

# Northwest Georgia Regional Plan 2024-2028

# Northwest Georgia Regional Plan Update 2024-2028 Adopted May 16th, 2024

## A RESOLUTION

### TO ADOPT THE NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL PLAN UPDATE (2024-2028)

**WHEREAS**, the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission has prepared the **Northwest Georgia Regional Plan Update (2024-2028)** as required by the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (Effective October 1, 2017); and

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has approved the plan update;

#### **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**

That the **Northwest Georgia Regional Plan Update (2024- 2028)** is hereby officially approved and adopted.

**SO RESOLVED**, this 16<sup>th</sup> Day of May, 2024.



Greg Hogan, Chairperson

Northwest Georgia Regional Commission



Boyd Austin, Executive Director

Northwest Georgia Regional Commission

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*Kayakers and fish weir on the Etowah River, photo credit Jesse Demonbreun-Smith.*

## Executive Summary

- Stakeholder Involvement Summary
- Regional Goal Summary
- Priority Needs and Opportunities
- Key Strategies and Actions

## Executive Summary

### Stakeholder Involvement Summary

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission (NWGRC) is charged with developing a long-term plan for the region which identifies regional goals, needs, and an implementation program including a five-year work program for the region.

Components of the Regional Plan are updated annually, but every five years, a full update is required. In Fall 2023, the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council began the five-

year update of the Regional Plan through a public planning process. The NWGRC Council served as the Regional Plan Steering Committee, which prepared the Regional Plan with input from NWGRC staff, stakeholders, and members of the public. Multiple methods of stakeholder and public input were used, including the following:



*Regional Plan Stakeholders Meeting, Ellijay, 2023.*

#### **Public and Stakeholder Input**

*Initial Public Hearing, September 21, 2023*

*NWGRC Council/ Steering Committee meetings on September 21, 2023, October 19, 2023, January 18, 2024, and February 15, 2024*

*Publicly advertised stakeholder and public meetings:*

- *October 3, 2023, Rome Civic Center, 4-6 pm*
- *October 30, 2023, NWGRC Dalton office, 4-6 pm*
- *November 14, 2023, Piedmont Community Center in Ellijay, 4-6 pm*
- *December 4, 2023, Dallas Civic Center, 4-6 pm*

*Regional Priorities Survey, 549 responses, December 2023- January 2024*

*Regional Plan update page on NWGRC website: <https://www.nwgrc.org/northwest-georgia-regional-plan-update/>*

*Public Hearing on the draft plan, February 15, 2024*

*All meetings were open to the public and were advertised via local newspaper and media outlets, NWGRC and local social media, and the NWGRC website.*

### Regional Survey

In Winter 2023, the Regional Priorities Survey was developed for smartphone and web responses, and distributed through direct email to NWGRC Council members, local governments, Chambers of Commerce, and school systems, posted on the NWGRC website, and shared via Facebook. The survey garnered 549 responses from December 2023 to January 2024. The Regional Priorities survey asked respondents to weigh in on topics including transportation and transit, electric vehicle infrastructure, natural, cultural, and historic resource preservation, broadband, economic development, and a regional TSPLOST. The survey provided an opportunity for wider public and stakeholder input, and the responses helped staff prioritize needs and develop priorities, strategies, and actions for the region's plan. Please see the appendix for the full survey results.

## Regional Plan Stakeholders Participating

<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
<b>Angela Rubino</b>	concerned citizen	<b>Jim Smith</b>	Director, Planning and Zoning, Gilmer County
<b>Ann Lippmann</b>	Paulding County Community Development	<b>Joseph Davidson</b>	Senior Planner, NWGRC
<b>Benito Rubino</b>	concerned citizen	<b>Karleen Ferguson</b>	Habitat for Humanity, GICH
<b>Brad Barnes</b>	concerned citizen	<b>Kayla Knowles</b>	concerned citizen
<b>Brandon Johnson</b>	Community Development Director, Bartow County	<b>Kent Sanford</b>	Greater Gilmer JDA
<b>Brian Stover</b>	Paulding County Post 4 Commissioner	<b>Kina Ferguson</b>	concerned citizen
<b>Brice Wood</b>	Director, Rome Floyd Planning Department	<b>Larry Callahan</b>	Public Safety Director, East Ellijay
<b>Casey Inoue</b>	Temple, Inc.	<b>Mary Elizabeth Burgess</b>	Development Director, City of Jasper
<b>Charlie Paris</b>	Chairman, Gilmer BOC	<b>Melinda Hadden</b>	Ellijay DDA
<b>Chase Holden</b>	GIS Officer, NWGRC	<b>Melissa Taylor</b>	Chattanooga-North Georgia TPO
<b>Chris Robinson</b>	Paulding County Planning & Zoning	<b>Michael Andrews</b>	Times-Courier Newspaper
<b>David Clonts</b>		<b>Michael Hughes</b>	Paulding EDO
<b>Dianne Graham</b>	concerned citizen	<b>Pam Powers-Smith</b>	Rome Floyd Chamber of Commerce
<b>Dianne Scoggins</b>	Greater Gilmer Community Foundation	<b>Richard Osborne</b>	Bartow County Zoning
<b>Don Callihan</b>	Mayor, East Ellijay	<b>Samantha Bishop</b>	Senior Community & Economic Development Repr. NWGRC
<b>Eric Pullen</b>	Chickamauga	<b>Sandra Bethel</b>	concerned citizen
<b>Erica Parish</b>	Paulding County Department of Transportation	<b>Sandy Kaecher</b>	Paulding County Post 2 Board of Commissioners
<b>Ethan Calhoun</b>	Assistant Planning Director, NWGRC	<b>Shane Evans</b>	Chattahoochee Tech
<b>Frank Baker</b>	Paulding County Manager	<b>Shane Holden</b>	GIS Officer, NWGRC
<b>George Jones</b>	Paulding County Department of Transportation	<b>Sonia James</b>	City Manager, Jasper
<b>Gretchen Lugthart</b>	Senior Planner, NWGRC	<b>Tom Sills</b>	Cartersville Bartow County MPO
<b>Heather &amp; Billy Campbell</b>	concerned citizens	<b>Tracy Hulseley</b>	Project Manager
<b>Jason Smith</b>	Ellijay Telephone Company	<b>Virginia Galloway</b>	Paulding Co Post 3 Commissioner
<b>Jim Looney</b>	Councilmember, City of Jasper		

## Regional Vision, Goals, and Policies

### Regional Vision Statement

The Northwest Georgia Regional Plan:

- Guides the development and conservation of the region's land, resources, and infrastructure;
- Aligns local, regional, and state planning and funding;
- Expands access to economic opportunities, safe adequate housing, outdoor recreation, and basic infrastructure;
- Supports education pathways and programs that meet the region's needs and residents' goals; Encourages intergovernmental coordination; and
- Improves Northwest Georgia's opportunities for health, economic growth, and prosperity.

### Regional Goals and Policies

This section includes goals that describe the desired outcomes for the region in planning and development areas (i.e., Natural Resources and Land Use), and policies to guide local and regional decisions. Regional maps on p. 18-28 illustrate these goals and policies, showing projected development through 2050, areas of conservation and development, and areas requiring special attention.

#### Regional Goals

- **Protect** our unique environmental, natural, historic, and cultural resources while improving recreational access; promote effective use of water resources; implement the Regional Water Plans (Coosa-North GA, Metropolitan North GA, and Upper Chattahoochee).
- **Use** regional maps (regional resources, conservation and development areas, and areas requiring special attention) to guide growth, along with local land use plans and policies; encourage redevelopment and infill development.
- **Provide** coordinated transportation planning to ensure connectivity and access to work, housing, healthcare, and education.
- **Implement** the NWGA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and local economic development plans. Encourage the development and expansion of diverse businesses and industries.
- **Ensure** infrastructure and services meet economic and community development, land use, housing, and service delivery needs; maximize use of existing infrastructure. Ensure communities have adequate basic infrastructure to implement their community and economic development objectives (2022 CEDS).
- **Improve** housing conditions and access to safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing, at a variety of price points and housing types.
- **Serve** as a resource to local governments, assisting with coordination, training, planning, and project development, and as a coordinator for regional, state, and federal opportunities.

## Priority Needs and Opportunities

The Steering Committee and stakeholders identified regional Needs and Opportunities in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, which were prioritized to develop the following list of priority needs to be addressed in the next five years in the region’s work program (2024-2028):

	<b>Priority Need/ Opportunity</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Ensure</b> infrastructure is in place across the region to meet the needs of existing and new businesses and industries
<b>2</b>	<b>Improve</b> the competitiveness of Northwest Georgia communities to attract and retain business and industry
<b>3</b>	<b>Provide</b> resources and assistance to support community development projects
<b>4</b>	<b>There is</b> a lack of safe, affordable housing and a lack of housing investment
<b>5</b>	<b>Develop</b> a coordinated long-term land use vision for Northwest Georgia that respects local land use plans and balances conservation with development needs
<b>6</b>	<b>Connect</b> more people with Northwest Georgia’s natural resources so they will enjoy and protect its diversity and beauty
<b>7</b>	<b>Preserve</b> irreplaceable historic and cultural resources through inventory, citizen engagement, planning, and funding assistance
<b>8</b>	<b>Maintain</b> surface and groundwater quality throughout the region to meet federal and state regulations
<b>9</b>	<b>Provide</b> safe, efficient movement of people and goods through Northwest Georgia to enhance economic growth
<b>10</b>	<b>Improve</b> connectivity of bike and pedestrian pathways throughout the region

## Key Strategies and Actions

Below are key Priority Needs, Strategies, and Actions.

### Community and Economic Development

**Priority Need: *Ensure infrastructure is in place for existing and new business and industry needs***

Strategy: Provide infrastructure improvements to support economic development

- Action: Assist communities to improve downtown and industrial infrastructure
- Action: Assist during the transition to Electric Vehicle (EV) manufacturing, deployment

**Priority Need: *Provide resources and assistance to support community development***

Strategy: Provide resources to improve public services, infrastructure, and tourism

- Action: Assist with water, sewer, broadband, parks and trails, and other projects
- Action: Provide training workshops on project development, funding, and compliance

### Housing

**Priority Need: *There is a lack of safe, affordable housing and a lack of housing investment***

Strategy: Provide resources and assistance for a range of local government housing needs

- Action: Hold regional workshops for local governments on housing resources
- Action: Assist communities in applying for GA Initiatives for Community Housing (GICH)

## Land Use and Planning

**Priority Need: Develop a coordinated long-term land use vision for Northwest Georgia that respects local land use plans while balancing conservation with development needs**

Strategy: Assist local governments in complying with the current Georgia Zoning Procedures Law

- Action: Assist local governments with Zoning and Land Use Ordinance preparation, adoption, and amendment; provide Planning and Zoning training

Strategy: Assist local governments to prepare and implement Comprehensive Plans

- Action: Assist with the preparation of scheduled updates to Joint Comprehensive Plans

## Natural and Cultural Resources

**Priority Need: Connect more people with Northwest Georgia's natural resources so they will enjoy and protect its diversity and beauty**

Strategy: Identify, preserve, and promote identified Regionally Important Resources

- Action: Update the Regional Resource Plan to include preservation recommendations

Strategy: Improve safety, visibility, and access to water trails and blueways

- Action: Make improvements to water trails/ blueways, parks, trails and trailheads

**Priority Need: Preserve irreplaceable historic and cultural resources through inventory, citizen engagement, planning, and funding assistance**

Strategy: Identify and preserve historic and cultural resources

- Provide resources to local governments for historic National Register nominations for regionally significant historical assets

**Priority Need: Maintain surface and groundwater quality throughout the region to meet federal and state regulations**

Strategy: Apply for funding to improve water quality, manage stormwater, restore streambanks, and protect water resources in the region

- Action: Provide resources to local governments to implement Watershed Management Plans and water quality plans

## Transportation

**Priority Need: Provide safe, efficient movement of people and goods through Northwest Georgia**

Strategy: Assist with local and regionally significant transportation projects

- Action: Prepare Regional Transit Development Plan; Assist with BIL/IIJA funding

**Priority Need: Improve connectivity of bike and pedestrian pathways throughout the region**

Strategy: Implement local and state bike & pedestrian safety plans and strategies

- Action: Assist with Safe Routes to School audits and Complete Streets policies



*Chickamauga National Battlefield, Fort Oglethorpe.*

## Regional Overview

## Section One. Regional Overview

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission includes fifteen counties and forty-eight cities, with a population of 942,597 (Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget 2023 estimates). Counties include Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Fannin, Floyd, Gilmer, Gordon, Haralson, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Walker, and Whitfield. The region borders Alabama, Tennessee, and North Carolina, including the Southeast Tennessee Development District and North Carolina’s Southwestern Commission to the north and the Top of Alabama Council of Governments and East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission to the west. In Georgia, it borders the Three Rivers Regional Commission, Atlanta Regional Commission, and Georgia Mountains Regional Commission. While the region is affected by the metro growth patterns of Chattanooga and Atlanta, many areas remain rural with active agriculture and forestry.

Northwest Georgia abounds in historic and cultural resources. From 1000-1550 AD, the Mississippian culture dwelt on the Etowah River in Cartersville, now the Etowah Indian Mounds Georgia State Historic Site. Following the Mississippian chiefdoms, the Creek confederacy was formed in Georgia and Alabama, ceding their lands in the early 1800’s. The Cherokee people lived in north Georgia, but under the Treaty of New Echota were removed to Oklahoma in 1838-1839 along the Trail of Tears. Actions in the Civil War campaigns of Chattanooga and Atlanta were fought here, including the Battle of Chickamauga, the site of which is preserved as the Chickamauga National Battlefield. The Regional Resource Plan details these and other sites.



*John Ross House, Rossville Georgia. Photo credit City of Rossville.*

Northwest Georgia’s ridges and valleys, mountains, and creeks present an eye-catching vista. Many highways and railroads follow historic travel routes. The Silver Comet Trail, a 61+ mile multi-use concrete path, connects Metro Atlanta to the Chief Ladiga Trail at the Alabama State Line; it has the potential to connect northward to Chattanooga. Industry, agriculture, tourism, and healthcare anchor the region’s economy.

### Northwest Georgia Regional Commission

**Mission Statement:** To improve the quality of life for every Northwest Georgia resident, through orderly growth, conservation of the region’s natural and historic resources, and care and development of the region’s human resources.



*Silver Comet Trailhead, Rockmart*

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission (NWGRC) is a multi-county organization consisting of 15 Northwest Georgia counties and 48 municipalities. Major responsibilities of the Regional Commission include (1) implementation of

the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; (2) administration of the Area Agency on Aging; (3) administration of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; and (4) providing planning and development assistance to member governments in areas they could not otherwise afford.

In the late 1950s, Mr. T. Harley Harper and Mr. Fred F. Starr traveled Northwest Georgia promoting regional cooperation and planning. The area-wide Coosa Valley Planning and Development Association began on May 7, 1959, at a regional conference at Berry College with 400 attending. In June 1960, the Association became a formally staffed organization, the Coosa Valley Area Planning and Development Commission (APDC), the first multi-county organization of its type in Georgia. Under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, it became the Coosa Valley Regional Development Center (RDC), then the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission in 2009.

## Purpose and Background of the Regional Plan

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission (NWGRC) develops a long-term plan for the region, which identifies goals, needs, and an implementation program. Sections of the Regional Plan are updated annually; a full update is required every five years. For the 2024 five-year update, the NWGRC Council served as the Regional Plan Steering Committee, updating the plan in a public process with stakeholder and public input, and adopting the approved plan on May 16, 2024. The Regional Plan aligns with the Regional Resource Plan, local Comprehensive Plans, state plans, and plans of the Georgia Mountains, Atlanta, and Three Rivers Regional Commissions. The 2024 Regional Plan update is divided into the following sections:

### Regional Goals

This section includes goals describing the desired outcomes for the region and policies to guide decision-making, illustrated by maps of projected development through 2050, areas of conservation and development, and areas requiring special attention.

### Needs and Opportunities

The Steering Committee and stakeholders used a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to identify regional needs and opportunities. Staff evaluated Quality Community Objectives, data, and areas of special attention, to prioritize needs.

### Implementation Program

The Implementation Program includes minimum and excellence standards for local governments, a new five-year work program for 2024-2028, and a report of accomplishments on projects from 2019-2023.

### Appendices

The appendices include the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis; the analysis of consistency with Quality Community Objectives; the Stakeholder Involvement Report; Regional Survey results; and the data and mapping supplement.





