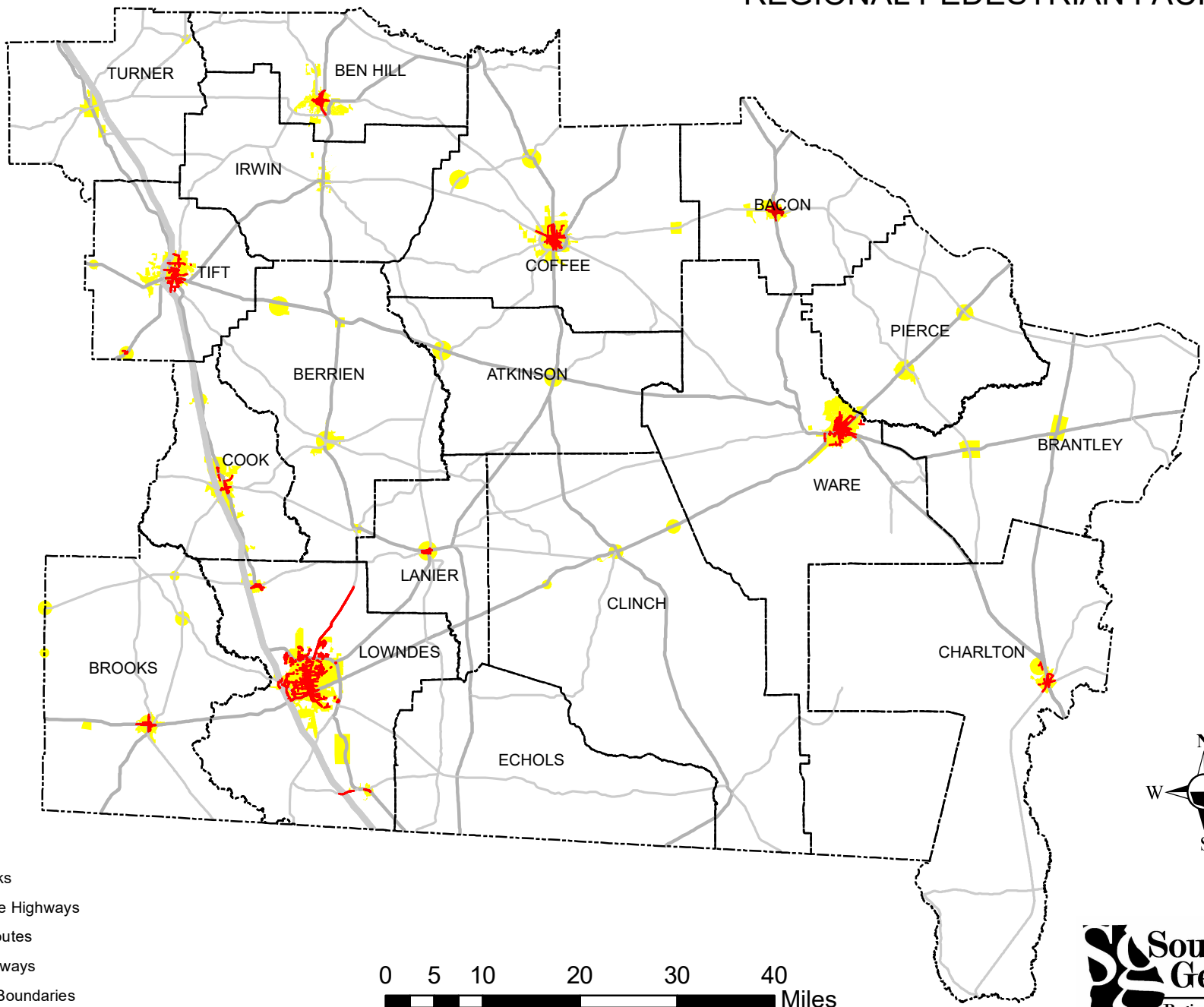
(INCLUDING GEORGIA GROWN TRAILS)



Legend

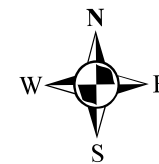
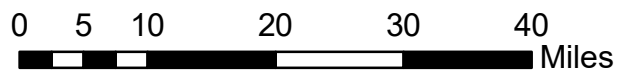
- Georgia Bicycle Route 10
- Georgia Bicycle Route 15
- Georgia Bicycle Route 20
- Proposed US Bike Route 15
- ⋯ Local Bike and Pedestrian Routes
- Interstate Highways
- State Routes
- US Highways
- Cities
- County Boundaries



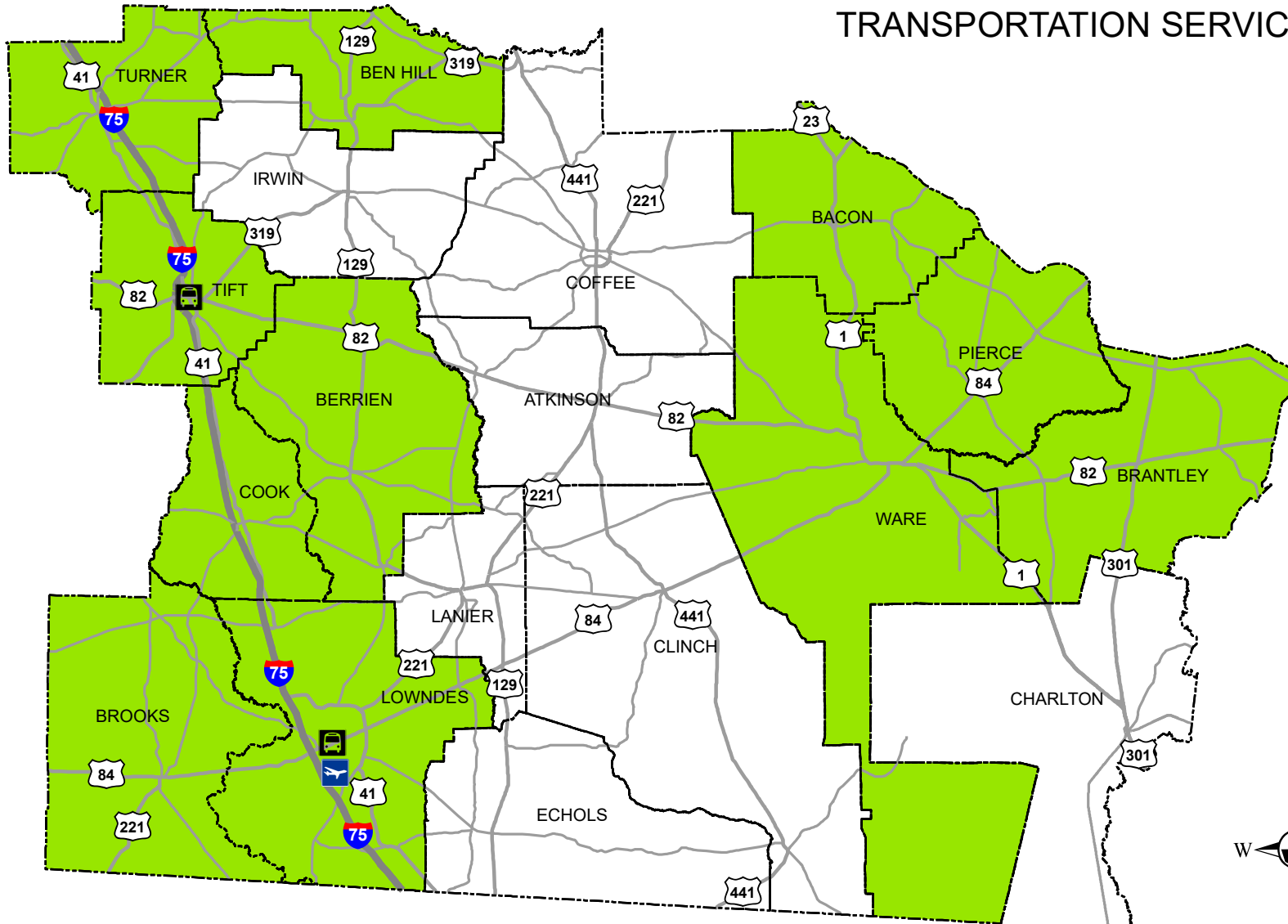


Legend

- Sidewalks
- Interstate Highways
- State Routes
- US Highways
- County Boundaries
- Cities

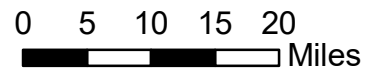


REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES









Legend

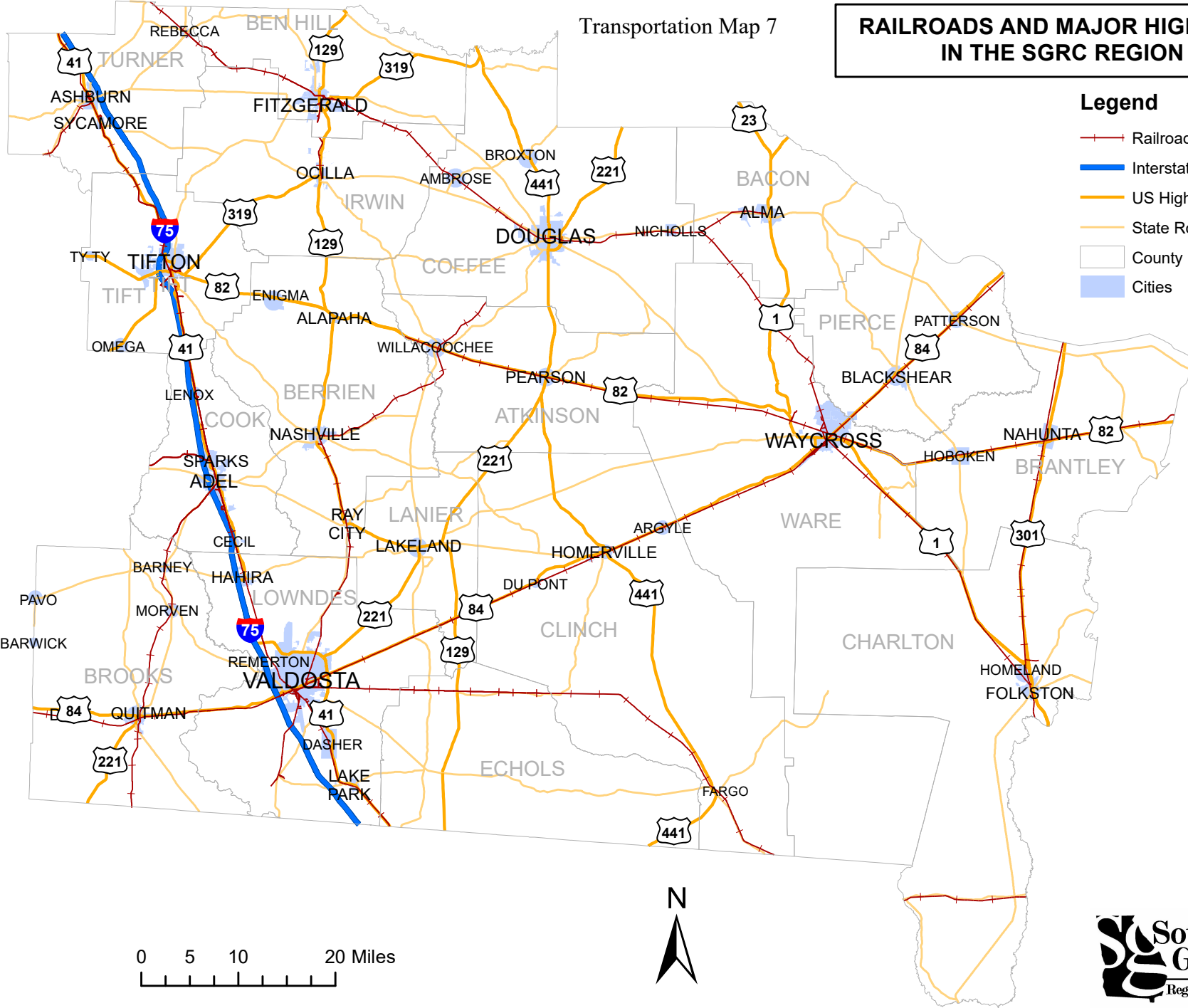
- Counties with on-demand public transportation
- Counties with no public transportation
- Greyhound Bus Stations
- Airports served by commercial airlines
- Interstate Highways
- State Routes
- US Highways
- County Boundaries



RAILROADS AND MAJOR HIGHWAYS IN THE SGRC REGION

Legend

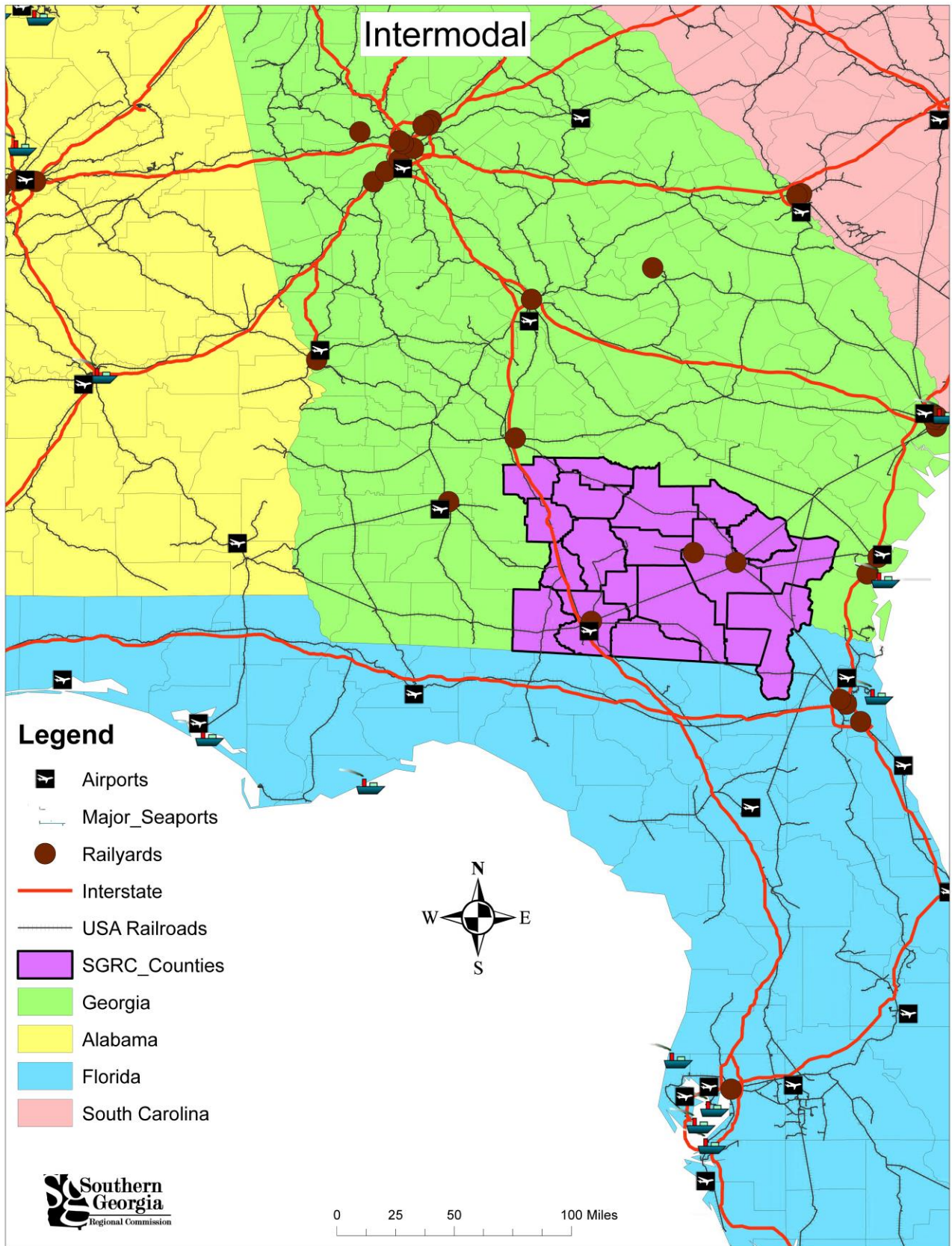
-  Railroads
-  Interstates
-  US Highways
-  State Routes
-  County Boundaries
-  Cities



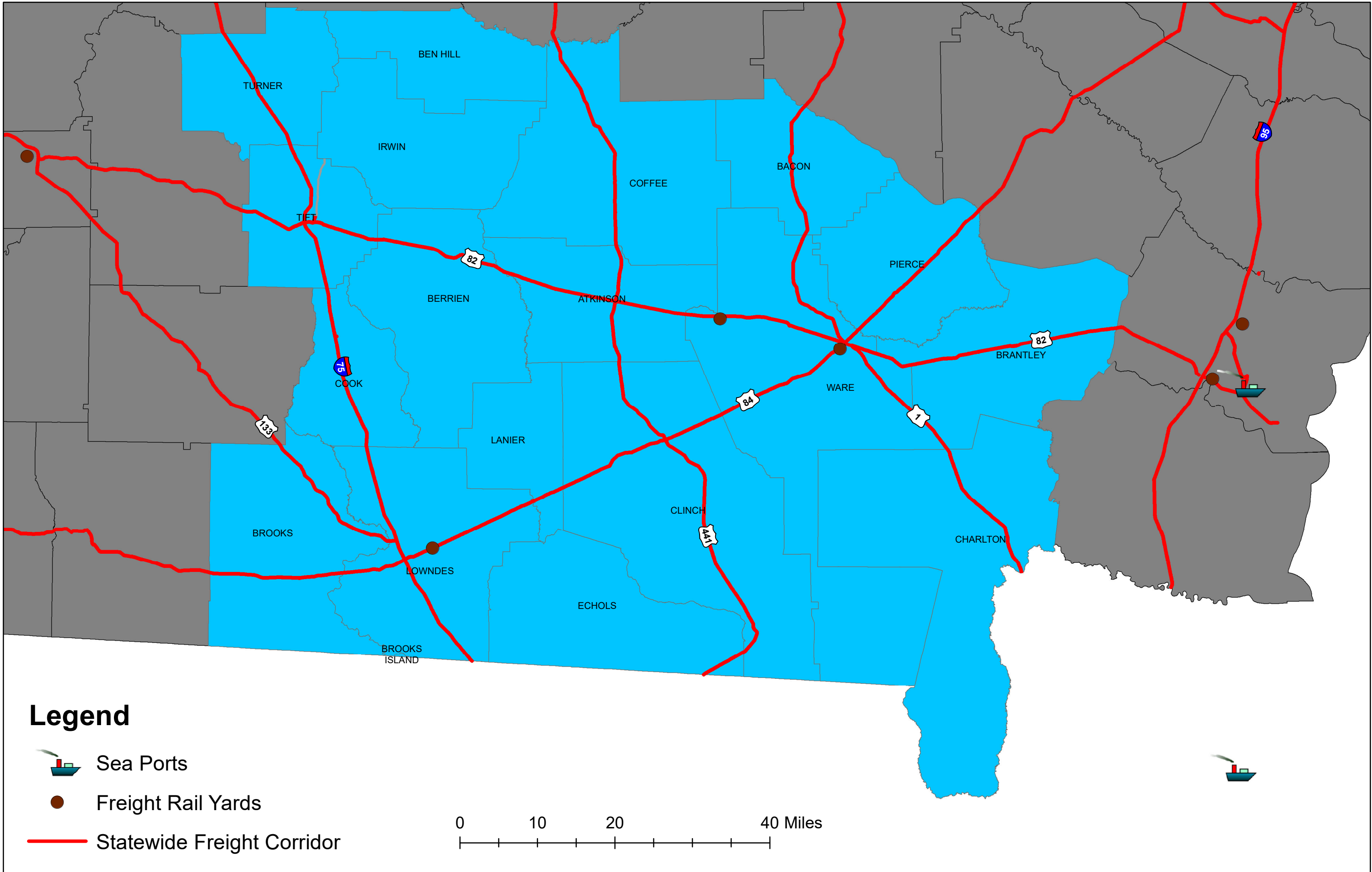
0 5 10 20 Miles



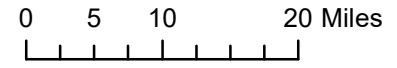
Transportation Map 8
Intermodal Freight Network