*Appalachian Regional Port, Eton, Georgia.*

## Regional Goals

- Regional Vision Statement
- Regional Goals and Policies
- Regional Maps
  - Projected 2050 Regional Land Use
  - Conservation and Projected 2050 Development
  - Areas Requiring Special Attention

## Section Two. Regional Goals

The Regional Goals section includes Goals that lay out desired regional results in areas such as economic development and transportation; Policies, that provide a guide for regional and local decisions; and Maps, that illustrate projected land uses (developed, developing, and rural) through 2050, areas of conservation and development, and areas where special attention is needed to ensure quality development or redevelopment.

### Vision Statement

The Northwest Georgia Regional Plan:

- Guides the development and conservation of the region’s land, resources, and infrastructure;
- Aligns local, regional, and state planning and funding;
- Expands access to economic opportunities, safe adequate housing, outdoor recreation, and basic infrastructure;
- Supports education pathways and programs that meet the region’s needs and residents’ goals; Encourages intergovernmental coordination; and
- Improves Northwest Georgia’s opportunities for health, economic growth, and prosperity.

### Regional Goals and Policies

Regional goals describe the desired outcomes for the region in planning and development areas, such as Natural Resources and Land Use. Policies guide regional and local decisions not specifically addressed in the regional plan and work program.

Element	Goal	Policies
<b>Natural Resources</b>	Protect our unique environmental, natural, historic, and cultural resources while improving recreational access; promote effective use of water resources; implement the Regional Water Plans (Coosa-North GA, Metropolitan North GA, and Upper Chattahoochee).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Include the Regionally Important Resources plan in development reviews, with its recommendations to mitigate potential impacts.</li> <li>➤ Protect the region’s ground and surface water sources to ensure a safe and adequate water supply.</li> <li>➤ Support the preservation and revitalization of historic areas and resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Land Use</b>	Regional maps (regional resources, conservation and development areas, and areas requiring special attention) are used to guide growth along with local land use plans and policies; redevelopment and infill are encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.</li> <li>➤ Preserve the rural character of our region and provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the region.</li> <li>➤ Encourage development that is sensitive to the historical context, sense of place, and overall setting of communities.</li> <li>➤ Redevelop/improve existing commercial/industrial areas where feasible, in preference to expansion in previously undeveloped areas.</li> <li>Promote the protection and maintenance of trees and green open space in all new developments.</li> <li>➤ Encourage new development in areas where potential negative impacts to the rural community</li> </ul>

Element	Goal	Policies
<b>Transportation</b>	Provide coordinated transportation planning to ensure connectivity and access to work, housing, healthcare, and education.	<p>can be appropriately mitigated while ensuring that any public infrastructure/utility expansion is economically prudent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Encourage walking, biking, vanpooling/ carpooling, and alternative transportation options.</li> <li>➤ Expand transit options to fill gaps in transportation to meet healthcare, work, school, and shopping needs.</li> <li>➤ Mesh transportation improvements with desired development patterns.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Development</b>	Implement the NWGA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and local economic development plans. Encourage the development and expansion of diverse businesses and industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Support the region's transformation from manufacturing and use of internal combustion engines to electric vehicles.</li> <li>➤ Support retention, expansion, and creation of businesses and industries that align with regional economic priorities, skills, and economic linkages.</li> <li>➤ Make educational and training opportunities accessible to all residents to improve job skills, adapt to technology, and achieve life goals.</li> <li>➤ Incentivize reinvestment in declining areas, vacant or underutilized sites</li> <li>➤ Consider impacts on infrastructure and natural resources in reviewing development projects.</li> <li>➤ Encourage downtown development for vibrant economic centers.</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Ensure infrastructure and services meet economic and community development, land use, housing, and service delivery needs; maximize use of existing infrastructure. Ensure communities have adequate basic infrastructure to implement their community and economic development objectives (2022 CEDS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Encourage efficient use of existing infrastructure and public facilities to minimize the need for costly new/expanded facilities and services.</li> <li>➤ Assist in planning and preparing funding applications for infrastructure needs-- water, sewer, stormwater, broadband, among others.</li> <li>➤ Assist with funding for new or expanded recreational facilities and services, parks, trails, open space, and green space.</li> <li>➤ Promote solid waste solutions-- disposal, waste reduction, and recycling.</li> <li>➤ Ensure that all residents have access to critical services, regardless of age, ability, or income.</li> <li>➤ Increase coverage, affordability, and access to high-speed internet.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	Improve housing conditions and access to safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing at a variety of price points and diverse housing types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Address substandard housing through rehabilitation, when possible; preserve naturally occurring, affordable housing; remove uninhabitable structures, when necessary.</li> <li>➤ Incentivize housing opportunities that meet workforce needs including price range, commuting distance, size, and type, for rental and ownership.</li> <li>➤ Promote the development of a range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and energy-efficient housing options at various price points.</li> <li>➤ Serve as a resource for communities in our region, providing training and technical assistance for housing programs and resources.</li> </ul>

Element	Goal	Policies
<b>Planning and Coordination</b>	Serve as a resource to local governments, assisting with coordination, training, planning, and project development, and as a nexus for regional, state, and federal opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="862 226 1511 289">➤ Provide information and training for local governments.</li> <li data-bbox="862 289 1511 352">➤ Encourage shared services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions, when mutually beneficial.</li> <li data-bbox="862 352 1511 436">➤ Develop shared solutions for regional needs (growth and development, infrastructure and transportation, watershed protection, solid waste).</li> <li data-bbox="862 436 1511 527">➤ Encourage intergovernmental consultation and involvement of other public entities (schools, state agencies) in local or regional decisions.</li> </ul>

## Northwest Georgia Projected 2050 Regional Land Use

The Northwest Georgia Projected 2050 Regional Land Use Map (Figure 1) illustrates desired future land use patterns for the region in terms of rural, developing, and developed areas. These areas were mapped using the 2015 *Georgia Land Use Trends* (GLUT) land use projections provided by the University of Georgia Natural Resources Spatial Analysis Lab (NARSAL) and updated using local comprehensive plans' Future Development or Future Land Use maps and recent development trends and data.



*Rural Gordon County.*

**Developed:** Areas that exhibit urban-type development patterns and where urban infrastructure services (water, sewer, other utilities) are provided. Areas within most city limits are shown as developed, excluding large green space or conservation uses. Developed areas also include industrial, mining, or college/institutional character areas/ future land use categories.

**Developing:** Areas that are expected to become urbanized and will require the provision of urban services, particularly sewer, during the next 20 years. Character Areas/Future Land Use categories designated as Developing include Suburban Residential/Suburban Neighborhood, Emerging Suburban, Commercial, Emerging Commercial, and Mixed Use.

**Rural:** Areas not expected to become urbanized or to require the provision of urban services during the next 20 years and include areas of agriculture, forestry, very low-density residential, or green space. Character Areas/ Future Land Use categories designated as Rural include Low-Density Residential, Park/Recreation, Agricultural/Forest, Conservation, Rural Area, Crossroad Community, Rural Residential, Rural Estate, and Preserve. Some very small towns are shown as Rural if lacking sewer infrastructure.



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## Northwest Georgia Conservation and Projected 2050 Development

The Conservation and Development Map identifies Conservation Areas, which will be preserved to protect important regional resources or environmentally sensitive areas. The map references the updated Regionally Important Resources Plan, showing environmentally sensitive areas, important regional resources, key environmental features, and state and federal forests.



Chief Vann House, Murray County, photo credit Georgia DNR.



Pickett's Mill Battlefield, Photo Credit NWGA RIR.



New Echota Council house, Gordon County.



Pinhoti Trail marker, photo credit Wikipedia.



Morganton Point Recreation Area on the Chattahoochee National Forest, Fannin County, Photo credit Fannin County Comprehensive Plan

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Figure 2. Northwest Georgia Conservation and Projected 2050 Development.

# DRAFT NW Georgia Conservation and Projected 2050 Development

## Regional Land Use Categories

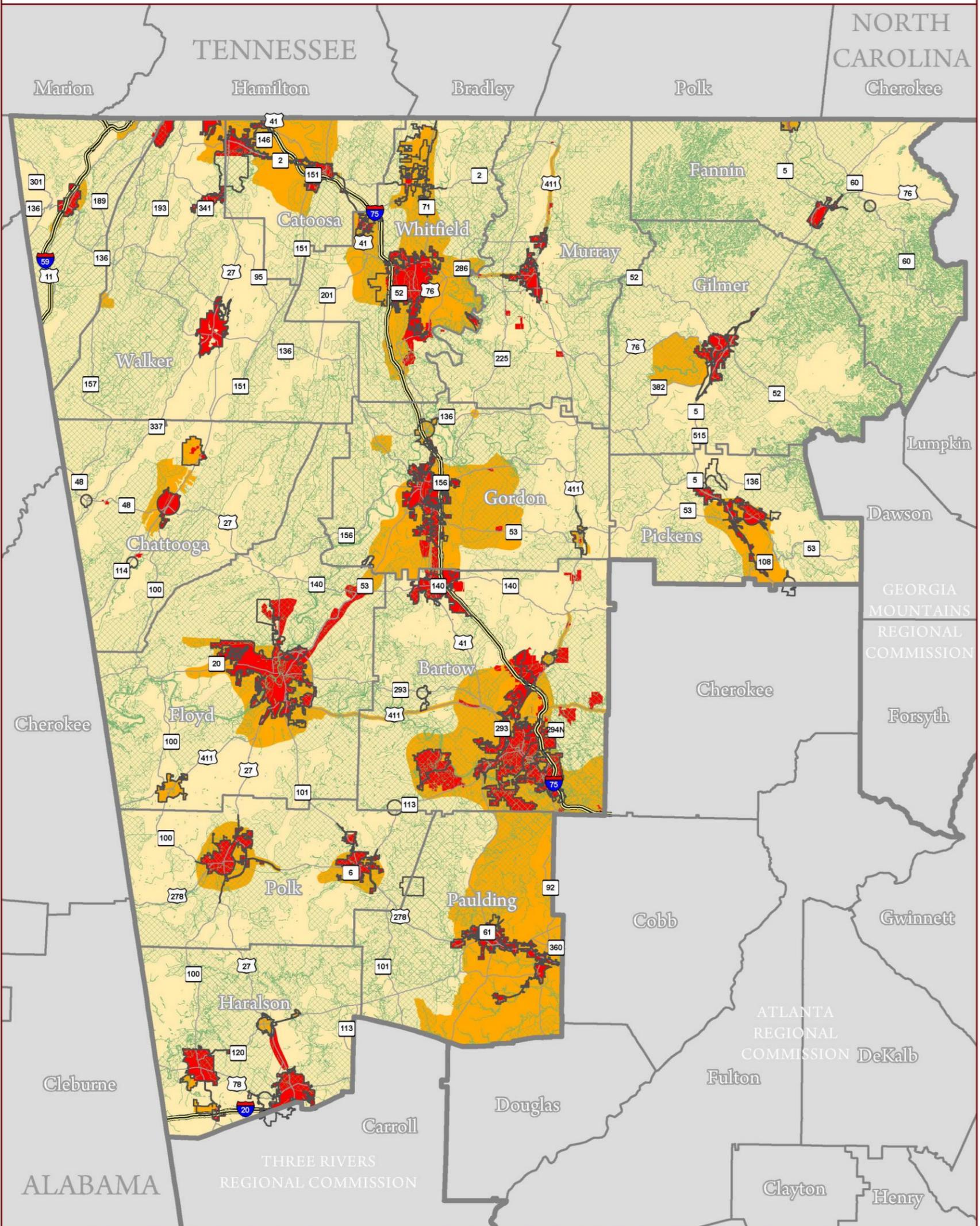
RURAL	DEVELOPING	DEVELOPED		
CONSERVATION <small>Southeastern Ecological Framework (which include Public Lands such as National Forest, State Parks and Wildlife Management Areas), Civil War Battlefields, State Historic Sites, Trail Corridors, Groundwater Recharge Areas, Protected River Corridors, Protected Mountains, NWT Wetlands, Water Supply Watersheds</small>				
Interstate	Highways	City Boundary	County Boundary	Regional Commission Boundary



**northwest**  
**GEORGIA**  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

1 in = 8 miles

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## Areas Requiring Special Attention in Northwest Georgia

**Narrative:** Areas Requiring Special Attention may need targeted monitoring and mitigation due to the potential for rapid development, redevelopment, and economic revitalization, or the overlap of developing areas with conservation areas. Development Strategies, Land Uses, and Quality Community Objectives for these areas are provided in the following tables.

### Threatened Regionally Important Resources

These areas show the overlap between Conservation areas shown on the Conservation and Development Map (p. 22) including adopted Regionally Important Resources, and “Developed” or “Developing” areas on the Projected 2050 Regional Land Use Map (p. 18). These areas include the Southeastern Ecological Framework, Chattahoochee National Forest, state forests, parks, and historic sites, state wildlife management areas, Civil War battlefields, trail corridors, environmentally sensitive areas (protected river corridors, protected mountains, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, and water supply watersheds), and Native American historical sites. Protection of environmentally sensitive areas is recommended within all land uses; they help filter surface water which becomes our drinking water, and provide stormwater control, connectivity to the natural environment, and fish and wildlife habitat.



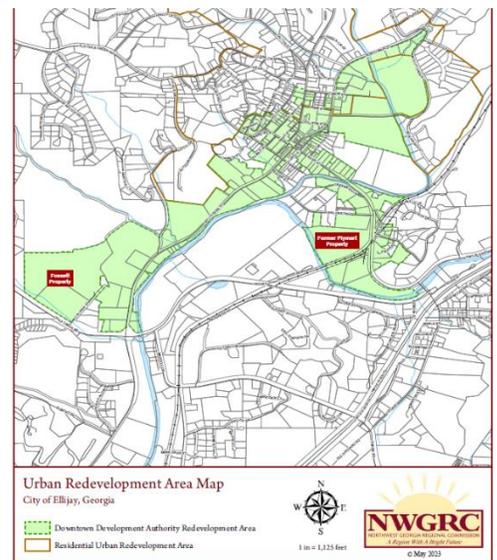
*Spring Creek Wetlands Preserve, photo credit Dalton Utilities.*

### Areas of Rapid Development

These are areas where rapid development and/or land use changes are likely to occur-- especially where the pace of development has or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation. Rapidly developing areas may be at risk for loss of environmental features, including wetlands, natural stormwater buffers and treatment areas, natural topography, tree canopy, wildlife, and prime or active agricultural land.

### Redevelopment Areas

These areas include Urban Redevelopment Areas, state and federal Opportunity Zones, and census tracts with poverty substantially higher than the region. Urban Redevelopment Areas are designated by the local government for rehabilitation of blight through the Urban Redevelopment Act. State Opportunity Zones are areas where economic reinvestments in job creation and private development can receive state job tax income credits or credits for affordable housing when state criteria are met; Federal Opportunity Zones were designated by the U. S. Treasury Department and the IRS to facilitate investment through preferential tax treatment where poverty rates are greater than 20%. Areas of highest poverty (25% or higher) indicate an overall need for additional services such as transportation, and opportunity for reinvestment.



**Recommended Development Practices**

This table indicates which development practices are suited to each area.