Georgia's Statewide Designated Freight Corridors

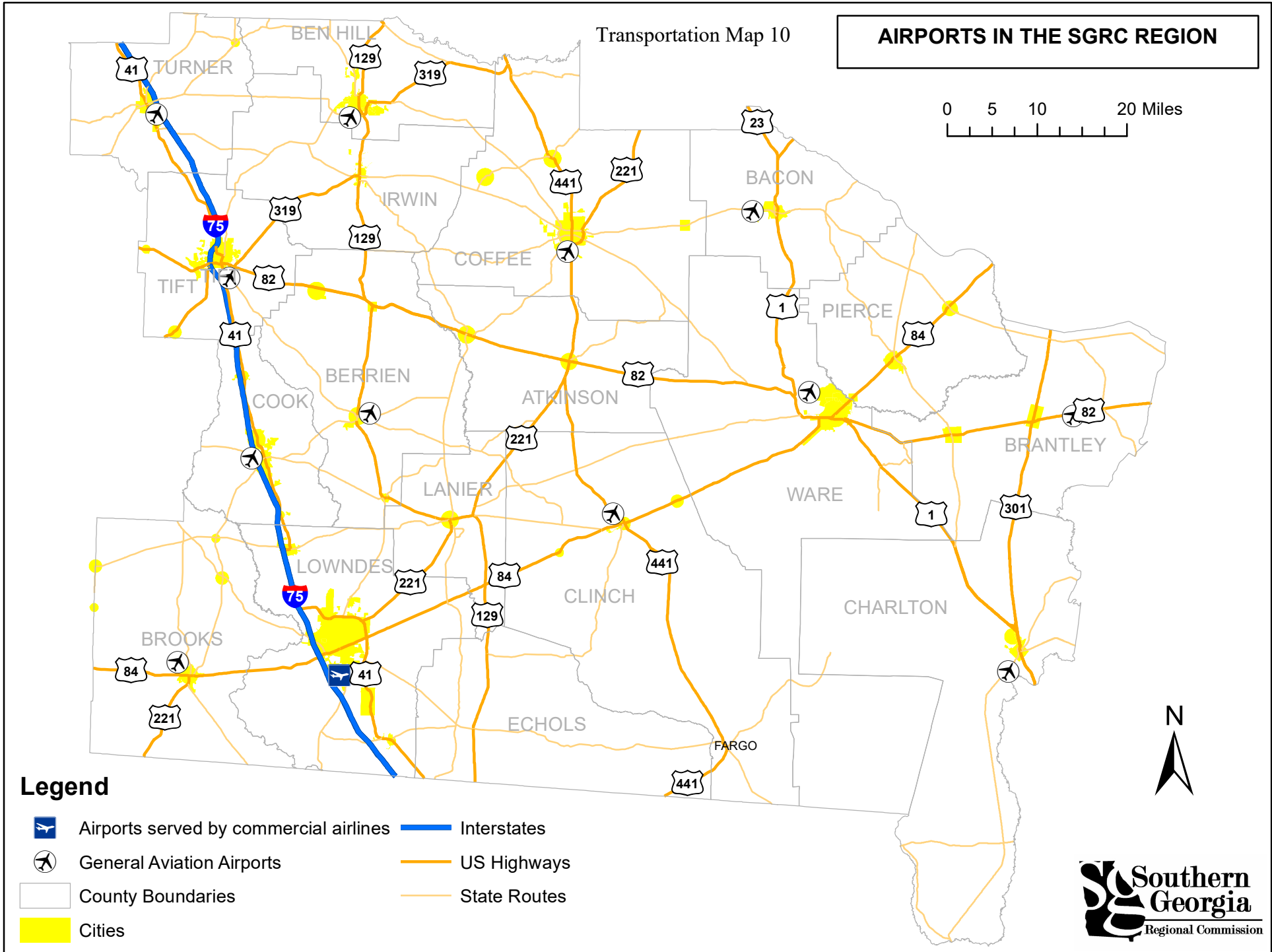


AIRPORTS IN THE SGRC REGION



Legend

-  Airports served by commercial airlines
-  Interstates
-  General Aviation Airports
-  US Highways
-  County Boundaries
-  State Routes
-  Cities



vi) Water Trails Map

The Water Trails Map (see the following page) shows designated Water Trails and boat ramps throughout the Region.

Water Trails and Boat Ramps

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:

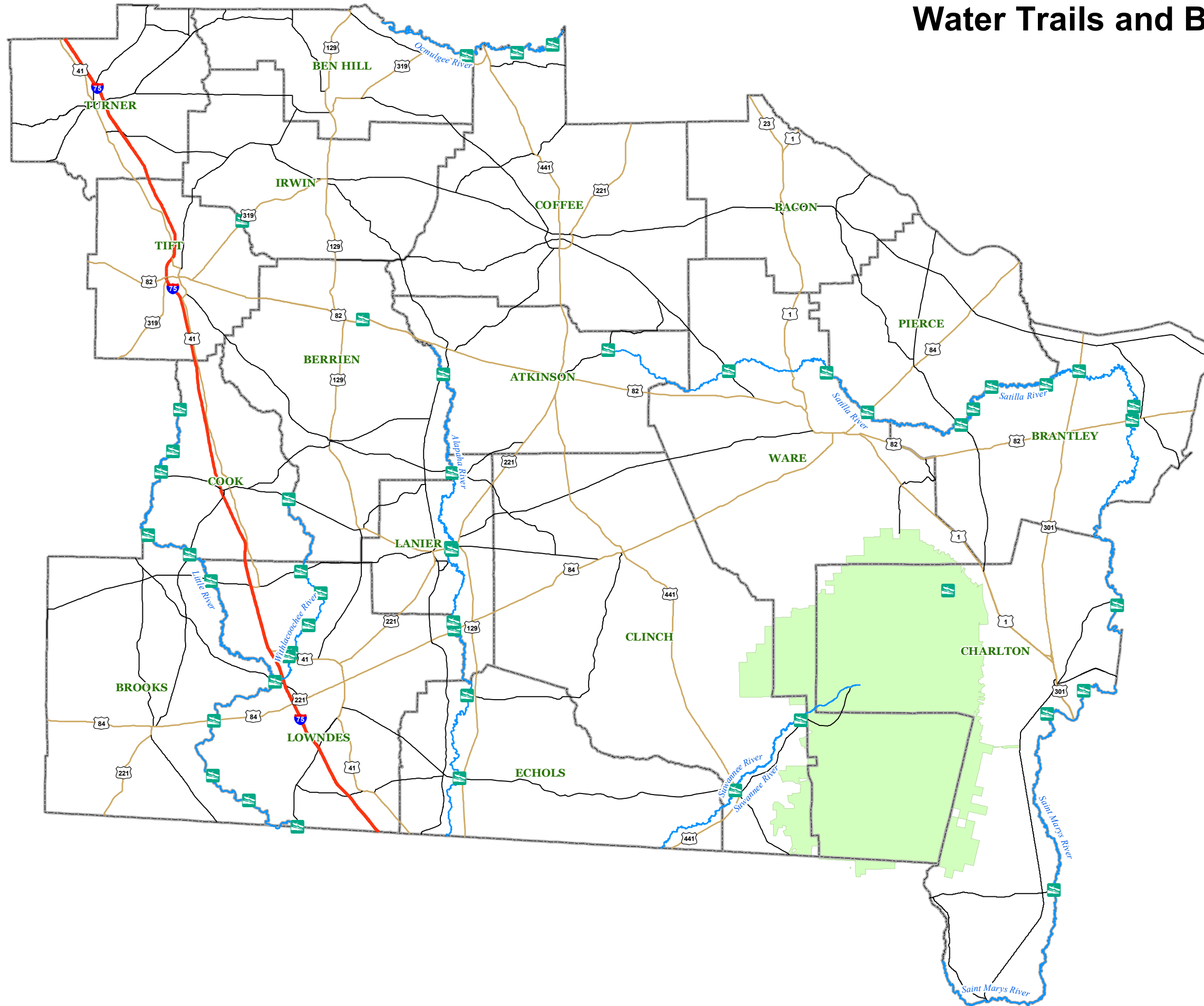
- Charlton (1)
- Clinch (2)

Withlacoochee River:

- Berrien (1)
- Brooks (1)
- Lowndes (8)