<b>Development Practice</b>	<b>Threatened RIRs</b>	<b>Rapid Development</b>	<b>Redevelopment</b>
Comply with all federal, state, and local legislation for the protection of State Vital Areas (groundwater recharge area, water supply watersheds, and wetlands).	✓	✓	✓
Retain existing vegetation and topography wherever possible.	✓	✓	✓
Use natural features for stormwater control whenever possible.	✓	✓	✓
Consider more than the minimum required buffers wherever possible.	✓	✓	✓
Minimize the amount of impervious surfaces by using alternative materials and designs.	✓	✓	✓
Take advantage of clustering and greenspace development options wherever they are permitted in development regulations.	✓	✓	
Limit clearing, grading, and soil disturbance where possible to areas where it is required for construction.	✓	✓	✓
When establishing new agricultural uses, consult with the County Extension Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission to identify and implement best management practices.	✓		
When establishing new forestry uses, consult with the Georgia Forestry Commission to identify and implement best management practices.	✓		
In any development, preserve topographical and hydrological features and cultural and historic resources to the greatest extent possible.	✓	✓	✓
Limit the proportion of impervious surfaces, including roofs, in developments.		✓	✓
Install pervious pavement whenever possible to allow water infiltration into the soil, and limit street width and length to the minimum possible within development regulations.		✓	✓
Construct vegetated swales in preference to tiles and drainage pipes wherever possible.		✓	✓
Construct bioretention areas or rain gardens in parking lot islands and residential areas.		✓	✓
Ensure that local regulations meet or exceed minimum State and federal requirements for the protection of State Vital Areas.	✓	✓	✓
Ensure local regulations meet or exceed minimum requirements for wetlands and stream buffers.	✓	✓	✓
Ensure that development ordinances prohibit or limit the placement of structures in flood-prone areas.	✓	✓	✓
Institute an incentive-based conservation easement program to lessen development in ecologically sensitive areas.	✓	✓	
Adopt ordinances to enable cluster and greenspace development.	✓	✓	
Assist landowners and developers in implementing appropriate development and best management practices.	✓	✓	✓
Provide infrastructure, particularly sewer, to areas of residential development where septic systems may be aging or failing, and where possible, site large or dense residential developments in areas where sewer service is available or planned.		✓	✓

	Threatened RIRs	Rapid Development	Redevelopment
<b>Development Practice</b>			
Adopt an Ordinance to Protect Groundwater Recharge Areas modeled on DCA's Environmental Planning Criteria Model Land Use Management Code §2-1 Groundwater Recharge Areas.	✓	✓	✓
Adopt a Water Supply Watershed Protection Ordinance modeled on DCA's Environmental Planning Criteria Model Land Use Management Code §2-2 Water Supply Watersheds.	✓	✓	✓
Adopt a Wetlands Protection Ordinance modeled on DCA's Environmental Planning Criteria Model Land Use Management Code §2-3 Wetlands.	✓	✓	✓
Prevent the potential loss of environmental features, including wetlands, natural stormwater buffers and treatment areas, natural topography, tree canopy, wildlife, and prime or active agricultural land		✓	

**Compatible Land Uses**

This table indicates which land uses are generally suited to each area of special attention.

	Threatened RIRs	Rapid Development	Redevelopment
<b>Land Use</b>			
Agriculture	✓		
Forest	✓		
Parks/ Recreation/ Trails	✓	✓	✓
Conservation/Greenspace	✓		
Low Density Residential	✓*	✓	✓
Medium and High Density Residential	✓*	✓	✓
Commercial	✓*	✓	✓
Industrial	✓*	✓	✓
Public/ Institutional	✓*	✓	✓
Mixed Use	✓*	✓	✓

\*Note: At a regional scale, many land uses may be found to be appropriate in each ARSA, or may already exist in each ARSA. Conversely, in certain environmentally sensitive areas, very limited or no land use/development may be appropriate. For example, very limited development patterns and land uses, that is, passive recreation use and trails, are appropriate for steep slopes and wetland areas. Such environmentally sensitive areas are found in each ARSA category but are specifically included in the threatened RIR category.

**Regional Quality Community Objectives**

The following table indicates which Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) are to be pursued in each ARSA.

QCO	Description	Threatened RIRs	Rapid Development	Redevelopment
Economic Prosperity	Encourage the development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community.		✓	✓
Resource Management	Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community.	✓	✓	✓
Efficient Land Use	Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community.	✓	✓	✓
Local Preparedness	Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve.	✓	✓	✓
Sense of Place	Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities.	✓	✓	✓
Regional Cooperation	Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs.	✓	✓	
Housing Options	Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community.		✓	✓
Transportation Options	Address the transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents.	✓	✓	✓
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.		✓	
Community Health	Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities.	✓	✓	✓

Figure 3. Areas Requiring Special Attention in Northwest Georgia.

# DRAFT Areas Requiring Special Attention in Northwest Georgia

The Areas Requiring Special Attention map identifies areas that may need targeted monitoring and mitigation due to potential development conflicts or opportunities for economic growth.

<b>THREATENED (POTENTIALLY IMPACTED)</b> Areas where significant natural or cultural resources overlap developed and developing areas and therefore are likely to be impacted by development	<b>RAPID DEVELOPMENT</b> Areas where rapid development is likely to occur and has or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation	<b>REDEVELOPMENT</b> Areas in need of or currently experiencing redevelopment. These areas include: State & Federal Opportunity Zones, Urban Redevelopment Areas and Census Tracts with 25%+ Poverty
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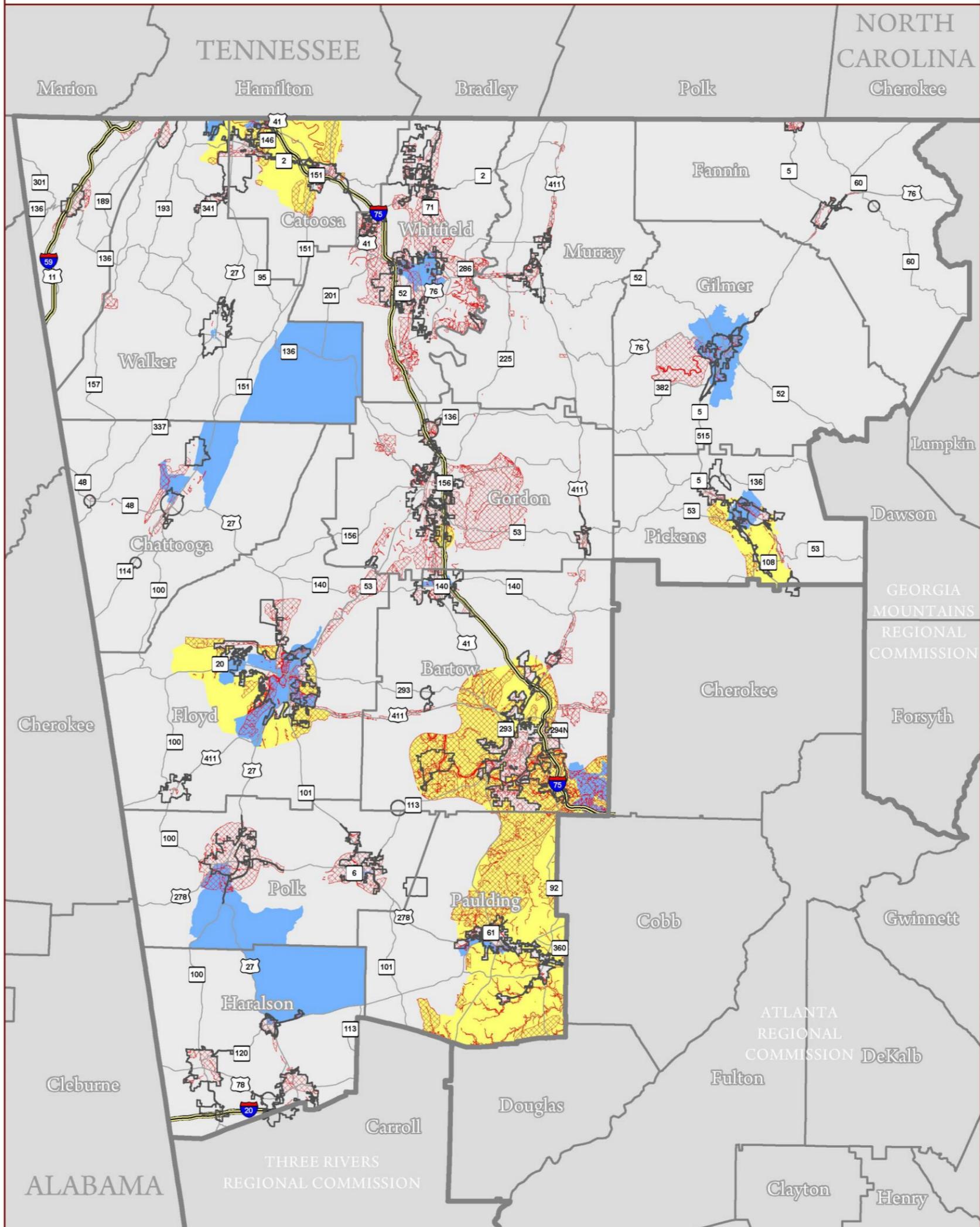
  

Interstate	Highways	City Boundary	County Boundary	Regional Commission Boundary



1 in = 8 miles

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*Picketts' Mill Battlefield State Historic Site.*

## Regional Needs and Opportunities

## Section Three. Needs and Opportunities

The NWGRC Council as the plan's Steering Committee, with stakeholders and members of the public, participated in a regional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis at its September 21, 2023 meeting, and in a series of public and stakeholder meetings from October 3, 2023- December 4, 2023. NWGRC staff reviewed the previous Regional Plan, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), the Transportation Improvement Plans of MPOs within and adjacent to the region, the GDOT Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan, Regional Plans of neighboring Regional Commissions, 2045 Georgia Land Use Trends (GLUT), areas of Conservation and Development and Areas Requiring Special Attention, and regional data. The Winter 2023 Regional Priorities Survey results also informed the regional needs and opportunities, which are described on the following pages. Those needs and opportunities were further refined to form the Priority Needs and Opportunities shown on p.35 which are addressed in the new regional work program, 2024-2028.



*Residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial land uses (Bartow County).*

### Community and Economic Development

As the local Economic Development District, with funding from the Economic Development Agency (EDA), NWGRC develops, revises, and implements the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in its five focus areas of Human Capital, Community Assets, Essential Infrastructure, Business Climate, and Resiliency. NWGRC partners with state and federal agencies including the Appalachian Regional Commission, Department of Community Affairs, and Georgia Department of Economic Development, and local and regional partners, to provide community and economic development assistance.

Regarding downtown development, regional survey respondents felt that support for existing businesses was most important (70%), followed by preserving historic buildings and assets (52%) and improving mobility and connectivity (39%). For electric vehicles, survey respondents felt that more charging stations and infrastructure were most needed (54%), followed by good examples from other communities (49%), and technical assistance for smaller communities (40%). For new industrial development, 87% indicated that ensuring sufficient roadways was the most important, followed by encouraging development where infrastructure is already in place (56%), then extending infrastructure to support new development (54%). For basic infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.), the greatest stated need was to repair and upgrade existing infrastructure (76%), then to require new development to help fund new infrastructure (38%), then to address drinking water quality (36%).

#### Needs:

- Assistance during the transition to manufacturing and deployment of electric vehicles
- Implement the Northwest Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- Increased access to diverse fields of employment and higher salary ranges
- Not enough high-paying job opportunities
- Aging infrastructure, particularly water and sewer, and lack of sewer in developing areas
- Ensure infrastructure is in place across the region to meet the needs of existing and new businesses and industries

#### Opportunities:

- Northwest Georgia is ideally located between Atlanta, Birmingham, and Chattanooga, with available land.
- There is great corporate diversity and business-friendly political leadership
- Tourism is a strong economic sector
- Provide resources and assistance to support community development needs
- Bordering Tennessee and Alabama provides opportunities for multi-state initiatives
- Improve the competitiveness of Northwest Georgia communities to attract and retain business and industry

### Land Use

Development interest in the region continues to be high. Land use is changing with population growth, housing, and industrial and warehousing projects. An up-to-date ordinance is a critical development tool for all communities with zoning. Through comprehensive planning and updated zoning ordinances, communities can adapt to changing opportunities.

#### Needs

- Ensure zoning ordinances are updated and address local needs
- Greater protection of natural resources is needed

#### Opportunities

- There is growth and development at a scale previously unseen, but there is also a lack of smart growth and quality growth
  - Develop a coordinated long-term land use vision for Northwest Georgia that respects local land use plans and balances conservation with development needs
- 

### Housing

The 2022 five-year American Community Survey data showed Paulding County has the highest homeownership at 80.3%, followed by Pickens County at 78.9%, while Floyd County had the highest percentage of rental residential at 36.9%, followed by Polk County at 34.9%. Almost half (44%) of renters reported payments of 30% or more of their household income, as did 23% of homeowners paying a mortgage, and 10% of owners not paying a mortgage. Regional survey respondents felt that for housing, cost was the most pressing issue (72%), followed by blight and disinvestment (40%), and lack of quality rental housing (29%). Additional housing stock and more diverse housing options were the second most important regional issue, followed only by basic infrastructure improvements.

#### Needs

- There is a lack of safe, affordable housing and a lack of housing investment
- Affordable workforce housing, multifamily, and senior housing is lacking
- There is a limited variety of housing types

#### Opportunities

- Relatively low cost of living and available jobs will contribute to a population increase
- 

### Natural and Cultural Resources

Northwest Georgia resources include water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, steep slopes (Gilmer, Fannin Counties), protected rivers, wetlands, the Chattahoochee National Forest, varied flora and fauna, and historic sites, including the National Historic Trail of Tears. Regional survey respondents felt local-state-private sector partnerships for preservation were most needed (70%), followed by education on historic assets (52%) and identification and National Register listing of these assets (40%). Regarding access to resources, respondents stated that trailhead improvements (parking, lighting) were most needed (62%), followed by connecting trails to downtowns (48%) and to other trails (43%). For basic infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.), the greatest need was to repair and upgrade existing infrastructure (76%), then to require new development to help fund new infrastructure (38%), then to address drinking water quality (36%).

**Natural/Cultural Needs**

- Agriculture is strong in the region, but greater protection of rural lands is needed
- Maintain surface and groundwater quality throughout the region to meet federal and state regulations

**Opportunities**

- Great access to outdoor recreation opportunities
- Preserve irreplaceable historic and cultural resources through inventory, citizen engagement, planning, and funding assistance
- Connect more people with Northwest Georgia's natural resources so they will enjoy and protect its diversity and beauty

**Transportation**

According to regional survey respondents, the greatest transportation need was more rural transportation options (54%), followed by cycling and pedestrian mobility improvements (47%) and regional public transit coordination (42%). Ensuring that roadways would support new development was a top priority for industrial development (87% of respondents). Respondents also indicated they would support a regional transportation special local option sales tax (55%) or would like more information (28%).

**Needs**

- East-West connectivity from I-75 is lacking
- Traffic congestion is increasing; more transportation options including transit for work and school are needed
- Local road infrastructure is stressed; increased truck weights have deteriorated local road infrastructure
- People are seeking longer trails and bikeways, as well as connections to local and regional treasures. People without cars need safe pathways to work and school.

**Opportunities**

- Interstate 75 is an economic development corridor; Rail and light rail, and the Appalachian Regional Port in Eton, provide alternate freight routes.
- Provide safe, efficient movement of people and goods through Northwest Georgia to enhance economic growth
- Improve connectivity of bike and pedestrian pathways throughout the region

## Priority Needs and Opportunities

The regional needs described on previous pages were further prioritized to develop the following list of priority needs that will be addressed in the next five years in the region's work program (2024-2028):

	Priority Need/ Opportunity
1	<b>Ensure</b> infrastructure is in place across the region to meet the needs of existing and new businesses and industries
2	<b>Improve</b> the competitiveness of Northwest Georgia communities to attract and retain business and industry
3	<b>Provide</b> resources and assistance to support community development projects
4	<b>There is</b> a lack of safe, affordable housing and a lack of housing investment
5	<b>Develop</b> a coordinated long-term land use vision for Northwest Georgia that respects local land use plans and balances conservation with development needs
6	<b>Connect</b> more people with Northwest Georgia's natural resources so they will enjoy and protect its diversity and beauty
7	<b>Preserve</b> irreplaceable historic and cultural resources through inventory, citizen engagement, planning, and funding assistance
8	<b>Maintain</b> surface and groundwater quality throughout the region to meet federal and state regulations
9	<b>Provide</b> safe, efficient movement of people and goods through Northwest Georgia to enhance economic growth
10	<b>Improve</b> connectivity of bike and pedestrian pathways throughout the region



*Ringgold City Hall with Memorial Day Flags.*

## Implementation Program

- Performance Standards
- Regional Work Program
- Report of Accomplishments

## Section Four. Implementation Program

The Implementation Program is the strategy for achieving the Regional Vision and addressing the Regional Priorities and Strategies. It identifies steps to be taken by NWGRC and regional leadership, in partnership with local governments, to implement the plan and achieve the Regional Vision. The Implementation Program includes Minimum and Excellence Standards, a Local Government Performance Report, a Report of Accomplishments on the previous five-year work program, and the 2024-2028 Regional Work Program which identifies projects to be completed in the next five years.

### Minimum and Excellence Standards

To encourage implementation of the Regional Plan, realize the Regional Vision, and address the Regional Issues and Opportunities, the NWGRC set Minimum and Excellence thresholds for local governments as required by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Regional Planning Requirements. The Minimum Standard includes essential activities for consistency with the Regional Plan, while the Excellence Standard includes desirable activities for consistency with the Regional Plan.