Legend

-  Boat Ramps
-  Water Trails
-  Interstates
-  State Routes
-  US Highways
-  SGRC Counties
-  Okefenokee NWR



vii) 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

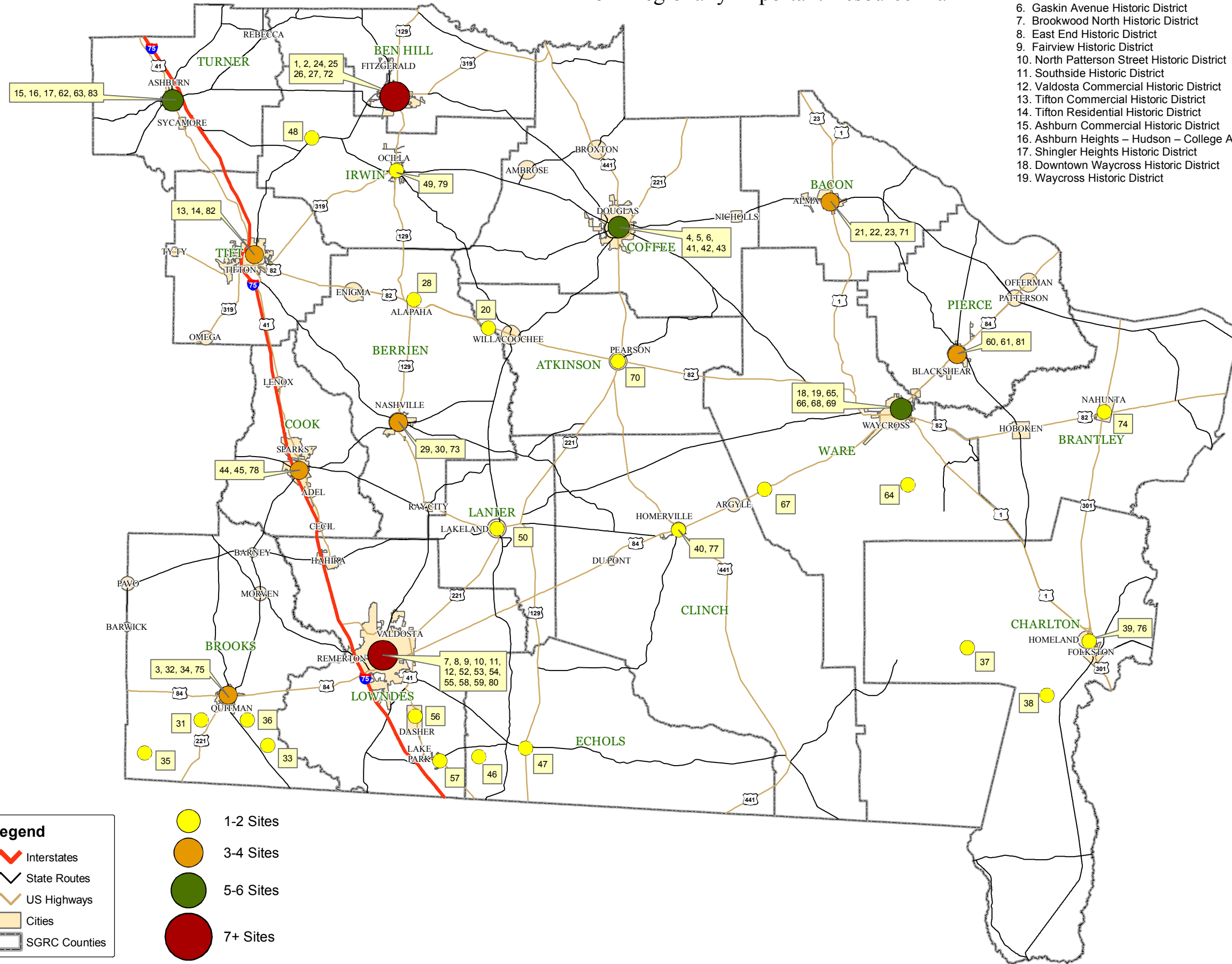
1. Fitzgerald Commercial Historic District
2. South Main – South Lee Streets Historic District
3. Quitman Historic District
4. Downtown Douglas Historic District
5. 11th District A & M School / South GA College Historic District
6. Gaskin Avenue Historic District
7. Brookwood North Historic District
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. Floyd's 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

Southern Georgia Regional Commission

0 5 10 Miles

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 the 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 meetings.

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

Other Participating Stakeholders:

Airport Authorities

Boards of Education

Chambers of Commerce

Citizens

Councils on Aging

Development Authorities

EMA/EMS

Fire Departments

Historic Preservation Boards

Hospitals/Medical Centers

Housing Authorities

Main Street Organizations

Moody Air Force Base

Police Departments

Southern Georgia Regional Commission

State and Federal Agencies

Universities/Colleges

Valdosta/Lowndes MPO

Workforce Development Boards

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 email.
2. **Facebook:** All listening session dates were published on the SGRC Facebook page where it was also possible to submit comments.
3. **Regional Plan Webpage:** All dates for listening sessions, 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 24, 2017, in Pearson, GA. The location was chosen due to its centrality within the Region.
5. **Listening Sessions:** The Regional Commission held four listening sessions throughout the Region:

Session 1: September 21, 2017, in Valdosta, GA. The purpose of the meeting was to familiarize the participants with the Regional Plan update process and undertake the SWOT analysis for the plan.

Session 2: October 19, 2017, in Waycross, GA. The SWOT analysis was completed at this listening session and needs and opportunities were prioritized. Draft policies were developed on how to approach addressing needs and opportunities over the planning period.

Session 3: December 7, 2017, in Tifton, GA. Policies were discussed further including implementation activities to further the plans and address the priority needs and opportunities.

Session 4: January 18, 2018, in Douglas, GA. Areas requiring particular attention were reviewed, defined and discussed at this listening session.

6. Further stakeholder involvement opportunities were provided at the Kick-off Public Meeting at the Regional Commission Board Meeting on August 24, 2018, 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.

Steering Committee Members:

Latrice Bennett	Andy Hutto	Danny Saturday
Nancy Bobbitt	Barbara King	Matt Seale
David Boland	Sandy Lumpkin	Adam Smith
James Brown	Dawn Main	Keith Stone
Lisa Coley	Brian Marlowe	Gary Strickland
Jason Davenport	Sam McCard	Albert Studstill
Nick Denham	April McDuffie	Janet Studstill
Bettye Drayton-Williams	Janice McKinnon	Doc Sumner
Buddy Duke	Roger Metts	Steve Taylor
Jana Dyke	Vivian Miller-Cody	Grady Thompson
Joyce Evans	Carlos Nelson	Stevi Thompson
James Everett	Mona Paulk	Richard Thornton
Dennis Fender	Oscar Paulk	Ashley Tye
Lace Futch	Dwight Purvis	Nick Valent
Cheryl Garner	John Quarterman	Mary Lott Walker
Willie Hardee	Jody Redding	Joel Whitley

SGRC staff who participated in the Regional Plan Update:

- Julia Shewchuk, Planning Director
- Loretta Hylton, Senior Planner
- Ariel Godwin, Senior Planner
- Sherry Davidson, Local Government Services Director

Sign-in sheets and meeting invitations

KICK-OFF MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

Southern Georgia Regional Commission

Council Meeting, Pearson, Ga
24-Aug-17

COUNCIL

Atkinson

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lace Futch
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bettye Drayton-Williams
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Janice McKinnon

Bacon

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Andy Hutto
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Peggy Murphy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lisa Coley

Ben Hill

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Steve Taylor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Masee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jason Dunn

Berrien

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Doc Sumner
<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael Richbourg
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Janet Studstill

Brantley

<input type="checkbox"/>	Skipper Harris
<input type="checkbox"/>	Diane Morgan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Richard Thornton

Brooks

<input type="checkbox"/>	Myra Exum
<input type="checkbox"/>	James Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vacant

Charlton

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	James Everett
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lee Gowen
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dawn Malin

Clinch

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Roger Metts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tom Kennedy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Willie Hardee

Coffee

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Oscar Paulk
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vacant
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Adam Smith

Cook

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dwight Purvis
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Buddy Duke
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vacant

Echols

<input type="checkbox"/>	Bobby Walker
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cheryl Garner

Irwin

<input type="checkbox"/>	Joey Whitley
<input type="checkbox"/>	Matt Seale
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mona Paulk

Lanier

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dennis Fender
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bill Darsey
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sandy Sanders

Lowndes

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joyce Evans
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vivian Miller-Cody
<input type="checkbox"/>	Anthony Payton

Pierce

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Neal Bennett
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mary Lott Walker
<input type="checkbox"/>	Andy Brannen

Tift

<input type="checkbox"/>	Grady Thompson
<input type="checkbox"/>	Julie Smith
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brian Marlowe

Turner

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sam McCard
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sandy Lumpkin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stevi Thompson

Ware

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carlos Nelson
<input type="checkbox"/>	John Knox
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Barbara King

Governor's Office

<input type="checkbox"/>	Vacant
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gary Strickland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vacant

Lt. Governor's Office

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Keith Stone
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Speaker's Office

<input type="checkbox"/>	Vacant
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KICK-OFF MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION COUNCIL

Council Meeting, Pearson, Ga
24-Aug-17

GUEST

STAFF

John S. Darterman

Wanda Joff

Jody Beddley

Lisa Cribb

Deanna Roberts

Chris Strom

Danny Sansom

Tish Mercer

Albert Studstill

Michelle Frey

Ashley Tye

REX PARSEY

Jess. J. J. J.