#### Minimum Standards

The Minimum Standard requirements are the same for all local governments in the region.

Number	Minimum Standard Requirement
<b>Min1</b>	The local government has an updated, adopted comprehensive plan and uses the future development map or land use map to guide development.
<b>Min2</b>	The local government has an approved, adopted Service Delivery Strategy which is updated as required.
<b>Min3</b>	The municipal/county clerk meets the mandated orientation training as specified in State law (O.C.G.A. sections 36-1-24 and 36-45-20).
<b>Min4</b>	Newly elected municipal/county officials participate in training sponsored by the Georgia Municipal Association or the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia.
<b>Min5</b>	The local government uses the Guiding Principles, Regional Vision, and Regional Priorities of the Northwest Georgia Regional Plan in making local planning decisions.
<b>Min6</b>	The local government uses the General Policies and Protection Measures in the Northwest Georgia Regionally Important Resource Plan when making decisions that affect Regionally Important Resources.
<b>Min7</b>	The local government complies with requirements regarding Developments of Regional Impact.
<b>Min8</b>	A hazard mitigation plan approved by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency has been officially adopted by the local governing authority.
<b>Min9</b>	The local government meets state financial reporting requirements and E-Verify requirements.
<b>Min10</b>	The local government shares updated Tax Assessor's data tables and parcel data with NWGRC annually or as needed.
<b>Min11</b>	The local government reports annexations and deannexations to the Department of Community Affairs and the US Census Bureau and participates in the annual Census Boundary and Annexation Survey.

**Excellence Standards****PlanFirst and Training**

We have applied for PlanFirst designation to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs

We are a PlanFirst Community designated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs

We have attended a Community Planning Institute in the last year

We have attended the Georgia Municipal Association or ACCG conference and training sessions in the last year.

**Economic and Community Development**

We are an Entrepreneur Friendly Community (Georgia Department of Economic Development).

We support or encourage a Buy Local campaign or actively partner with our downtowns, Chamber of Commerce, and Development Authority in economic development.

Our ordinances are available online, on our website, or another website such as municode.com.

We have an active Business Retention and Expansion program or an Existing Industry Program.

We have an Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) per O.C.G.A. 36-61-1.

We participate in the Certified Literate Community Program (CLCP) under the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education.

We have attended training offered by the Georgia Academy for Economic Development.

We have an inventory of sites and buildings available for commercial and industrial development or redevelopment.

We are a Main Street Community or a Better Hometown Community or have an active downtown development program.

We have an Enterprise Zone and/or Opportunity Zone (Georgia tax credit program) or similar incentive program for economic development.

We participate in multi-county economic development efforts.

We have a unified development code to help streamline the development process.

We participate in regional tourism efforts (e.g. promotional materials).

We are a Camera-Ready Community.

We participated in the Department of Economic Development Tourism Resource Team program.

### Housing

We have a written housing plan, strategy, or redevelopment strategy.

We provide development incentives for housing at a variety of affordable, low-moderate, and middle-income levels.

We have a housing trust fund participate in a land trust or land bank, or partner with Habitat.

We participate in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) program.

Our zoning ordinance allows very small lot sizes (1/4 acre or smaller) for single-family houses, duplex/triplex housing, or multifamily housing.

Our staff or elected officials attend housing training annually.

We have adopted and implemented an ordinance that facilitates the cleanup, repair, and/or demolition of unsafe or abandoned properties.

We actively incentivize housing that is attainable and adequate, meeting a variety of housing needs for households of all income levels.

### Transportation

We require sidewalk connectivity for new development and internal sidewalks for new subdivisions.

We have a bicycle and pedestrian master plan and have bike facilities and pedestrian trails in our community.

We participate in the Georgia Safe Routes to School program.

We participate in a public transit program and have an updated transit development plan or assessment.

We have developed and implemented policies/ordinances/plans that encourage or promote street connectivity and improve access and mobility.

We participate in regional transportation and transit initiatives.

We have adopted a local Right-of-Way Protection Plan.

We have implemented local road improvements consistent with an existing transportation plan.

We provide incentives for private roads to be paved and constructed per local road standards and provide for maintenance through homeowners' associations.

### Land Use

We have a zoning ordinance or development code in place that is regularly updated to reflect the community's vision.

Our zoning ordinance allows accessory housing/ dwelling units.

We have a unified development code to help streamline the development process.

Our zoning ordinance allows mixed uses (such as allowing residential and commercial together in the same district).

## Land Use

Our zoning ordinance allows planned unit developments (PUDs).

Our zoning ordinance accommodates the reuse of closed, decommissioned, or obsolete (greyfields) uses.

Our zoning ordinance includes manufactured home compatibility standards that ensure the architectural compatibility of manufactured homes with adjacent single-family residences.

Our zoning ordinance has a floating or more permissive overlay zone to provide more flexibility.

Our zoning ordinance requires that new infill development is compatible with its neighborhood and maintains the harmony and character of existing areas.

We have subdivision regulations.

We have growth boundaries to attempt to control sprawl.

We have adopted and implemented a landscaping ordinance.

We have a process or procedure to allow construction on existing substandard lots.

We provide incentives for green subdivision design, such as conservation subdivisions.

We have an impact fee ordinance.

We require or provide incentives for new development/redevelopment to pursue LEED certification for “green” site planning, construction, and post-construction practices.

We require that new developments consider and accommodate upstream stormwater runoff and do not negatively impact downstream areas.

We require agricultural buffers where non-agricultural land abuts agricultural land.

We have adopted and implemented policies and regulations to preserve agricultural land and activities.

We require our planning commissioners and staff to attend training at least annually.

We have an annual meeting of the planning commission and elected officials.

We have adopted and enforced design guidelines for new construction.

We participate in the National Flood Insurance Program by enforcing a floodplain management ordinance that meets or exceeds FEMA requirements to reduce flooding.

We have a legal sign ordinance.

We analyze the financial impacts of growth before allowing residential development (subdivisions) over a certain size.

We have developed, adopted, and implemented design overlay ordinances for important gateways, corridors, and city center areas.

We have a litter prevention ordinance.

We have adopted and implemented standards or ordinances for low-impact development.

We plan for development to locate where infrastructure and services already exist.

We have a geographic information system (GIS) that utilizes in-house staff or a third party.

We have a GIS that is shared with other local government entities such as fire and police.

### Land Use

We have GIS-generated products that are available to the public.

We have developed GIS data for address points and/or building footprints.

We participate in FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS) program to reduce flood losses, facilitate accurate insurance ratings, and promote awareness of flood insurance.

### Natural and Cultural Resources

We have implemented environmental ordinances providing local protections for wetlands, steep slopes, groundwater recharge areas, river corridors, and water supply watersheds (as applicable to our jurisdiction).

We have adopted a water conservation policy or ordinance.

We organize or participate in a stream clean-up program such as Adopt-A-Stream or Rivers Alive.

We have designated a local historic district, adopted a historic preservation ordinance, and have an active historic preservation commission.

We seek state/ federal historic designations for districts or resources.

We have and enforce a tree ordinance.

We have an area-specific plan (such as a downtown development plan) to address a specific part of our jurisdiction.

We are a Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliate.

We have developed and adopted ordinances that encourage developers to protect trees, open space, natural resources, and wildlife habitats.

We are addressing known water quality needs such as impaired streams, illicit dumping to stormwater or sewer, inflow and infiltration, etc.

### Community Facilities and Services

We require connection to public water and sewer systems for new construction where they are available, and at the natural time of replacement when septic systems fail [in our urban areas].

We have water and sewer revenues that adequately cover the maintenance and operation of the systems (see Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Finance Center).

We incentivize redevelopment and improvement of existing commercial and industrial properties over greenfield development requiring new investment in utilities through programs such as TDRs, TAD/BIDs, Urban Redevelopment Plans

We have a written asset management plan or capital improvement plan for infrastructure (water, sewer, electric, etc.).

We have a recreation plan, greenspace plan, or parks or trails plan.

We have developed and adopted a Capital Improvements Element (CIE) according to state law.

We have or participate in a recycling program.

### **Coordination and Planning**

Our department heads actively review the comprehensive plan community work program at least semi-annually.

We work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management, natural resource protection, transportation, air quality, etc.).

We have developed active partnerships with state and/or federal agencies in addressing regional issues.

We provide input as applicable during reviews of Developments of Regional Impact.

We update and amend the Service Delivery Strategy when changes occur.

We participate in the North Georgia Water Resources Partnership.

We are implementing the recommendations contained in the Coosa-North Georgia Regional Water Plan, Middle Chattahoochee Regional Water Plan, or Metropolitan North Georgia Planning District's Water Resources Plans, as appropriate.

**Local Government Performance Standards Update**

This is a report on minimum performance standards. For state-required reporting, Minimum standard 9, DCA prepares a quarterly update of past-due reports; NWGRC contacts each local government to make them aware and offer assistance. NWGRC would similarly offer assistance in meeting each minimum standard should it be needed.

**Minimum Performance Standards Met**

Local Government	Min 1	Min 2	Min 3	Min 4	Min 5	Min 6	Min 7	Min 8	Min 9	Min 10	Min 11
Bartow County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adairsville	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cartersville	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Emerson	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Euharlee	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kingston	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Taylorville	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
White	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Catoosa County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fort Oglethorpe	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ringgold	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Chattooga County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lyerly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Menlo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Summerville	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trion	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dade County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trenton	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fannin County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Blue Ridge	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
McCaysville	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Morganton	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Floyd County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cave Spring	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rome	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gilmer County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ellijay	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
East Ellijay	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gordon County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Calhoun	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fairmount	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Plainville	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Resaca	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Haralson County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL PLAN 2024-2028

<b>Local Government</b>	<b>Min 1</b>	<b>Min 2</b>	<b>Min 3</b>	<b>Min 4</b>	<b>Min 5</b>	<b>Min 6</b>	<b>Min 7</b>	<b>Min 8</b>	<b>Min 9</b>	<b>Min 10</b>	<b>Min 11</b>
<b>Bremen</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Buchanan</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Tallapoosa</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Waco</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Murray County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Chatsworth</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Eton</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Paulding County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Braswell</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<b>Dallas</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Hiram</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Pickens County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Jasper</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Nelson</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Talking Rock</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Polk County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Aragon</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<b>Cedartown</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rockmart</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Walker County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Chickamauga</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>LaFayette</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Lookout Mountain</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Rossville</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Whitfield County</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Dalton</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Cohutta</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Tunnel Hill</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Varnell</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

## Northwest Georgia Regional Work Program (2024-2028)

The Northwest Georgia Regional Work Program (2024-2028) lists actions, or specific projects to be completed in the next five years, or the longer term, by the Regional Commission and partner agencies, in conjunction with local governments. Each action has a corresponding priority and strategy that it addresses. All actions have a timeline, whether during the next five years from 2024-2028 or in the long-term planning horizon past 2028. Some projects may be shown as ongoing, meaning that they are an important and recurring aspect of the Regional Commission's work, but do not have a specific year of accomplishment. Each action has an estimated cost per year or a total over the life of the project. Each action includes responsible parties that will implement the project, whether NWGRC staff, local governments, partner agencies, and other organizations or groups.

#	Action	Partners	Short Term (1-5 yrs)	Long term (6-10 yr)	Ongoing
<b>Community and Economic Development</b>					
<b>Priority Need: Ensure infrastructure is in place across the region to meet the needs of existing and new businesses and industries.</b>					
<b>Strategy: Implement regional and local plans and strategies for infrastructure improvements needed to support job creation/retention and private investment</b>					
1	Assist 10-15 communities/ year to improve or expand infrastructure to support downtown and economic development through grant writing and planning; assist with projects related to IJJA/BIL funds	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$70,000/ YR		
2	Partner with neighboring regions to assist in the transition to Electric Vehicle (EV) manufacturing; assist with EV infrastructure	NWGRC, ARC ARISE	2024-2028 \$15,000/ yr		
3	Update the Northwest Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)	NWGRC	2027 \$10,000		
4	Implement Economic Resiliency Plan (EDA) in NW Georgia.	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$10,000/		
<b>Priority Need: Improve the competitiveness of Northwest Georgia communities to attract and retain business and industry</b>					
<b>Strategy: Provide planning and funding assistance to increase economic competitiveness in coordination with state and federal agencies</b>					
5	Provide EDA RLF loan packaging to assist 3+ small businesses each year to expand operations or add jobs, including assessment of need, preparation of loan packages, and financial planning in partnership with EDA and lending institutions	NWGRC, EDA, Lenders, Businesses	2024-2028		
6	Participate in and implement recommendations of Georgia’s Artificial Intelligence in Manufacturing (GA-AIM) project	NWGRC	2024-2026		
<b>Priority Need: Provide resources and assistance to support community development projects</b>					
<b>Strategy: Provide project development and application assistance for projects that improve public services, infrastructure, and tourism</b>					
7	Assist with water, sewer, broadband, and other infrastructure improvements, fire and police services, parks, recreation, and trails, and other community development needs	NWGRC, DCA, ARC, GEFA, LWCF, Recreational Trails, AFG, others	2024-2028 \$80,000/yr		
8	Provide 1-5 training workshops/ year for local governments on project development, funding assistance, compliance, and related topics	NWGRC, DCA, ARC, others	2024-2028 \$10,000/yr		
9	Provide technical assistance to local governments in meeting compliance requirements for grants received	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$20,000/yr		
<b>Housing</b>					
<b>Priority Need: There is a lack of safe, affordable housing and a lack of housing investment</b>					
<b>Strategy: Incentivize redevelopment of blighted or vacant areas for residential use; assist local governments with housing needs</b>					
10	Partner with state agencies to hold 1-3 regional workshops per year for resources and training for local governments on housing needs	NWGRC, DCA, state agencies and partners	2024-2028 \$5,000		

#	Action	Partners	Short Term (1-5 yrs)	Long term (6-10 yr)	Ongoing
11	Provide data and resources to communities to identify housing needs	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$10,000/yr		
12	Assist 1-2 communities/ YR to apply for GA Initiatives for Community Housing (GICH); serve on community teams	NWGRC, local governments	2024-2028 \$7,500/ YR		
<b>Land Use</b>					
<b>Priority Need: Develop a coordinated long-term land use vision for Northwest Georgia that respects local land use plans and balances conservation with development needs</b>					
<b>Strategy: Assist local governments to comply with the current Georgia Zoning Procedures Law (O.C.G.A. 36-66-1, et seq.; 36-67-1, et seq.; and, 36-67A-1, et seq. as amended) and provide necessary technical assistance.</b>					
24	Assist 2-5 local governments each year with Zoning and Land Use Ordinance authoring and adoption and amendment; develop local service contracts with 5-10 local governments for zoning and land use assistance	NWGRC, local governments	2024-2028 \$20,000/yr.		
25	Administer the Dalton-Whitfield- Varnell Unified Development Ordinance	NWGRC	\$40,000/yr		
26	Work with training providers including UGA CVIOG to provide 1- 2 annual planning and zoning training and related training	NWGRC, local governments, Training providers (GAZA, GPA, DCA, UGA CVIOG)	2024-2028 \$1,000/ yr.		
<b>Strategy: Assist local governments to prepare and implement Comprehensive Plans, update and implement the regional plan, meet other requirements of the Georgia Planning Act and related laws, and apply for PlanFirst designation.</b>					
27	Assist with the preparation of scheduled updates to joint comprehensive plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gilmer County and municipalities (2024),</li> <li>• Chattooga and Catoosa Counties and municipalities (2026),</li> <li>• Dade, Fannin, Haralson, Polk, Walker Counties and municipalities (2027),</li> <li>• Bartow, Gordon, Murray, and Whitfield Counties and municipalities (2028)</li> </ul>	NWGRC, local governments	2024-2028 \$60,000/yr.		
28	Prepare 10+/year Development of Regional Impact reviews and reports for projects meeting DRI thresholds; prepare regional map of DRI projects	NWGRC, local governments	2024-2028 \$7,500/year		
29	Assist 1-2 communities each year with PlanFirst applications	NWGRC, local governments	2024-2028 \$5,000/ yr.		
30	Update the <i>Northwest Georgia Regional Plan</i> in 2024 and 2028-2029; prepare annual implementation reports.	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$7,500		

#	Action	Partners	Short Term (1-5 yrs)	Long term (6-10 yr)	Ongoing
31	Prepare 20-30 local plan reviews, transportation plan reviews, environmental reviews, Section 106 reviews, and other coordinated reviews each year	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$5,000/ yr.		
<b>Natural and Cultural Resources</b>					
<b>Priority Need: Connect more people with Northwest Georgia’s natural resources so they will enjoy and protect its diversity and beauty</b>					
<b>Strategy: Identify, preserve, and promote identified Regionally Important Resources</b>					
13	A complete update of the Regional Resource Plan per Section 110-12-4-, 02(4) of Rules of Georgia Department of Community Affairs, including recommendations to preserve critical resources	NWGRC	2024 \$5,000		
14	Implement RIR plan: Develop publicly accessible GIS database and maps highlighting the region’s historic, cultural, and natural assets	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$7,500/ YR		
<b>Strategy: Improve trails, greenways, water trails/ blueways, and trail connections within and to adjoining regions; Improve safety, visibility, and access to trails and water trails/blueways; provide improved recreational opportunities for all</b>					
15	Assist 1-5 communities/ year to improve water trails/ blueways and put-ins, parks and recreation areas, trails, and trailheads	NWGRC, local governments, state partners and agencies, SORBA, TPL, Limestone Valley RC&D, Thrive Regional Partnership, and others	2024-2028 \$7,500/ YR		
16	Assist Catoosa, Dade, and Walker Counties and Cities to implement the 2015 NW GA Feasibility Study for Bikeway & Pedestrian Multi-Use Trails including the development of Chick-Chatt greenway, trail, and Lookout Mountain trail connections	NWGRC, Catoosa, Dade, and Walker Counties and Cities, funding agencies, Chick-Chatt Greenway Association, Thrive Regional Partnership	2024-2028 \$7,500		
<b>Priority Need: Preserve irreplaceable historic and cultural resources through inventory, citizen engagement, planning, and funding assistance</b>					
<b>Strategy: Identify and preserve historic and cultural resources</b>					
17	Provide resources to local governments for historic National Register nominations for regionally significant historical assets	NWGRC, HPD	2024-2028 \$10,000/ YR		
18	Support historic resource surveys and digitize NWGRC’s historic resource documents	NWGRC, Bandy Heritage Center	2024-2028 \$6,000		

#	Action	Partners	Short Term (1-5 yrs)	Long term (6-10 yr)	Ongoing
19	Assist region's Certified Local Governments (CLGs) to maintain eligibility; assist in updating local ordinances	NWGRC, HPD, local govts	2024-2028 \$5,000/ YR		
<b>Priority Need: Maintain surface and groundwater quality throughout the region to meet federal and state regulations</b>					
<b>Strategy: Apply for funding to improve water quality, manage stormwater, restore streambanks, and protect water resources in the region</b>					
20	Provide resources to local governments to implement Watershed Management Plans and water quality plans, with Limestone Valley RC&D as a partner when possible.	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$5,000/yr.		
21	Provide staff support to the North Georgia Water Resources Partnership including administration of Regional Water Plan Seed Grants and annual educational seminar	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$5,000/yr.		
22	Administer FY2023 Regional Water Plan Seed Grant funds to prepare the Lake Lanier Pilot Nutrient Trade project, and FY2024 RWP seed grant funds for resiliency study	Coosa-North Georgia Water Council, N GA Water Resources Partnership, NWGRC, GAEPD	2024-2028 \$2,000/ yr		
23	Assist 2-3 local governments/ year to implement recommendations of Coosa-North Georgia Water Plan, resiliency study, other plans through green infrastructure, culvert redesign and improvement, green space, and conservation design projects	NWGRC, GAWP, DCA, others	2024-2028 \$5,000/ yr		
<b>Transportation</b>					
<b>Priority Need: Provide safe, efficient movement of people and goods through Northwest Georgia to enhance economic growth</b>					
<b>Strategy: Improve coordination between local governments, GDOT, MPOs, and federal agencies to implement regionally significant transportation projects</b>					
32	Prepare Regional Transit Development Plan in partnership with GDOT and consultant agencies	GDOT, NWGRC, Modern Mobility, AECOM	2024 \$40,000		
33	Participate in meetings of federal and state transportation agencies, Atlanta MPO, Chattanooga/Hamilton County/North Georgia TPO, Rome-Floyd County MPO, Greater Dalton MPO, Cartersville-Bartow County MPO; provide quarterly planning and coordination between these agencies and the NWGRC Council and non-MPO governments on regionally significant projects	NWGRC, GDOT, MPOs			Ongoing \$20,000/yr.
34	Implement THRIVE2055 transportation and freight mobility initiatives, representing NWGRC Counties of Dade, Walker, Catoosa, Whitfield, Murray	NWGRC, THRIVE2055	2024-2028 \$5,000/yr.		
35	Add transit page with GDOT transit materials and links to NWGRC website; update regularly	NWGRC	2024-2028 \$5,000/yr.		

#	Action	Partners	Short Term (1-5 yrs)	Long term (6-10 yr)	Ongoing
36	Coordinate with GDOT District 6 and/or Office of Planning and with local governments and MPOs in needs related to BIL/IIJA funding, incl. training, technical assistance, etc.	NWGRC, GDOT, local governments	2024-2028 \$5,000/ yr.		
<b>Priority Need: Improve connectivity of bike and pedestrian pathways throughout the region</b>					
<b>Strategy: Implement bike &amp; pedestrian safety plans, GA Bicycle/ Pedestrian Safety Action Plans, Safe Routes to School, implement Complete Streets design</b>					
37	Migrate Bike! Walk! Northwest Georgia website materials to NWGRC website to implement the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Safety Plan and local plans.	NWGRC, GDOT, local govts, and Bike! Walk! NWGA	2024-2028 \$5,000/ yr.		
38	Participate in 1-2 Safe Routes to School Resource Center walk safety audits per year and assist 1-2 schools and local governments/ year to implement audit recommendations and GDOT Complete Streets policies through planning, training, and grant writing assistance	NWGRC, GDOT, Safe Routes Resource Center	2024-2028 \$5,000/ yr.		
39	Incorporate all local bike/ ped plans into a regional database; identify favorable connection corridors between bike/ ped infrastructure	NWGRC, GDOT, local govts, and Bike! Walk! NWGA	2024-2028 \$10,000		

## Report of Accomplishments

The Report of Accomplishments presents an annual status update on each project listed in the 2023 annual implementation report. Each project from the 2023 Regional Work Program must be listed as either Ongoing, Completed, Dropped, or Postponed. If the project was Dropped or Postponed, an explanation for the change must be provided. If the project was completed, the date completed is also shown. If a project is Ongoing or Ongoing-Rewritten, it will be included in the new work program for 2024-2028.

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
<b>Economic Development</b>						
Ensure infrastructure is in place across the region to meet the needs of existing and new business and industry.	Implement regional and local plans and strategies for infrastructure improvements needed to support job creation/retention and private investment	1. Assist 10-15 communities as identified annually to improve or expand infrastructure to support economic development through grant writing, planning, and document/plan updates and to implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy; assist with projects related to ARP, IIJA, recovery funds	NWGRC	2023-2026 \$70,000/ YR		Ongoing-Rewritten
		2. Implement Cares Act Supplemental Assistance for EDD Partnership Planning Grant Funds to identify potential resiliency, mitigation, and economic recovery projects in NW Georgia.	NWGRC	2023 \$400,000		Completed 2023
Focus on improvement of skills for jobs in Northwest Georgia (specific training and skill	Improve local and regional partnerships between industry/ business, workforce development providers, and	3. Develop and implement education, training, and employment opportunities for unemployed/ underemployed individuals in Northwest Georgia; provide leadership training and work-ready skills	WIOA, Local Governments	2023-2026	Federal funds	Dropped due to routine nature

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
development for the jobs and industries in our region).	educational institutions both K-12 and post-secondary, and community leadership.	for ages 14-21 through approved training providers; and provide layoff support services, under the direction of the Workforce Development Board.				
Improve the competitiveness of Northwest Georgia communities to attract and retain business and industry	Provide planning and funding assistance to increase economic competitiveness in coordination with state and federal agencies	4. Provide loan packaging to assist 5-10 businesses each year to expand operations or add jobs, including assessment of need, preparation of loan packages, and financial planning in partnership with EDA and lending institutions, and with COVID-19-related loan assistance	NWGRC, EDA, Lenders, Businesses	2023-2026 \$95,000		Ongoing-rewritten
<b>Housing</b>						
There is a lack of safe, affordable housing and a lack of mid to high-range housing investment in downtowns	Incentivize redevelopment of blighted or vacant areas for residential use; provide assistance for a range of local government housing needs	5. Work with state agencies to hold 1-2 regional workshops per year, including Housing Resource Workshops, to provide resources and training for local governments and agencies on regional housing issues and needs	NWGRC, DCA, UGA, GICH, GA Conservancy, GA Power	2023-2026 \$3,000		Ongoing-rewritten
		6. Assist 1-2 communities/ YR to apply for GA Initiatives for Community Housing (GICH) and to complete program	NWGRC, local governments	2023-2026 \$7,500/ YR		Ongoing

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
		7. Survey local governments to determine interest in “circuit-riding” or shared assistance program for code enforcement, zoning, and related assistance	NWGRC	2023 \$1,000/ YR		Dropped; local assistance is provided on request. May revisit.
		8. If enough communities express interest, develop local government pilot program for “circuit-riding” or shared assistance with code enforcement, zoning, and related assistance	NWGRC, DCA, local governments	2023-2026 \$5,000		Dropped; local assistance is provided on request. May revisit.
Natural and Historic Resources						
More people need to connect with Northwest Georgia’s natural resources so they will enjoy and protect its diversity and beauty	Identify, protect, preserve, and promote identified Regionally Important Resources	9. Complete update of the Regional Resource Plan per Section 110-12-4-, 02(4) of Rules of Georgia Department of Community Affairs, including recommended actions to address critical resources and improve access to natural resources	NWGRC	2023-2024 \$5,000		Ongoing
		10. Implement RIR plan: Develop publicly accessible GIS database and maps highlighting the region’s historic, cultural, and natural assets	NWGRC	2024-2026 \$7,500/ YR		Postponed- Will begin after the adoption of the plan
	Promote trails, greenways, and blueways; Improve safety, visibility, and access to trails and	11. Provide planning and grant writing assistance to 1-5 communities/ year to plan for expansion of and safety improvements to land and	NWGRC, local governments, DNR and grant agencies, SORBA, SETPL, other groups	2023-2026 \$7,500/ YR		Ongoing-rewritten

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
	blueways and add access points	water trails, parks and recreation areas, trailheads, and water access/ put-ins, including assistance related to recovery funds				
Preserve irreplaceable historic and cultural resources through inventory, citizen engagement, planning, and funding assistance	Identify and preserve historic and cultural resources	12. Prepare 1-2 National Register preliminary determinations and nominations for regionally significant historical assets and/or assist 1-2 local governments/ YR to prevent loss of HPD Certified Local Government (CLG) status	NWGRC, HPD	2023-2026 \$15,000/ YR		Ongoing - rewritten
		13. Digitize NWGRC historic resource documents including National Register listings, historic resource surveys	NWGRC, Bandy Heritage Center	2023-2026 \$6,000		Postponed to 2024-2025 due to staff changes
Maintain surface and groundwater quality throughout the region to meet federal and state regulations	Apply for funding to improve water quality, manage stormwater, restore streambanks, and protect water resources in the region	14. Administer finances and grant funds and provide staff support for monthly and annual meetings of the North Georgia Water Resources Partnership	NWGRC	2023-2026 \$5,000/yr.		Ongoing- rewritten (combined with #15)
		15. Assist the North Georgia Water Resources Partnership, Coosa-North Georgia Water Council, or local governments and utilities to apply for state and federal funding to implement Regional Water Plans and related studies	NWGRC	2023-2026 \$7,500/yr.		Ongoing- rewritten

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
		16. Administer FY2023 Regional Water Plan Seed Grant funds to Implement Lake Lanier Pilot Nutrient Trading Study	Coosa-North Georgia Water Council, N GA Water Resources Partnership, NWGRC, GAEPD, TetraTech	2023-2024 \$2,000 year Staff time		Ongoing
		17. Administer SFY22 RWP Seed Grant funds for the Coosa-North Georgia Water Council project to provide water quality modeling of proposed increases in Lake Lanier elevation levels.	Coosa-North Georgia Water Council, N GA Water Resources Partnership, TetraTech, other parties, GAEPD, NWGRC	2023 Staff time		Completed 2023
		18. Assist local governments with planning resources for green infrastructure, culvert redesign and improvement, greenspace and conservation design, etc.	NWGRC, GAWP, DCA, others	2022-2023 Staff time		Ongoing-rewritten
<b>Land Use</b>						
Develop a coordinated long-term land use vision for Northwest Georgia that respects local land use plans and that balances conservation with	Assist local governments to comply with current Georgia Zoning Procedures Law (O.C.G.A. 36-66-1, et seq.; 36-67-1, et seq.; and, 36-67A-1, et seq. as amended) and provide necessary technical assistance.	19. Assist 2-5 local governments each year with Zoning and Land Use Ordinance authoring and adoption, amendment	NWGRC, local governments	2023-2026 \$20,000/yr.		Ongoing
		20. Work with training providers including UGA CVIIOG, DCA, GAZA, and GPA to provide at least one annual planning and zoning training in the region, and/or local training as requested	NWGRC, local governments, Training providers (GAZA, GPA, DCA, UGA CVIIOG)	2023-2026 \$1,000/ yr.		Ongoing

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
development needs		21. Prepare 20+ Development of Regional Impact reviews and reports for projects meeting DRI thresholds	NWGRC, local governments	2023-2026 \$7,500/year		Ongoing
		22. Prepare a map of completed Developments of Regional Impact in the region	NWGRC	2023-2026 Staff time		Postponed for the region to 2024-2025; completed for Bartow, Paulding Co.
Local Government Planning Assistance						
Develop a coordinated long-term land use vision for Northwest Georgia that respects local land use plans and that balances conservation with development needs		23. Provide planning assistance related to the implementation of federal recovery funds and projects; assist with plan amendments as needed to reflect emerging priorities	NWGRC	2023-2026 \$5,000/ yr.		Completed 2023
		24. Assist with preparation of 3-6 scheduled updates to joint comprehensive plans – Bartow, Gordon, Pickens, and Murray Counties and Municipalities in 2023	NWGRC, local governments	2023-2026 \$60,000/yr.		Completed for 2023; upcoming plans added in new work program item
Develop a coordinated long-term land use vision for Northwest Georgia that respects local land use plans	Assist local governments in preparing and implementing Comprehensive Plans and service delivery strategies in accordance with the Georgia Planning	25. Assist as requested to 1-3 communities/ year to review and update Service Delivery Strategy agreements as required	NWGRC, local governments	2023-2026 \$3,500/ yr.		Completed 2023
		26. Assist 1-2 communities each year with PlanFirst applications	NWGRC, local governments	2023-2026 \$5,000/ yr.		Ongoing

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
	Act and Service Delivery Strategy Act, to implement projects and initiatives in the comprehensive plan, and to apply for PlanFirst designation.					
	Update the Regional Plan according to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning	27. Update the <i>Northwest Georgia Regional Plan, 2019-2023</i> in 2023; prepare annual implementation reports.	NWGRC	2023-2024 \$7,500		Ongoing
	Provide outreach, training, and technical assistance on the planning and development needs of local governments	28. Develop marketing, branding, media, training and outreach materials, newsletter, and Facebook page for Regional Commission services and assistance	NWGRC, local governments	2023-2026 \$5,000/ yr.		Completed 2023
		29. Prepare 20-30 local plan reviews, transportation plan review, environmental reviews, Section 106 reviews, and other coordinated reviews each year	NWGRC	2023-2026 \$5,000/ yr.		Ongoing
<b>Transportation</b>						
Provide safe, efficient	Improve coordination	30. Prepare Regional Transit Study/ Assessment	GDOT, NWGRC	2024 \$40,000		Ongoing