J. Skewels

Lauren Spame

Nancy Bolittle
(Sandra Isokson)

Kelly Smith

Lina K. Anderson

Kelly Lane

Diana Hanks

Patricia Bennett

Eva Boyd

Greg Speckard

Jana Dyke

W. F. Giddens

**Southern Georgia Regional Commission
2018 Regional Plan Update
Workshop 1 – SGRC Valdosta
September 21, 2017**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Email</u>
Rip Taylor	Charleston Co	JKT628@gmail.com
Molly STEVENSON	LOWNDES COUNTY	mstevenson@lowndescounty.com
Neil Ginty	Lanier County	neilginty@icloud.com
Teresa Barber	City of Lenox	cityoflenox@gmail.com
Charles Nianno	SGRC	CNianno@sgrc.us
Corey Hull	SGRC	chull@sgrc.us
Datoshun Patrick	City of Tifton	dpatrick@tifton.net
Amanda Peacock	6DEC	apeacock@georgiad.org
Loretta Hylton	SGRC	lhylton@sgrc.us
Lucile Middlebrooks	Ocilla	cityclerk@cityofocilla.net
LISA COLLINS	COOK CO.	lisacollins@cookcountycdc.com
Wilton Deloach	City of Waycross	wdeloach@waycrossga.com
Vivian Miller-Cady	Valdosta city	vmiller-cady@valdostacity.com
Dr. S. Quano	WALUS	contact@suwanneejournal.com
Julia	SGRC	
Sherry Davidson	SGRC	
Amy Martin	SGRC	

**Southern Georgia Regional Commission
2018 Regional Plan Update - Workshop
October 19, 2017 Waycross Georgia**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Email</u>
Joseph (G.) Taylor	City of Homeland	720 854968	JKT628@gmail.com
Wilton DeLoach	City of Waycross	912-281-3793	WdeLoach@waycrossga.com (No email numbers)
Ryne Nimmo	SGRC	677 300-0914	rynemmo@sgrc.us
PIE SNELL	CPTC		PSNELL@CONSTALPINES.EDU
Andy Hutto	Bacon Co. Commission	282-4537	andy@baconcounty.org
Korretta Hylton	SGRC	229-333-5077	korretah@bcsgrc.us
Wanda Taft	SGRC AAA	912-285-6097	wtaft@sgrc.us
Bethie D. Williams	City of Pearson	912-422-3392	Mayor@cityofpearson.com
Bridget Delaney	SGRC AAA	912-285-4097	bdelaney@sgrc.us
Lisa Gribb	SGRC	229-300-0915	lrgribb@sgrc.us
Julia Stenschul	SGRC		jstenschul@sgrc.us

**Southern Georgia Regional Commission
2018 Regional Plan Update - Workshop
October 19, 2017 Waycross Georgia**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Email</u>
Matt Martin	Cof. Val...	259-3563	✓
Dawn James	Clinch Co Dev Auth	912-657-4872	ghants@growclinds.com
Jacklyn James	Clinch BOC	912-487-2662	clinchcountyga@gmail.com
Shava Boatright	Charlha BOC	912-870-0050	Sboatright@charlha.com

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
2018 Regional Plan Update
Listening Session #3, Tifton, GA 12/7/2017

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Darwin Peavy	Tiftarea YALTA	391-9622	dpeavy@tiftareayma.org
Julie Smith	City of Tifton	334-1776	Julie Smith@Tifton.net
Koretha Hopton	SGRC	333-5277	khopton@sgrc.us
Julia Skewoch	SGRC	333-5277	jskewoch@sgrc.us
Ryan Alimino	SGRC	333-5277	ralimino@sgrc.us
John S. Quander	WVATS	222-2101	contact@wvats.net

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
 2018 Regional Plan Update
 Listening Session #3, Tifton, GA 12/7/2017

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Pete Puzenski	City of Tifton	(229) 391-3908	ppuzenski@tifton.net
Wilton DeLoach	City of Waycross	912-298-2955	wdeLoach@waycrossga.com
Joseph Taylor	City of Homerville	780-857-4968	JT628@gmail.com
Kelly Daniell	Southern Regional	781-941-1675	Kolaniell@southernregional.edu
JASIN JAVENPORN	LCBOL	229 671-2130	JAVENPORN@SANDHILLCOUNTY.COM
Gwen Hanks	CCPA - Clinch	912-487-6572	ghanks@growcclinch.com
Allyson Bengel	Charter BOC	912-496-7574	alpbengel@charter.com

**Southern Georgia Regional Commission
Regional Plan Update 2018
Listening Session #4, City of Douglas, January 18, 2018**

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Dale Batten	City of Douglas	912-389-3433	dbatten@cityofdouglas.com
Joseph K Taylor	City of Homeland	912-390-9325	JKT628@gmail.com
Donna Ryan	Lincoln County Sch	912-487-5321	dryan@lincolncounty.com
Rylee Nimmo	SGRC		Cecilia@sgrc
Danna Shrouder	City of Douglas	912-389-3432	dshrouder@cityofdouglas.com
Georgia Henderson	City of Douglas	912-383-2877	ghenderson@cityofdouglas.com
Alpha Benefield	Charlton Co. SOC	912-288-4688	aphybe@ga600.com

Julia Shewchuk

From: Julia Shewchuk
Sent: Monday, August 21, 2017 11:21 AM
To: Amy Hitt (amy.hitt@piercecounityga.gov); Ann Peterson; Ashley Topley ; Becky Jo Reyes ; Bernice Pascal; Brenda Exum; Brenda Ferrell; Bruni Hudson; Cassie Morris; Cristina Evans; Darlene Williamson; Deitra Powell ; Diane Westberry ; Donna Prather; Donna Studstill; Helen Gilliard; Jackie Jordan (nashvillecityclerk@windstream.net); Jane Douglas; Janet Daniels; Jennifer Nobles; Jessica Jones ; Julie Dinkins; Kellie Overmier; Kristi Morgan (JL Roper); Latrice Wilson; Lessie Youngblood ; Linda Henderson; Lisa Johnson; Lisa Mashburn; Lucille Middlebrooks ; Lynn Reed ; Margaret Hampton; Mary Lee Sweat; Mary Sayers; Mary Vickers; Michelle Cooper; Nell Ford; Nina Lott; Paige Dukes ; Patricia Battle (irwinclerk@windstream.net); Patricia Williams; Peggy McClelland; Ray Cunningham ; Rene' Herrin ; Rhonda Rowe; Sandra Smallwood; Sandy Rentz; Sheree Hickman; Sherrie Mikell ; Sherry Boyett; Shirley Britt; Shirley Teston; Sonya Philpot; Stephanie Boyd ; Susan Fowler; Suzanne Manning ; Tabitha Fowler; Teresa Barber; Teresa Bolden; Tonia Studstill; Tracie Vickers; Vicki Parrish; Wynetta Bolder; Yolanda Baker; Yvette White ; Yvonne Staten; Amanda Peacock (APeacock@georgia.org); Andrea Schrujjer; Andrea Taylor; Bob Hereford; Brian Marlowe; Crissy Staley; Dawn Malin; Dennis G. Lee (dlee@southernregional.edu); Ellen Hill; Gwen F. Hanks (ghanks@growclinch.com); Jana W. Dyke (jana@wwda.us); Jason Dunn (dunnjason@mediacombb.net); Jenny Robbins; Jerry Connell; Kathy Walker; Kelly Lane; Kevin Ellis ; Lequrica Gaskins; Lidell Greenway (lidell.greenway@wiregrass.edu); Lisa Collins; Lisa Cribb; Lori Wiggins Hensey; Mara Register ; Martha Douglas; Matt Carter; Michelle Shaw; Myrna Ballard (E-mail); Neesa Williams (neesawilliams@mediacombb.net); Pattie Merritt; Pete Snell (psnell@coastalpines.edu); Phil Martin; piercechamberofcommerce@gmail.com; Richard Thornton; Sandy Sanders ; Scott Purvis; Sloan Fountain; Stevi Thompson; Tammy Vickers; Tiffany Holmes; Varian Brown; Al Crace (al.crace@atc.cc); Capt. Mike Terrell ; Faye Hughes (cookgov@windstream.net); Horace Hudgins; Jaclyn James ; Jason Rubenbauer (county.manager@piercecounityga.gov); Jim Carter ; Joe Pritchard (E-mail); John Flythe (jflythe@windstream.net); Jonathan Sumner ; Justin Devane; Larry Hanson; latrice.b@yahoo.com; Mandy Luke (mandyluke@windstream.net); Michael Felts (mfeltsquitman@gmail.com); Nan Mikell; Neil Ginty; Pender Lloyd (penderlloyd@yahoo.com); Pete Pyrzenski (ppyrzenski@tifton.net); Raphel Maddox (rmaddox@waycrossga.com); sboatright@charltoncountyga.gov; Sedic Carithers (sedric_carithers@yahoo.com); smoye@warecounty.com; Terrell Jacobs (tjacobs@cityofdouglas.com); Tom Wirth; Wesley Vickers (wvickers@coffeecountygov.com); Carroll Griffin (carrollhgriffin@gmail.com); Clayton Milligan; Crance, Angela; Debbie Hobdy (debbiehobdy@hotmail.com); Dr. Cason; Harriet Crum (hcrum83@yahoo.com); Jim Galloway (jgalloway@flyvaldosta.com); jparker51@gmail.com; Lu Williams (lwilliams@industrialauthority.com); Michael O. Cooper (mcooper@asaeng.com); Phill Hubbard; Ray Sable (rasable@valdosta.edu); Richard Saeger (rtsaeger@valdosta.edu); Robert Wilbers (rjwilbey@msn.com); Ronald Skrine; Stan Crance; Steve Barnes; Tessa Carder (tmcarder8610@yahoo.com); Vanessa FLucas; Walter Sandlin (sandlinpas@bellsouth.net); Wes Taylor; William A. Branham (ceobill2000@yahoo.com); Alex Lee (alee@fmb.net); Andrew.Edwards@fhwa.dot.gov; ann-marie.day@dot.gov; Bill Slaughter; G. R. Holton (grholton@yahoo.com); Jason Davenport; jgayle@valdostacity.com; Larry Hanson; Lisa Cribb; Mike Fletcher (mfletcher@lowndescounty.com); Tom McQueen (tmcqueen@dot.ga.gov); Brent Thomas (bthomas@dot.ga.gov); Danny Weeks (dweeks@lowndescounty.com); Gwen Weaver; Jeff Hill; Little, Aries; Meeks,Michael W; Pat Collins (pcollins@valdostacity.com); Adam Smith; Andy Brannen (creeksideberryfarmllc@gmail.com); Andy Hutto; Anthony