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
movement of people and goods through Northwest Georgia to enhance economic growth;	between local governments, GDOT, MPOs, and federal agencies to implement regionally significant transportation projects	31. Participate in meetings of federal and state transportation agencies, Atlanta MPO, Chattanooga/Hamilton County/North Georgia TPO, Rome-Floyd County MPO, Greater Dalton MPO, Cartersville-Bartow County MPO; provide quarterly planning and coordination between these agencies and the NWGRC Council and non-MPO governments on regionally significant projects	NWGRC, GDOT, MPOs		Ongoing \$20,000/yr	Ongoing
		32. Implement THRIVE2055 transportation and freight mobility initiatives, representing NWGRC Counties of Dade, Walker, Catoosa, Whitfield, Murray	NWGRC, THRIVE2055	2023-2026 \$5,000/yr.		Ongoing
		33. Incorporate all local bike/ped plans into a regional database; identify favorable connection corridors between bike/ ped infrastructure	NWGRC, GDOT, local govts and Bike! Walk! NWGA	2023-2026 \$10,000		Postponed to 2024-2025 due to staff changes; rewritten
		34. Coordinate with GDOT District 6 and/or Office of Planning and with local governments and MPOs in needs related to ARP and IJA recovery funding, incl training, technical assistance, etc.	NWGRC, GDOT, local governments	2023-2026 \$5,000/ yr.		Ongoing; rewritten

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
Improve connectivity of bike and pedestrian pathways throughout the region	Implement bike & pedestrian safety plans, GA Bicycle/ Pedestrian Safety Action Plans, Safe Routes to School, implement Complete Streets design	35. Staff and administer and update website for Bike! Walk! Northwest Georgia to implement the Regional Bike and Pedestrian Safety Plan and local plans.	NWGRC, GDOT, local govts and Bike! Walk! NWGA	2023-2026 \$5,000/ yr.		Postponed to 2024-2025 due to staff changes; rewritten
		36. Participate in 1-2 Safe Routes to School Resource Center walk safety audits per year and assist 1-2 schools and local governments/ year to implement audit recommendations and GDOT Complete Streets policies through planning, training, and grant writing assistance	NWGRC, GDOT, Safe Routes Resource Center	2023-2026 \$5,000/ yr.		Ongoing
	Develop more trails and trails systems that connect to parks, neighborhoods, retail centers, libraries, workplaces, and downtowns	37. Assist Catoosa, Dade, and Walker Counties and Cities with planning and grant writing to implement the 2015 NW GA Feasibility Study for Bikeway & Pedestrian Multi-Use Trails including the development of Chick-Chatt greenway, trail, and Lookout Mountain trail connections	NWGRC, Catoosa, Dade, and Walker Counties and Cities, funding agencies, Chick-Chatt Greenway Association, THRIVE2055	2023-2026 \$7,500		Ongoing, moved to Natural and Cultural Resources
<b>Broadband</b>						
Assess needs regarding 5G, provide assistance and	Partner with the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative, local	38. Assist 1-5 communities/ year to apply for Broadband Ready designation	NWGRC, DCA, local governments, providers	2023-2026 \$5,000		Completed

FY2023-2024 Report of Accomplishments						
Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Ongoing	Status
resources Improve broadband and telecommunicati on services	governments, providers, and other agencies and initiatives, and participate in the Georgia Broadband Ready Program.	39. Regional Broadband Committee of NWGRC Council and NWGRC staff: With GA Broadband Deployment Initiative and providers, assist 5-10 local governments/ year to identify and prioritize service and speed demand, identify gaps in infrastructure and costs to address those gaps, and to develop local and/or regional plans of action or feasibility study to address priority gaps in service; including assistance for Federal and state ARPA/IIJA funding	NWGRC, DCA, local governments, providers	2022-2025 \$5,000		Completed
		40. Provide planning and grant-writing assistance to 1-10 local governments/year to implement local broadband action plans or feasibility assessments; including assistance for Federal and state ARPA/IIJA funding	NWGRC, local governments, providers	2022-2025 \$7,500/ yr.		Completed



*Silver Comet Trail, Rockmart.*

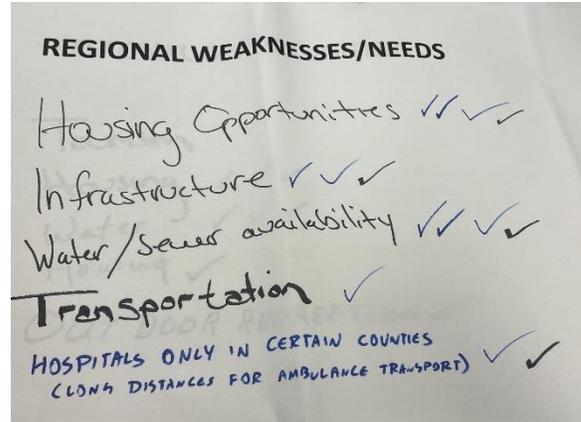
## Appendices

- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis
- Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives
- Regional Priorities Survey
- Stakeholder Involvement Report
- Data and Mapping Supplement

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

In September 2023, the NWGRC Council as the Regional Plan Steering Committee participated in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, which was augmented by input from stakeholders and members of the public, via four public and stakeholder meetings held around the region in October- December 2023, and individual interviews/ questionnaire responses.

Participants were asked to list strengths and weaknesses (issues or needs, positive and negative, within the region and our control) and opportunities and threats (factors from outside our region that may or may not be in our control). Stakeholders who could not attend the meetings were sent questionnaires. Staff reviewed the previous Needs and Opportunities from the 2019 plan for continuity, as well as data, survey responses, plans of neighboring regions, Georgia DNR SCORP, Transportation Improvement Plans of MPOs in the region, GDOT STIP, Regional Plans of neighboring Regional Commissions, 2045 Land Use Trends based on GLUT data and projections, areas of Conservation and Development, and Areas Requiring Special Attention, to compile the final list of needs and opportunities.



Nov. 14, 2023 Public-stakeholder meeting SWOT worksheet.

### SWOT Analysis Results, September- December 2023

#### NWGRC Council Steering Committee, Stakeholders and Public

##### Economic Development

Needs	Opportunities
Limited fields of employment- only low-paying jobs coming here	Corporate diversity
Inability to recruit young professionals	Economic development resources
Not enough High Pay Jobs	Business-friendly political leadership
Low average income	Affordable land for development
Senior jobs	Available land
Jobs going to nearby communities	Investment Opportunity
	Location between Atlanta, Chattanooga, Birmingham

##### Land Use

Needs	Opportunities
Creative Zoning Code/ need to update zoning	Close location to major cities
Lack of smart growth	Growth interest previously unseen
Lack of quality growth	
Too much development of rural areas ***	

Needs	Opportunities
Litter	
No protection of natural resources	
Set-asides/ protection of rural lands	
Increased development changing rural way of life	
The decline of farmland	

**Housing**

Needs	Opportunities
The housing supply is lacking	An opportunity to increase the supply of affordable housing
Fast growth of rental housing/ houses	Local governments are receiving increased requests for apartments and multifamily housing
Lack of workforce housing	Housing
Need for market-price housing	Affordability (relatively)
Limited housing options	Low Cost of Living
Housing unaffordability	
Affordable senior housing	
Housing Opportunities	

**Natural and Cultural Resources**

Needs	Opportunities
Litter	Temperate climate
No protection of natural resources	Natural Resources
Set-asides/ protection of rural lands	Recreational opportunities
Increased development changing rural way of life	National Forest (Preserved Green Space)
The decline of farmland	Beautiful Natural Resources X2
How do we preserve the tradition and character of our region, rather than becoming a generic nowhere	Rich history
What kind of region do we want to be	Character
Preservation of tradition, culture, history	Outdoor Recreation
	Trails
	Landscape
	Access to greenspace

**Infrastructure**

Needs	Opportunities
Aging infrastructure	Roadways (local) deteriorating
Lack of infrastructure	Utilities
Aging water and sewer infrastructure	Power
Lack of sewer infrastructure	Water/sewer aging

<b>Needs</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Infrastructure	Broadband extension
Water/Sewer Availability	Regional approach to solid waste management
Lack of infrastructure (aged)	Solid waste to energy
Infrastructure Improvements	Water
Infrastructure improvements are needed	Infrastructure capacity

**Transportation**

<b>Needs</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Lack of East to West connector from I-75 to Dade County – everything is funneled through Chattanooga	Roadways (local) deteriorating
Truck weight increases	Interstate 75
Transportation= Congestion	Rail and light rail
Transportation	Borders Tennessee, Alabama
Extreme traffic	
Road infrastructure in disrepair	

**The region as a Whole**

<b>Needs</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Lack of diversity in the makeup of boards	Food program for the aging
Aging population	Quality of life
Illegal immigration	Close location to major cities
Inflation	Not a part of metro Atlanta
Increase in untreated mental health	General Aviation Airport
Crime	Proximity to International Airport
High rate of stray animals	Hwy 92 Jobs Corridor South Paulding
Panhandling	Tourism
Need smaller and more schools, more teachers also	Climate
Too many drugs	Agriculture
Drugs and violence	Proximity to Medical Care
Homelessness	Healthcare

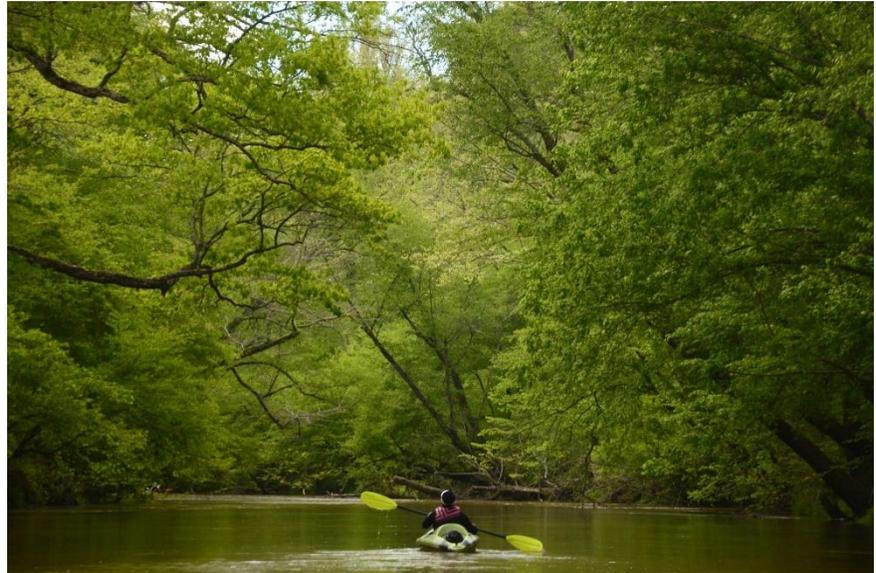
**Workforce Development**

<b>Needs</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Workforce is lacking	Private partnerships for workforce development
Overpopulation of school systems	Strong educational opportunities
	Diverse Workforce
	Affordable education
	Higher Education- Technical
	Education- Colleges within the region

## Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives

### Quality Community Objectives

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs prepared a list of ten objectives adapted from generally accepted community development principles to fit the unique qualities of Georgia’s communities. It is thought that “If a community implements these principles, it will result in greater efficiency, cost savings, and a higher quality of life for Georgia citizens,” as taken from Georgia Department of Community Affairs 2011 *Quality Community Objectives*. Through reviewing the 2019 Regional Plan, comprehensive plans of counties and municipalities in the region, the Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Programs within the region, and the Plan Implementation Meetings held with local governments, the following analysis of consistency with Georgia’s Quality Community Objectives was prepared.



*Kayaker on Tallapoosa River, photo credit Haralson Chamber of Commerce.*

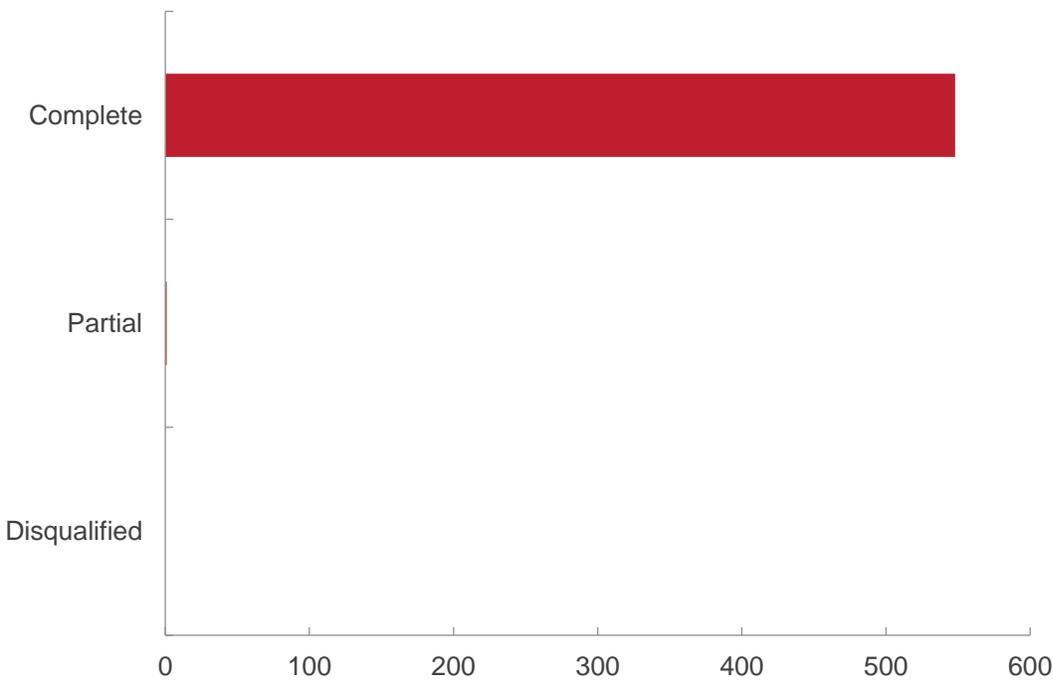
QCO	Northwest Georgia
<p><b>Economic Prosperity</b> Encourage the development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community.</p>	<p>Across the region manufacturing and health care are major employment sectors. Manufacturing is becoming diversified, and more automated, and large investments in solar and electric vehicles are being made. For example, QCells in Whitfield and Bartow Counties, and SK-Hyundai in Bartow County, are major manufacturing projects. The Appalachian Regional Port in Murray County is expected to expand the region’s logistics employment sector. A larger skilled workforce is a great need. Support during the transition to electric vehicle manufacturing is an emerging need.</p>
<p><b>Resource Management</b> Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community.</p>	<p>Northwest Georgia’s expanding outdoor recreation and tourism sector thrives on connecting residents and visitors to the abundant and beautiful natural resources here, and many groups have taken up the cause of cleanup, conservation, and protection of sensitive water resources. Communities are implementing major recreation, trails, and water trail projects funded through state and federal programs.</p>
<p><b>Efficient Land Use</b> Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community.</p>	<p>Infill and redevelopment efforts are increasing, particularly in downtowns and historic neighborhoods, which protect existing infrastructure investment. Georgia’s Rural Zone program provides designated rural downtowns with reinvestment, job creation, and historic preservation incentives. Sprawl, less</p>

QCO	Northwest Georgia
	dense development patterns, and conversion of land uses do exist. Often greenfield sites are attractive to job creators and developers. If changes in land use are anticipated, the cost of infrastructure expansion can be mitigated.
<p><b>Local Preparedness</b> Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve.</p>	Infrastructure and resiliency/preparedness remain a great need across the region, including water, sewer, utilities, broadband expansion, and electric vehicle infrastructure. The cost of infrastructure (replacing existing or expanded/new infrastructure) is continually increasing.
<p><b>Sense of Place</b> Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities.</p>	As residents and visitors to the region seek out authentic places and experiences, identifying and preserving a sense of place is crucial to our local governments. Planning, good design principles, and funding are needed.
<p><b>Regional Cooperation</b> Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs.</p>	Through the Regional Council, a foundation for effective leadership and regional cooperation is built. Regional transportation solutions are needed.
<p><b>Housing Options</b> Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community.</p>	A greater supply of all types of housing at a variety of price points for rental and ownership is needed-- particularly for workforce housing. Rising costs of existing stock, high costs of construction and finance, and short supply, all contribute to a lack of housing.
<p><b>Transportation Options</b> Address the transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents.</p>	Transit and intermodal connectivity are needed. Maintenance of local roads and bridges, along with improvement of highly traveled routes, are needed. Improvements to east-west routes are needed.
<p><b>Educational Opportunities</b> Make educational and training opportunities readily available, enabling all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions.</p>	Greater connectivity between business/industry desired skills, and those offered in high school and post-secondary schools is needed. College and Career Academies provide this directly, but all counties can benefit from improved communication between business and industry, education, and elected leadership.
<p><b>Community Health</b> Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities.</p>	Greater availability and access to healthy local food, physical activity opportunities and safe walkability, mental health maintenance and treatment options, senior care needs, and substance abuse treatment are all needs in our region.