To: Payton (capayton55@gmail.com); Barbara King ; Bettye Drayton-Williams (bettyejo@planttel.net); Bill Darsey; Buddy Duke (b.duke@mchsi.com); Carlos Nelson; Doc Sumner; Dwight Purvis (hayman4750@yahoo.com); Gary Strickland; Grady Thompson (miriam.jordan@tiftcounty.org); James Brown; James Everett (ccchairman13@gmail.com); James Everett (jevphotochristianbooks@windstream.net); Janet Studstill (berrienchamber.janet@windstream.net); Janice McKinnon; Joey Whitley (irwinco@mediacombb.net); John Knox; Joyce Evans; Julie Smith; Keith Stone; Lee Gowen; Lisa Coley; Marcia Kilmark; Mark Massee; Mary Lott Walker (marylwalker@bellsouth.net); Matt Seale (matt@irwinomics.com); Matt Seale (mayor@cityofocillaga.net); Michael Richbourg; Mona Paulk; Myra Exum; Neal Bennett; Oscar Paulk; Peggy Murphy ; Sam McCard (smccard@sgbconline.com); Skipper Harris; Steve Taylor ; Tom Kennedy; Vicki Parrish; Vivian Miller-Cody (vmiller-cody@valdostacity.com); Willie Hardee Jr.; Satilla Riverwatch; St. Marys Riverkeeper; Suwannee Riverkeeper

Cc: Sherry Davidson; Ariel Godwin; Loretta Hylton; pemd.opqga@dca.ga.gov; Tish Hardee; Julia Shewchuk

Subject: 2018 Regional Plan 5 year Update Kick-off Meeting 8/24/2017

Attachments: 2018 DRAFT Regional Plan Update Work Book 08172017.pdf

Importance: High

Good Morning Everyone,

This email is to inform you that the Southern Georgia Regional Commission is formally kicking off its 2018 5-year update of the SGRC Regional Plan. The initial kick-off public meeting will be held during the regular SGRC Board meeting on:

**Thursday, August 24, 2017
11 a.m. or soon thereafter
City of Pearson Sports Complex and Civic Center, 786 Austin Ave East, Pearson**

The purpose of this kick-off hearing is to brief potential stakeholders on the process that we will use to develop, revise and update the current regional plan, opportunities for participation and to obtain input into the proposed planning process.

Here is a brief summary of the process:

1. The due date for the 2018 Update to be adopted is July 2018, therefore we are aiming to submit a final draft of the update to DCA for review in April of 2018.
2. DCA is in the process of adopting new Regional Planning Requirements within the near future and we will be following the new draft guidelines for the update.
3. The current full comprehensive plan plus its recent annual amendments have been formatted into the format outline proposed by the new guidelines and is attached to this email as our draft workbook to follow throughout the update process. Copies are also available for download from our website at www.sgrc.us and our Facebook Page SGRC Information Sharing Center. A limited amount of hard copies will be available at the Board meeting on August 24th. Subsequent updates during the process will also be made available on our website, Facebook, through our email notifications and by request.

4. Currently there are three stakeholder/interested party workshops scheduled throughout the Region to provide opportunities for public participation and input. The workshops are open to the public:

- a) September 14th, 9:30a – 12:30p, Valdosta SGRC offices
- b) October 19th, 9:30a – 12:30p, Waycross SGRC offices
- c) January 11, 2018, 9:30a – 12:30p, City of Douglas City Hall Commission Chambers.

Each workshop will review, discuss and update different areas of the current Regional Plan so we request that everyone who would like to participate, attend all three of these workshops. Additional workshops may be scheduled as needed to receive additional input. We want to make sure the final regional plan is representative of the region and its communities so that all communities will be interested in helping to implement it.

5. We will also put together a steering committee of 10 – 20 interested stakeholders who will be meeting monthly throughout the process to guide us in the development and provide feedback on intermediate drafts and the ongoing process. We will be asking for volunteers to be on this steering committee. If you are interested, please let us know.
6. Please feel free to forward this email to any member any community within the Region who you feel may be interested in participating in any of the workshops starting September 14th in Valdosta. Please also feel free to forward us their email so we may include them into our email list.
7. All notifications and information will be distributed electronically, so please make sure we have your correct email contact.

Please don't hesitate to e-mail or call me with any questions. We look forward to seeing you on the 24th.

Best Regards,

Julia Shewchuk, AICP
Planning Director | Southern Georgia Regional Commission
229-333-5277
229-300-0924
www.sgrc.us

Julia Shewchuk

Subject: 1st Regional Plan Workshop September 21st, 2017 9:30a Valdosta SGRC Offices

From: Julia Shewchuk [mailto:jshewchuk@sgrc.us]
Sent: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 4:31 PM
To: Julia Shewchuk <jshewchuk@sgrc.us>
Cc: Sherry Davidson <sdavidson@sgrc.us>
Subject: 1st Regional Plan Workshop September 21st, 2017 9:30a Valdosta SGRC Offices
Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

A quick-follow up to our email from yesterday rescheduling the 1st Regional Plan Update Workshop to

**September 21st, 2017 9:30a to 12:30p
Valdosta SGRC Offices at 327 W. Savannah Ave**

We hope that by then all traffic lights will be working, all schools will be back open and power restored to the majority of communities.

The first workshop will cover the following topics:

1. Review the existing issues and opportunities within the Region and determine whether they are still applicable or if any changes (deletions, additions, modifications) need to be made. The sections concerning Education and Senior Services & Aging do not contain any issues and opportunities as of yet (they were not part of the original Regional Plan), and will therefore need to be developed.
2. Based on the revised issues and opportunities for all sections (Economic Development, Natural & Cultural Resources, Community Facilities & Services, Housing, Land Use & Transportation, Intergovernmental Coordination, Education, Senior Services & Aging) we will need to develop corresponding Regional Goals for each element. This is an exciting opportunity to express your vision for the Region in the form of specific goals to be reached in the next 10 years.

A copy of the Regional Plan Workbook is available for download on our website www.sgrc.us, you can request it from us directly via email, and we will bring hard copies to the workshop.

We are hoping that you all will be able to come to bring and share your communities' knowledge, experience and input to the new Regional Plan to make it truly regional and applicable to all. The following workshops in the three or four workshop series all will build upon each other, so we hope that you will be able to attend all. We will repeat the dates for all workshops at the first workshop or just email us for more information.

We are looking very much forward to seeing you on the 21st of September, hope you all are safe, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Julia

Julia Shewchuk

Subject: Attention - 2nd Regional Plan Workshop October 19th, 2017 at 10:00a in Waycross SGRC Offices

From: Julia Shewchuk [mailto:jshewchuk@sgrc.us]

Sent: Monday, October 09, 2017 12:56 PM

To: Julia Shewchuk <jshewchuk@sgrc.us>

Cc: Sherry Davidson <sdavidson@sgrc.us>; Loretta Hylton <lhylton@sgrc.us>; Ariel Godwin <agodwin@sgrc.us>; Tish Hardee <timercer@sgrc.us>; Wanda Taft <wtaft@sgrc.us>; Roberta Lovett <rlovett@sgrc.us>; Michelle Frey <mfrey@sgrc.us>; Corey Hull <chull@sgrc.us>; Chris Strom <cstrom@sgrc.us>; Amy Martin <amartin@sgrc.us>; Kimberly Hobbs <kkhobbs@sgrc.us>

Subject: Attention - 2nd Regional Plan Workshop October 19th, 2017 at 10:00a in Waycross SGRC Offices

Importance: High

Good Afternoon Everyone,

This email is a quick reminder to attend the 2nd Regional Plan Update Workshop in Waycross, Georgia, on:

October 19th, 2017 10:00 a.m. to 12:30p

Waycross SGRC Offices at 1725 South Georgia Parkway West, Waycross, GA, 31503, 912-285-6097

This second workshop will cover the following topics:

1. Quick review of the revised issues and opportunities as developed during the first workshop in Valdosta, Ga, on September 21, 2018. The revisions are listed on pages 36 – 44 of the revised workbook. The issues and opportunities highlighted in red were deemed to have first priority, with the ones highlighted in blue were judged as second priority.
2. Based on the revised issues and opportunities for all sections (Economic Development, Natural & Cultural Resources, Community Facilities & Services, Housing, Land Use & Transportation, Intergovernmental Coordination, Education, Senior Services & Aging) review of the draft Regional Goals for each element. The draft goals for your review are listed on pages 7 – 11 of the revised workbook.
3. We will start a review of the policies and action items, which then will be continued in the third workshop possibly in November or December. Please check your calendars for available dates.

A copy of the latest version of the Regional Plan Workbook is available for download on our website www.sgrc.us, and we will bring hard copies to the workshop. Unfortunately it is too large to attach to email.

We are hoping that you all will be able to come to bring and share your communities' knowledge, experience and input to the new Regional Plan to make it truly regional and applicable to all. The following workshops in the three or four workshop series all will build upon each other, so we hope

that you will be able to attend all. We will repeat the dates for all workshops at this next workshop or just email us for more information.

We are looking very much forward to seeing you on the 19th of October, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Julia

Julia Shewchuk, AICP
Planning Director | Southern Georgia Regional Commission
229-333-5277
229-300-0924
www.sgrc.us

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Julia Shewchuk

From: Julia Shewchuk
Sent: Monday, December 4, 2017 1:14 PM
To: Julia Shewchuk
Cc: Sherry Davidson; Amy Martin; Loretta Hylton; Charles R. Nimmo
Subject: Reminder: Invitation to third workshop of the 2018 Regional Plan Update on December 7th in Tifton, GA

Importance: High

Good Afternoon Everyone,

This email is a quick reminder to attend the **3rd** Regional Plan Update Workshop in Tifton, Georgia, on:

December 7th, 2017 10:00 a.m. to 12:30p
Tifton-Tift County Chamber of Commerce, 100 Central Avenue, Tifton, GA 31793 at 229-382-6200

This third workshop will cover the following topics:

1. Review and discussion of the current Minimum Standards and Standards of Excellence as they were adopted for the current Regional Plan and comments for changes, additions or deletions (pages 44 – 47 of the Regional Plan Draft Workbook).
2. If time available we will start looking at the current Areas Requiring Special Attention.