## Regional Priorities Survey

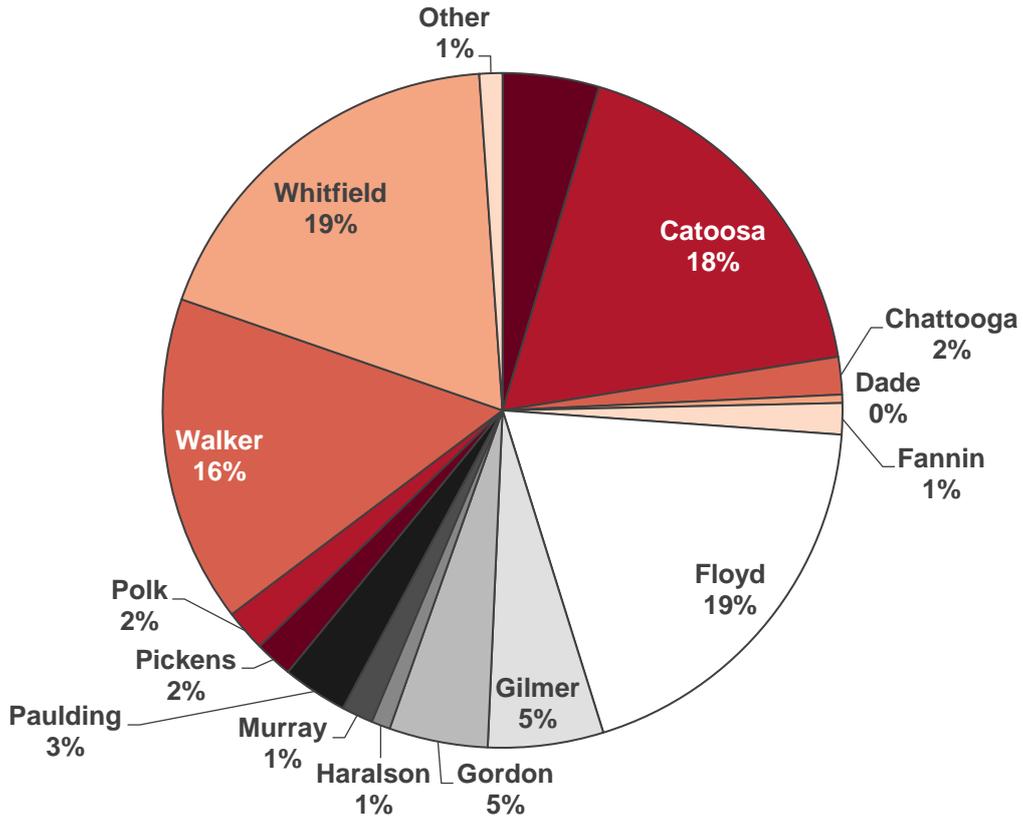
In Winter 2023, the Regional Priorities Survey was developed for smartphone and web responses, and distributed through direct email to NWGRC Council members, local governments, Chambers of Commerce, and school systems, posted on the NWGRC website, and shared via Facebook. The survey garnered 549 responses in December 2023 and January 2024. The Regional Priorities survey asked respondents to weigh in on topics including transportation and transit electric vehicles, natural, cultural, and historic resource preservation, broadband, economic development, and regional TSPLOST. The survey provided an opportunity for wider public and stakeholder input, and the responses helped NWGRC staff prioritize needs, provide guidance to cities and counties, and set policies and actions for the region’s plan.

### Response Statistics



	Count	Percent
Complete	548	99.8
Partial	1	0.2
Disqualified	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>549</b>	

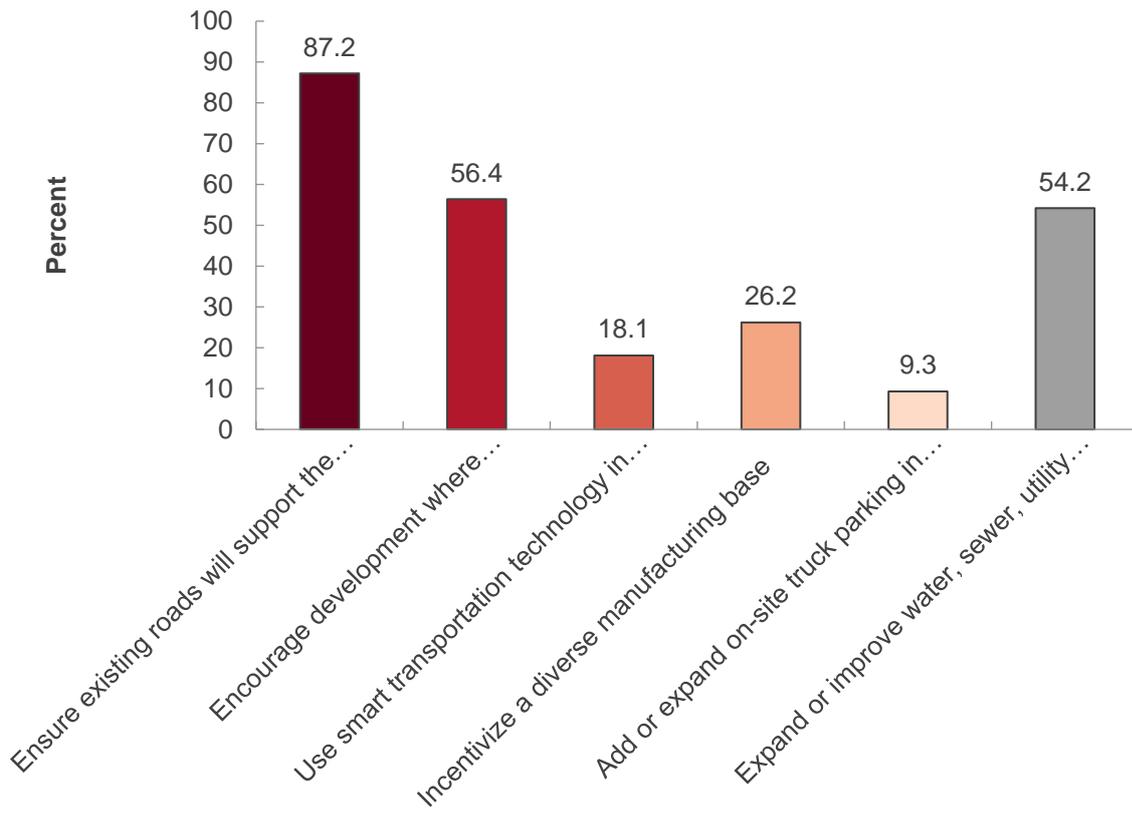
1. In which county do you reside?



Value	Percent	Count
Bartow	4.6%	25
Catoosa	17.9%	98
Chattooga	1.8%	10
Dade	0.4%	2
Fannin	1.5%	8
Floyd	19.1%	105
Gilmer	5.5%	30
Gordon	4.7%	26
Haralson	0.9%	5

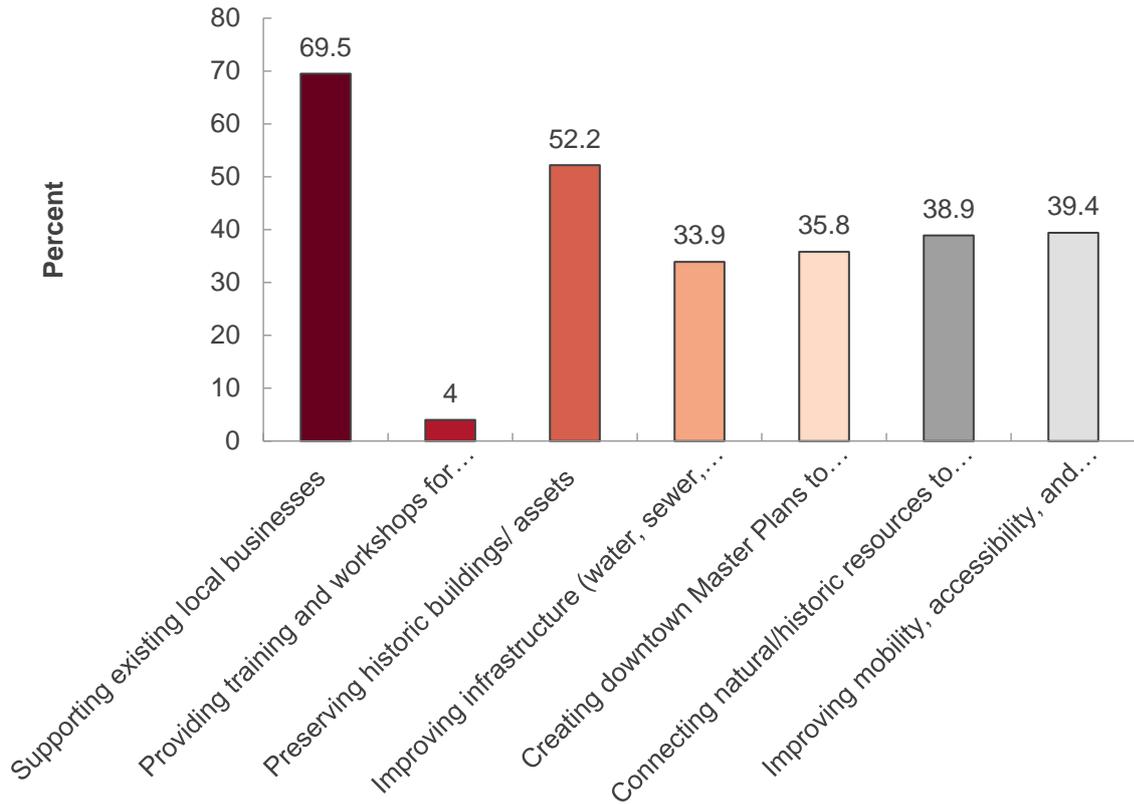
Value	Percent	Count
Murray	1.5%	8
Paulding	3.1%	17
Pickens	1.8%	10
Polk	2.0%	11
Walker	15.7%	86
Whitfield	18.6%	102
Other	1.1%	6
<b>Totals</b>		<b>549</b>

**2. For areas where new industrial development is occurring, what should be addressed? (Select up to three)**



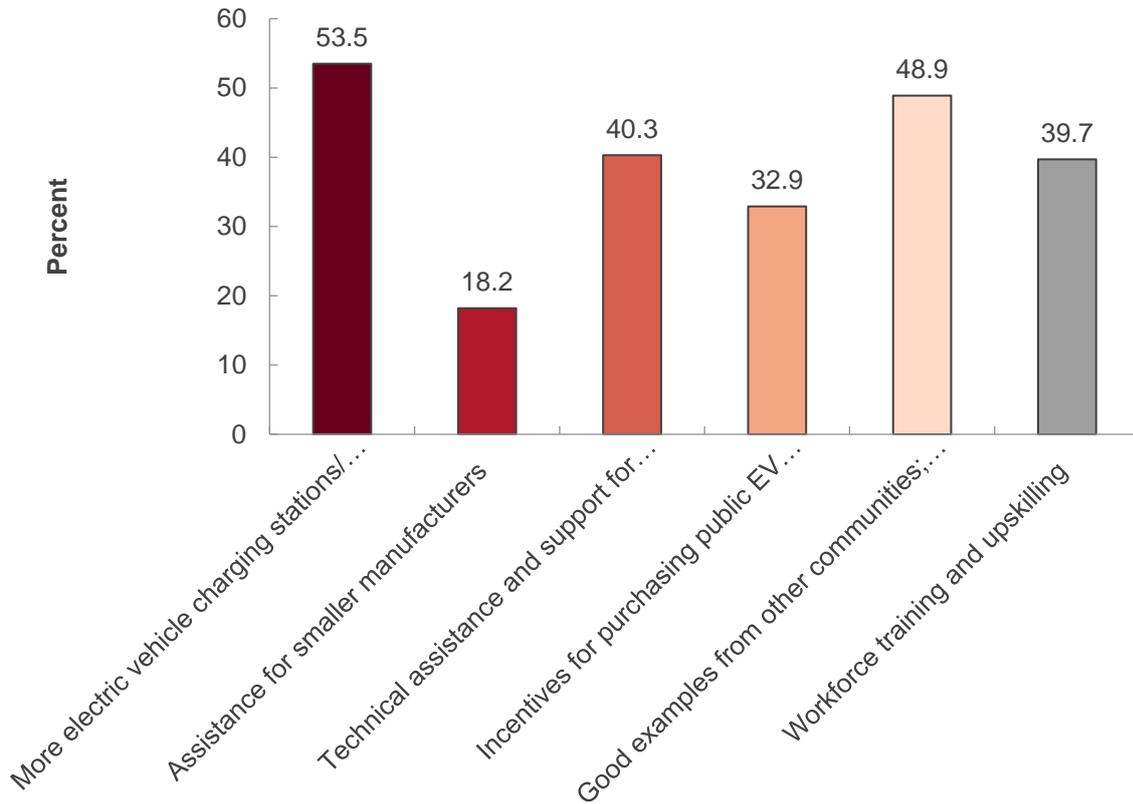
Value	Percent	Count
Ensure existing roads will support the increased traffic	87.2%	476
Encourage development where infrastructure already exists	56.4%	308
Use smart transportation technology in high-traffic areas	18.1%	99
Incentivize a diverse manufacturing base	26.2%	143
Add or expand on-site truck parking in new industrial developments	9.3%	51
Expand or improve water, sewer, and utility infrastructure in industrial sites	54.2%	296

**3. Downtowns are the hearts of our region. What do you consider to be most important in downtown development? (Select up to three)**



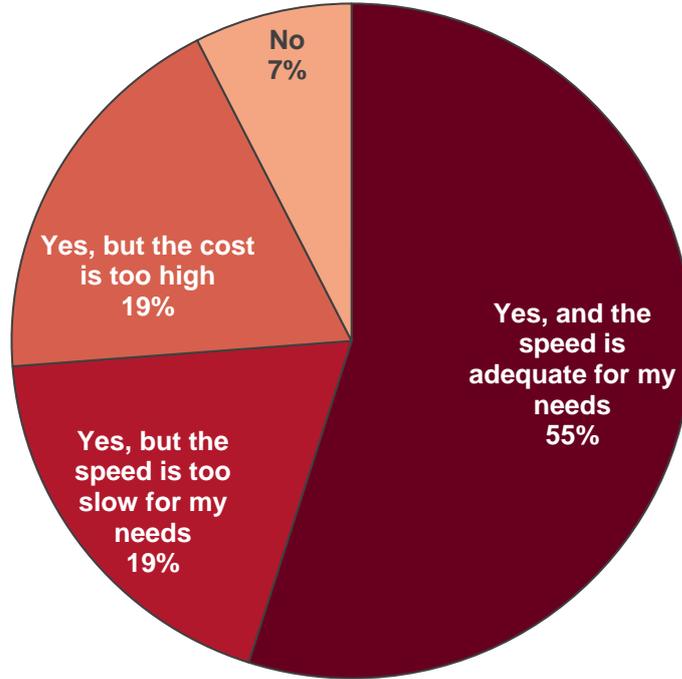
Value	Percent	Count
Supporting existing local businesses	69.5%	381
Providing training and workshops for downtown development	4.0%	22
Preserving historic buildings/ assets	52.2%	286
Improving infrastructure (water, sewer, broadband)	33.9%	186
Creating downtown Master Plans to prioritize needs and actions	35.8%	196
Connecting natural/historic resources to downtowns (trails, sidewalks, signage)	38.9%	213
Improving mobility, accessibility, and pedestrian connectivity	39.4%	216

**4. With the transition from internal combustion engines to electric vehicles, Northwest Georgia will see many changes. What are the most important needs? (Select up to Three)**