A copy of the **latest version of the Regional Plan Workbook** is available for download on our website <http://www.sgrc.us/regional-plan.html>, and we will bring a few hard copies of the Minimum Standards and Standards of Excellence to the workshop. Unfortunately, the entire Regional Plan Draft itself it is too large to attach to email.

We are hoping that you all will be able to come to bring and share your communities' knowledge, experience and input to the new Regional Plan to make it truly regional and applicable to all. The following workshops in the three or four workshop series all will build upon each other, so we hope that you will be able to attend all. We will repeat the dates for all workshops at this next workshop or just email us for more information.

We are looking very much forward to seeing you on the 7th of December in Tifton, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Julia

Julia Shewchuk, AICP
Planning Director | Southern Georgia Regional Commission
229-333-5277
229-300-0924

Julia Shewchuk

From: Julia Shewchuk
Sent: Monday, January 8, 2018 2:19 PM
To: Julia Shewchuk
Cc: Sherry Davidson; Loretta Hylton; Ariel Godwin
Subject: Reminder: Invitation to fourth listening session workshop of the 2018 Regional Plan Update on January 18th in Douglas, Georgia

Importance: High

Good Afternoon Everyone,

This email is a quick reminder to attend the 4th Regional Plan Update Workshop in **the City of Douglas**, Georgia, on:

January 18th, 2018 10:00 a.m. to 12:30p

**City of Douglas City Hall, 224 East Bryan Street, Douglas, GA 31533,
912-389-3401**

This fourth workshop will cover the following topics:

1. Future Development Maps, Conservation Maps, and Areas Requiring Special Attention Areas and Map

A copy of the latest version of the Regional Plan Workbook is available for download on our website <http://www.sgrc.us/regional-plan.html>, unfortunately, the entire Regional Plan Draft itself is too large to attach to email. We will bring copies of all maps to the workshop, along with markers to revise all maps as indicated by your input.

We are hoping that you all will be able to come to bring and share your communities' knowledge, experience and input to the new Regional Plan to make it truly regional and applicable to all. One final workshop will be held in May 2018 to review and receive final comments on the updated regional plan at that time.

We are looking very much forward to seeing you on the 18th of January in Douglas, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Julia

Julia Shewchuk, AICP
Planning Director | Southern Georgia Regional Commission
229-333-5277
229-300-0924
www.sgrc.us

Public Hearing Advertisements

Kick Off – Public Hearing Southern Georgia Regional Commission Regional Plan 5-Year Update

A public hearing will be held at **11a.m. on August 24th, 2017 at City of Pearson Sports Complex and Civic Center 786 Austin Avenue East Pearson, GA** to announce the beginning of the 2018 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 Julia Shewchuk at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, (229) 333-5277.

SGRC Hosts 5-Year Plan Public Hearing

PEARSON — The Southern Georgia Regional Commission will host a public hearing on a 5-year update of the regional plan at City of Pearson Sports Complex and Civic Center, 786 Austin Ave. East., Thursday, Aug. 24, at 11 a.m.

NEWS STORY

Southern GA Regional Commission to update plan during meeting on May 22

A public hearing to review and transmit the 2018 Southern Georgia Regional Plan Update to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review will be held at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 22 at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, 327 West Savannah Avenue, Valdosta GA 31601.

Residents are invited to attend and participate in the planning process. Copies of the Plan Update are available for public review at the SGRC office and for download at the SGRC

website: <http://www.sgrc.us/regional-plan.html>.

Persons with special needs relating to disability access or foreign language should contact the Southern Georgia Regional Commission at (229) 333-5277.

Persons with hearing disabilities may consider using the Georgia Relay Service, at (Voice) 1-800-255-0135.

All persons are invited to attend the public hearing. If you would like more information, please contact Ariel Godwin, SGRC Planner, at (229) 333-5277.



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Regional Plan Survey

This section presents the survey that was distributed to stakeholders and located on the SGRC's website. Even though the survey was talked about at the workshops and shared with the entire stakeholder e-mail list (222 people), there were only three (3) responses received, resulting in a response rate of 1.35%. The following is a summary of the survey and a copy of each survey received:

Summary:

Economic Development

Workforce and education seem to remain an issue throughout the Region. Associated problems include the need for better wages and improvements within the school systems' education programs. Lack of skills also continues to be an issue.

Natural and Cultural Resources

There seems to be a consensus on the need to expand the use of local natural and cultural resources for recreational and tourism purposes. There was also a concern that there are not enough public access points to rivers and streams. More public access to these rivers and streams would lead to better use and appreciation of these resources.

Community Facilities & Services

There is a lack of funding to provide quality community facilities and annual maintenance of existing facilities. It was suggested that we continue with the SPLOST, E-SPLOST and T-SPLOST programs.

Housing

Housing is still a significant concern throughout the Region. Rehabilitation is often not cost-effective. It was suggested that funding should be allocated to streamline rehabilitation.

Transportation

Transportation concerns are lack of funding and the need for more projects that will benefit the entire Region. Lack of rail transportation is also a concern.

Intergovernmental Coordination

It was noted that there is a lack of regular communication among the leadership of the Cities, Counties, Boards of Education, Hospitals, and Economic Development.

Education

There is a lack of educational opportunities to earn certain professional degrees. The Region's youth need to be educated appropriately for the jobs that are available.

Senior Services/Aging

Additional and expanded services are needed for the aging population. There is a need for better health care for this growing population. Programs are needed to attract better health care.

Regional Plan Survey
Southern Georgia Regional Commission
327 W Savannah Avenue
Valdosta, GA 31601
P 229-333-5277 | F 229-333-5313

- 1) In the following categories identified, what do you think are the priority issues, opportunities, threats and weaknesses within the region?

Economic Development

Issues: _____
Opportunities: _____
Threats: _____
Weaknesses: _____

Natural & Cultural Resources

Issues: _____
Opportunities: _____
Threats: _____
Weaknesses: _____

Community Facilities & Services

Issues: _____
Opportunities: _____
Threats: _____
Weaknesses: _____

Housing

Issues: _____
Opportunities: _____
Threats: _____
Weaknesses: _____

Land Use

Issues: _____
Opportunities: _____
Threats: _____
Weaknesses: _____

Transportation

Issues: _____
Opportunities: _____
Threats: _____
Weaknesses: _____

Intergovernmental Coordination:

Issues: _____
Opportunities: _____
Threats: _____
Weaknesses: _____

Education

Issues: _____
Opportunities: _____

Threats: _____
Weaknesses: _____

Senior Services/Aging

Issues: _____
Opportunities: _____
Threats: _____
Weaknesses: _____

- 2) What is your number 1 goal for the region? _____
- 3) What projects would you like to see in the region? _____
- 4) Do you feel that the Regional Plan will be a usable resource for the communities? ___Yes ___No
- 5) I would participate in this type of regional planning process again? ___Yes ___No
- 6) The overall satisfaction with the Regional Plan and its process is high? ___Yes ___No

Additional comments:

Results

Regional Plan Survey

Southern Georgia Regional Commission

327 W Savannah Avenue
Valdosta, GA 31601
P 229-333-5277 | F 229-333-5313

7) **In the following categories identified, what do you think are the priority issues, opportunities, threats and weaknesses within the region?**

- **Economic Development**

Issues: Workforce; Education; Transportation infrastructure. Where in the region can you earn an engineering, law, medical, etc. degree? Older population, better wages,
Opportunities: improvements in technical college and high school education; teach higher tech skills
Threats: as manufacturers move more towards automation, the need for less skilled workers will diminish
Weaknesses: workforce; adult substance abuse; employability skills;

- **Natural & Cultural Resources**

Issues: How do we process more of the resources that are grown here instead of shipping them out of state for processing? i.e. crops, forestry products, etc.....
Opportunities: recreational & eco-tourism, i.e. kayaking, biking, hiking, hunting, fishing, bird watching; Timber supply will continue to anchor south Georgia communities as lumber producers just as our farmland will keep the region strong in all aspects of agriculture.
Threats: Lack of access to some of GA Rivers and streams
Weaknesses:

- **Community Facilities & Services**

Issues:

Opportunities:

Threats:

Weaknesses:

- **Housing**

Issues: modern housing; existing housing stock is archaic and not energy efficient
Opportunities: creating a program that will give communities more funding and streamlining the process to remove decrepit housing and abandoned mobile homes from their communities
Threats: older housing becoming blighted; too costly to rehab – creates opportunity for “slum lords” & less than desirable living accommodations
Weaknesses: old housing, blighted neighborhoods, poor code enforcement

- **Land Use**

Issues:

Opportunities: the opportunity exists for communities to invest in redeveloping & repurposing former manufacturing sites by razing functional obsolete facilities and remediating properties with environmental issues to take advantage of the existing infrastructure in place (The former Delphi site in Ben Hill County is a prime example)

Threats: lack of vision in selection of future industrial sites, schools, etc.

Weaknesses: wetlands across the region make it tough to create large manufacturing sites; Counties with limited funding are not capable of investing in the infrastructure needed to develop effective industrial sites; more emphasis should be placed on regional manufacturing sites.

- **Transportation**

Issues: meaningful transportation projects that will truly benefit the region. Developing additional rail access

Opportunities: passage of the Regional TSPLOST is a start, yet the projects have to be meaningful

Threats: counties inability to work as a regionally. As deep water port rail traffic increases and the CSX mainline get busier, will existing industries on that mainline be able to be serviced? How can the region effectively collaborate with CSX to develop new rail access?

Weaknesses: Do we have a regional transportation plan? If so, how can we have additional input?

- **Intergovernmental Coordination:**

Issues: getting school system, city, county, utilities on the “same page”

Opportunities: Archway Partnership

Threats: one of biggest issues is our people

Weaknesses: elected officials knowing their role, electing qualified people

- **Education**

Issues: lack of opportunities to earn professional degrees outside of criminal justice, education, business, and liberal arts. We need more engineering, medical, mechatronics, etc.

Opportunities: creation of College & Career academies, the need for a public school attendance policy that mirrors what is expected upon entry into the workforce, random drug testing in public high school, update STD education in public schools; work based learning, apprenticeships

Threats: lack of parental engagement within the school system

Weaknesses: Adult literacy, employability skills, attendance policies, “everyone gets a trophy”

- **Senior Services/Aging**

Issues: a population that is getting older and needing additional services

Opportunities: additional opportunities for health care related employment

Threats: How can we care for a population that is growing older and has less resources to fund their care?

Weaknesses: ability to recruit medical professionals into the region

- 8) **What is your number 1 goal for the region?**
- 9) **What projects would you like to see in the region? Additional 4-laning that would connect communities such as Douglas and Fitzgerald to Interstates 16 and 75.**
- 10) **Do you feel that the Regional Plan will be a usable resource for the communities?** Yes No
- 11) **I would participate in this type of regional planning process again?** Yes No
- 12) **The overall satisfaction with the Regional Plan and its process is high?** Yes No

Additional comments:

There is no mention of public health. Everyone in south GA has access to adequate health care that is usually within a 60-minute drive, yet the health of the average citizen in south GA is lacking. Obesity rates in our poor are especially high. Couple this with opiate abuse, tobacco, lack of exercise, below average birth weights, teen pregnancy rates, and poor eating habits and you begin to understand why indigent costs in our hospitals are rising and why those hospitals struggle so much.

Regional Plan Survey
Southern Georgia Regional Commission
327 W Savannah Avenue
Valdosta, GA 31601
P 229-333-5277 | F 229-333-5313

13) In the following categories identified, what do you think are the priority issues, opportunities, threats and weaknesses within the region?

- **Economic Development**

Issues:

Opportunities: food agriculture is a huge opportunity for this region, I think we are slowly moving away from Timber being the primary ag product

Threats: lack of the region to join together in a common economic development attraction/retention effort

Weaknesses: lack of the region being willing to take risks to attract and retain companies

- **Natural & Cultural Resources**

Issues:

Opportunities: great amount of natural and cultural resources

Threats:

Weaknesses: the region has been unable to turn these resources into an economic engine for the region

- **Community Facilities & Services**

Issues:

Opportunities:

Threats: deteriorating and aging infrastructure threatens to undermine community financial stability

Weaknesses: communities being willing to charge residents for their utility services for the actual amount it costs to provide that service

- **Housing**

Issues:

Opportunities:

Threats: aging housing is a challenge for current needs

Weaknesses:

- **Land Use**

Issues:

Opportunities:

Threats:

Weaknesses:

- **Transportation**

Issues:

Opportunities:

Threats: lack of available funding in the future to maintain what we have currently

Weaknesses: communities not being willing to charge residents the actual cost to maintain roadway infrastructure.

- **Intergovernmental Coordination:**

Issues: local governments are spread thin financially and through qualified leadership

Opportunities: develop training opportunities for young leaders and encourage staff promotion at local governments

Threats: as the population of some communities continues to shrink we need to have a plan to reduce the number of cities and ultimately counties in the region.

Weaknesses:

- **Education**

Issues: are we educating the young people in the region for the jobs that will be available in the region in the future

Opportunities: the programs at VSU, SGC, technical colleges and high schools need to be tweaked to make sure that they are providing the skills training needed for a future workforce needed in this region.

Threats: the attractiveness of jobs and quality of life outside of this region, especially in larger cities.

Weaknesses:

- **Senior Services/Aging**

Issues: a growing senior population

Opportunities: services already in place that can meet a growing demand

Threats: more seniors in rural areas will stress medical infrastructure and transportation needs to get these people to services in larger cities

Weaknesses:

- 14) **What is your number 1 goal for the region? Attract and retain sustainable employers**
- 15) **What projects would you like to see in the region? Projects that support the growing and emerging businesses in the region (like a regional support system for them)**
- 16) **Do you feel that the Regional Plan will be a usable resource for the communities? Yes No**
- 17) **I would participate in this type of regional planning process again? Yes No**
- 18) **The overall satisfaction with the Regional Plan and its process is high? Yes No**

Additional comments:

Regional Plan Survey
Southern Georgia Regional Commission
327 W Savannah Avenue
Valdosta, GA 31601
P 229-333-5277 | F 229-333-5313

19) In the following categories identified, what do you think are the priority issues, opportunities, threats and weaknesses within the region?

- **Economic Development**

Issues: a) Workforce available with skills or initiative to learn skills

Opportunities: To provide a lower cost of living and lower cost to produce goods and services.

Threats: Lack of Skilled Workers, Individuals without the discipline to be a Reliable Employee.

Weaknesses: Lack of individual training and desire to develop key skills, Individuals unable to pass drug tests and be

Reliable Employee.

- **Natural & Cultural Resources**

Issues:

Opportunities:

Threats:

Weaknesses:

- **Community Facilities & Services**

Issues: Lack of Capital Funding and Annual Maintenance Funding to provide Quality Community Facilities

Opportunities: Continue to pass SPLOST, E-SPLOST & T-SPLOST to invest in the Community

Threats: Lack of Funding means inadequate Community Facilities

Weaknesses: Lack of Facilities and Programs to develop individuals.

- **Housing**

Issues: Housing has significantly improved for the working families over the past 40 years.

Economically low performing individuals have very marginal to substandard housing.

Opportunities: With sufficient family income, substandard housing would decline.

Threats: for individuals with very limited income, they will continue in substandard housing

Weaknesses: Low skilled and low income will continue as a barrier to adequate housing.

- **Land Use**

Issues: In South Georgia and slow to moderate growth conflict between Urban & Rural Land uses will be minimum.

Opportunities: To continue a balance between Rural & Urban Land Uses.

Threats: Lack of Governmental will and leadership to adopt Ga Building Codes and then thoughtfully enforce the Bldg. Codes. Property Maintenance is a rapidly growing public nuisance. Adoption of the Property Maintenance Code and vigilant enforcement will be needed in the future.

Weaknesses: Lack of basic community standards being adopted and enforced thoughtfully.

- **Transportation**

Issues: Lack of Funding for a) Construction & b) Annual Maintenance

Opportunities: Passage of T-SPLOST to invest in our area and communities.

Threats: Failure to pass property funding.

Weaknesses: Lack of Funding

- **Intergovernmental Coordination:**

Issues: Each Community working out a Community Service Delivery Plan

Opportunities: HB 489 & GA DCA provide the means and methods to develop a viable Community Service Delivery Plan

Threats: Failure of the Leadership of the City, County, Board of Education, Hospital and Economic Development to communicate regularly. Leadership's failure to support a Community Service Delivery Plan and mutual respect for each other.

Weaknesses: Failure to communicate, in good faith.

- **Education**

Issues:

Opportunities:

Threats:

Weaknesses:

- **Senior Services/Aging**

Issues:

Opportunities:

Threats:

Weaknesses:

20) **What is your number 1 goal for the region? Better Transportation**

21) **What projects would you like to see in the region? T_SPLOST a) passage and b) implemented**

22) **Do you feel that the Regional Plan will be a usable resource for the communities? Yes No**

23) **I would participate in this type of regional planning process again? Yes No**

24) **The overall satisfaction with the Regional Plan and its process is high? Yes No**

Additional comments:

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAA – Area Agency on Aging
ACT – At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics
AICUZ – Air Installation Compatible Use Zone
ARSA – Areas Requiring Special Attention
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
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 2018 UPDATE COMPLETION SCHEDULE												
	AUG 17	SEPT 17	OCT 17	NOV 17	DEC 17	JAN 18	FEB 18	MAR 18	APR 18	MAY 18	JUN 18	JUL 18
KICK OFF PUBLIC HEARING	24 th											
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS	24 th				14 th	23 rd		22 nd	26 th	24 th	28 th	26 th
SURVEY DISTRIBUTION	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
PUBLIC LISTENING SESSIONS		21 st Valdosta Lowndes County	19 th Waycross Ware County		7 th Tifton, Tift County	18 th Douglas, Coffee County						
TRANSMITAL PUBLIC HEARING									x	x		
DCA REVIEW PERIOD										x		
ADOPTION & PUBLIC HEARING												x

**SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL PLAN
2018 FULL UPDATE
ADOPTION RESOLUTION**

**A RESOLUTION BY THE SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION TO
ADOPT THE 2018 REGIONAL PLAN FULL UPDATE AND SUBMIT NOTIFICATION
TO THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

WHEREAS, the Southern Georgia Regional Commission recognized the need to prepare the 2018 Full Update for the Regional Plan, including an update of the Regional Work Program for SFY 2018-2022;

WHEREAS, the 2018 Full Update for the Regional Plan was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning, and has been approved by the Department of Community Affairs on October 10th, 2018;

WHEREAS, the public participation requirements of the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning were met;

WHEREAS, all government review requirements of the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning were met;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2018 Full Update for the Regional Plan for the Southern Georgia Regional Commission be adopted.

DULY RESOLVED THIS 13th **DAY OF** December, 2018.

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION



Joyce Evans, Chair