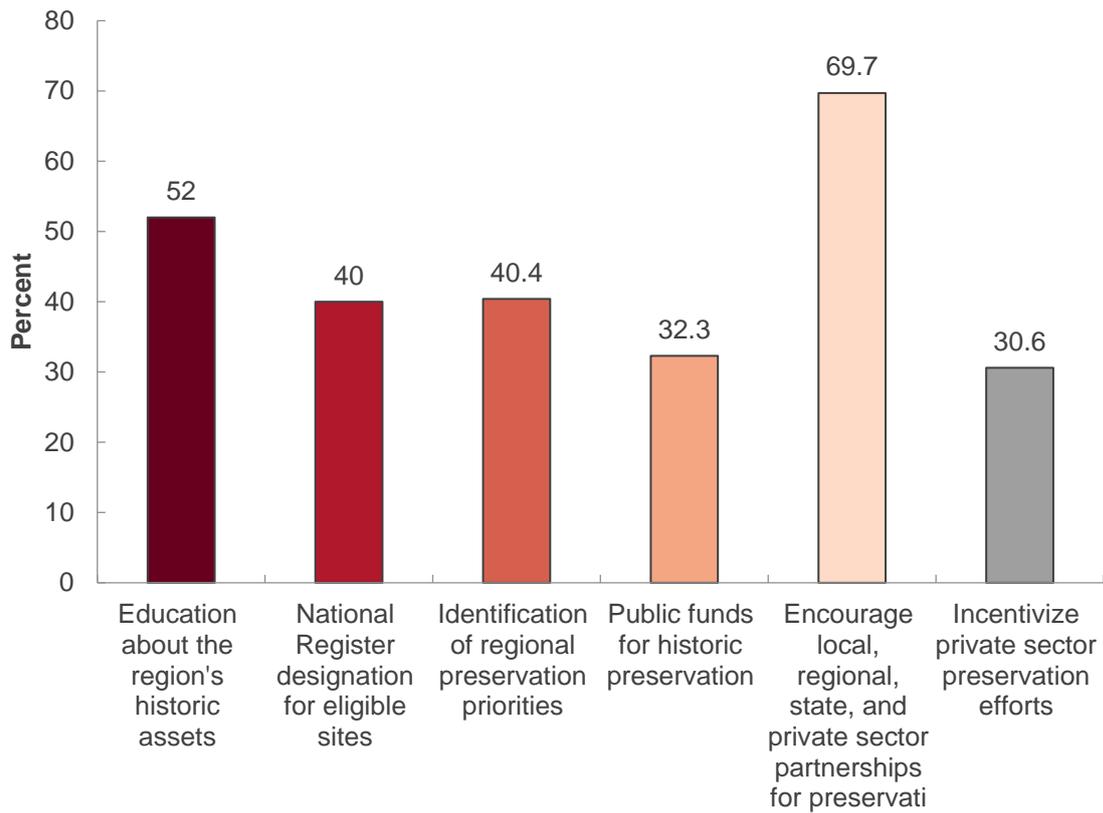
Value	Percent	Count
More electric vehicle charging stations/ more infrastructure	53.5%	268
Assistance for smaller manufacturers	18.2%	91
Technical assistance and support for local governments	40.3%	202
Incentives for purchasing public EV vehicles (transit, public safety, etc)	32.9%	165
Good examples from other communities; information on what to expect and how to plan	48.9%	245
Workforce training and upskilling	39.7%	199

5. Do you have access to broadband internet (land-based) at your home?  
(Select Only One)



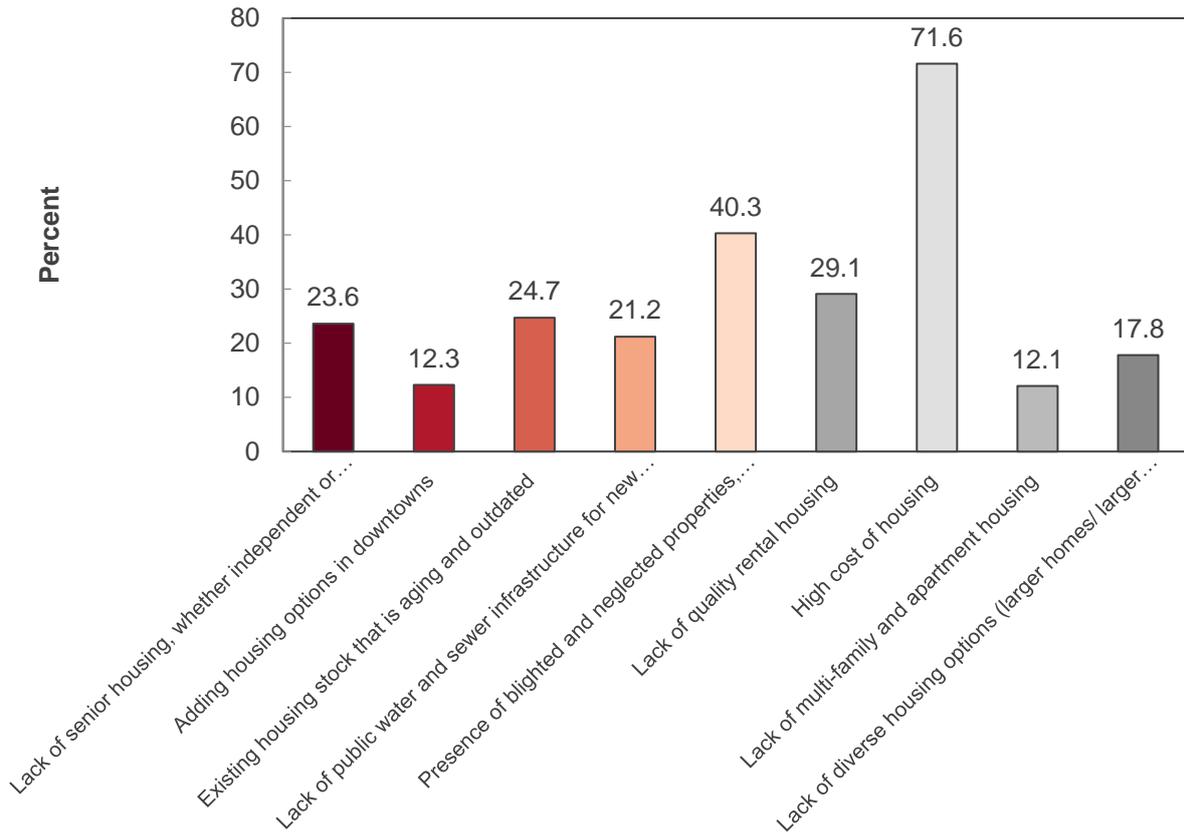
Value	Percent	Count
Yes, and the speed is adequate for my needs	54.9%	299
Yes, but the speed is too slow for my needs	18.9%	103
Yes, but the cost is too high	18.7%	102
No	7.5%	41
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>545</b>

**6. Northwest Georgia is home to many historic and cultural sites and natural resources. These assets, once lost, are irreplaceable. What should be done to preserve them? (Select up to Three)**



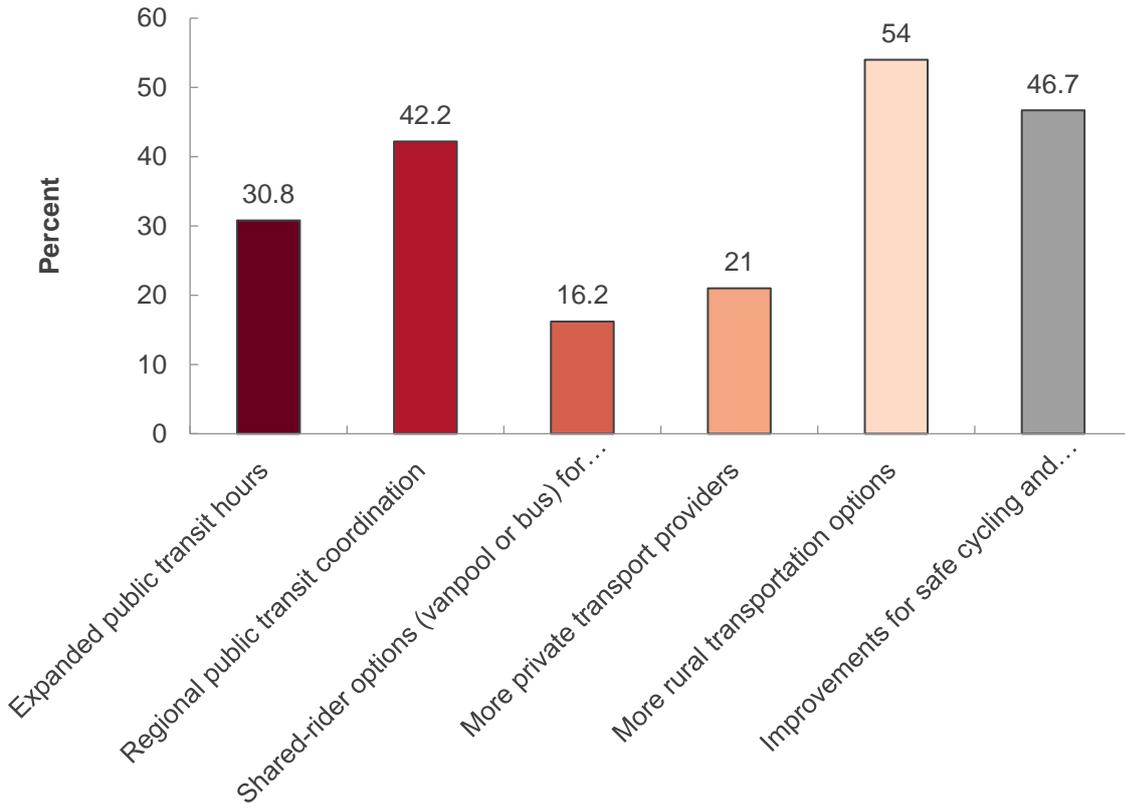
Value	Percent	Count
Education about the region's historic assets	52.0%	282
National Register designation for eligible sites	40.0%	217
Identification of regional preservation priorities	40.4%	219
Public funds for historic preservation	32.3%	175
Encourage local, regional, state, and private sector partnerships for preservation/ protection	69.7%	378
Incentivize private-sector preservation efforts	30.6%	166

**7. What do you consider to be the most relevant issues related to housing today? (Select up to Three)**



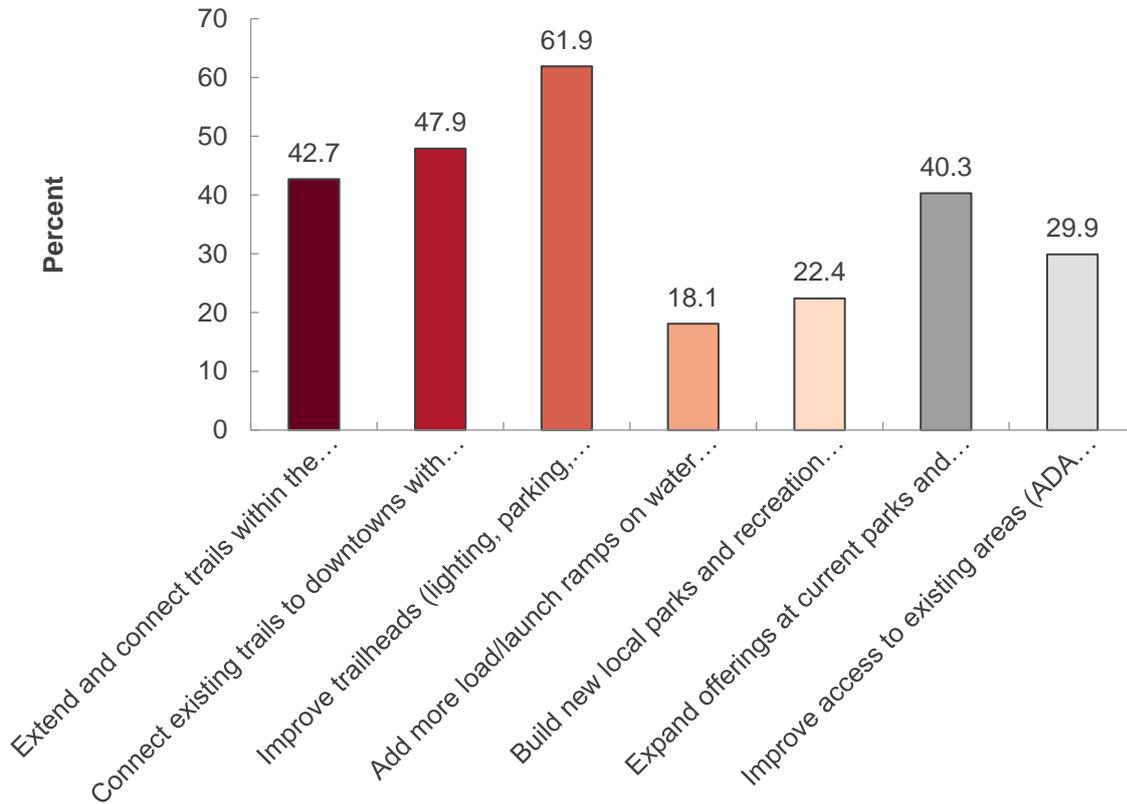
Value	Percent	Count
Lack of senior housing, whether independent or assisted living facilities	23.6%	129
Adding housing options in downtown	12.3%	67
Existing housing stock that is aging and outdated	24.7%	135
Lack of public water and sewer infrastructure for new housing development	21.2%	116
Presence of blighted and neglected properties, disinvestment	40.3%	220
Lack of quality rental housing	29.1%	159
High cost of housing	71.6%	391
Lack of multi-family and apartment housing	12.1%	66
Lack of diverse housing options (larger homes/ larger lots/ higher price points, required by local ordinances)	17.8%	97

**8. What types of transportation options are most needed? (Select up to Three)**



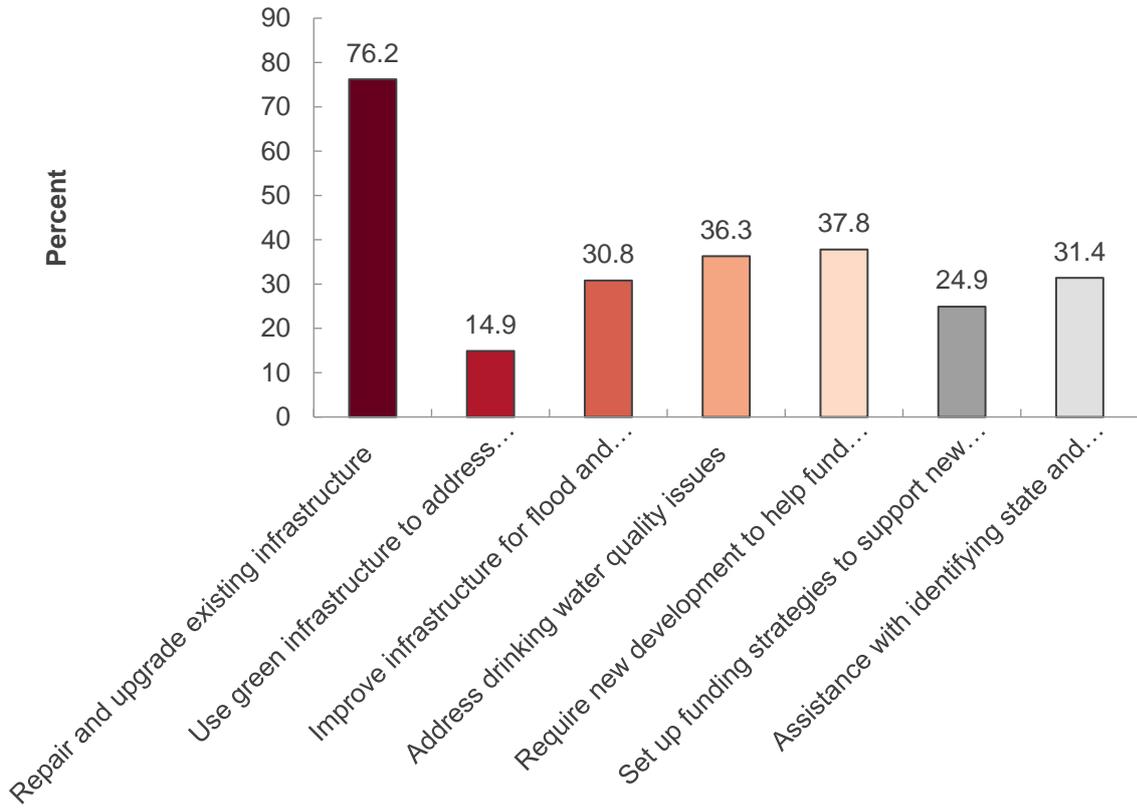
Value	Percent	Count
Expanded public transit hours	30.8%	169
Regional public transit coordination	42.2%	231
Shared-rider options (vanpool or bus) for work	16.2%	89
More private transport providers	21.0%	115
More rural transportation options	54.0%	296
Improvements for safe cycling and pedestrian mobility	46.7%	256

**9. Northwest Georgia is home to many natural and historic resources, parks, trails, and waterways. What should be done to improve public access to these resources? (Select up to Three)**



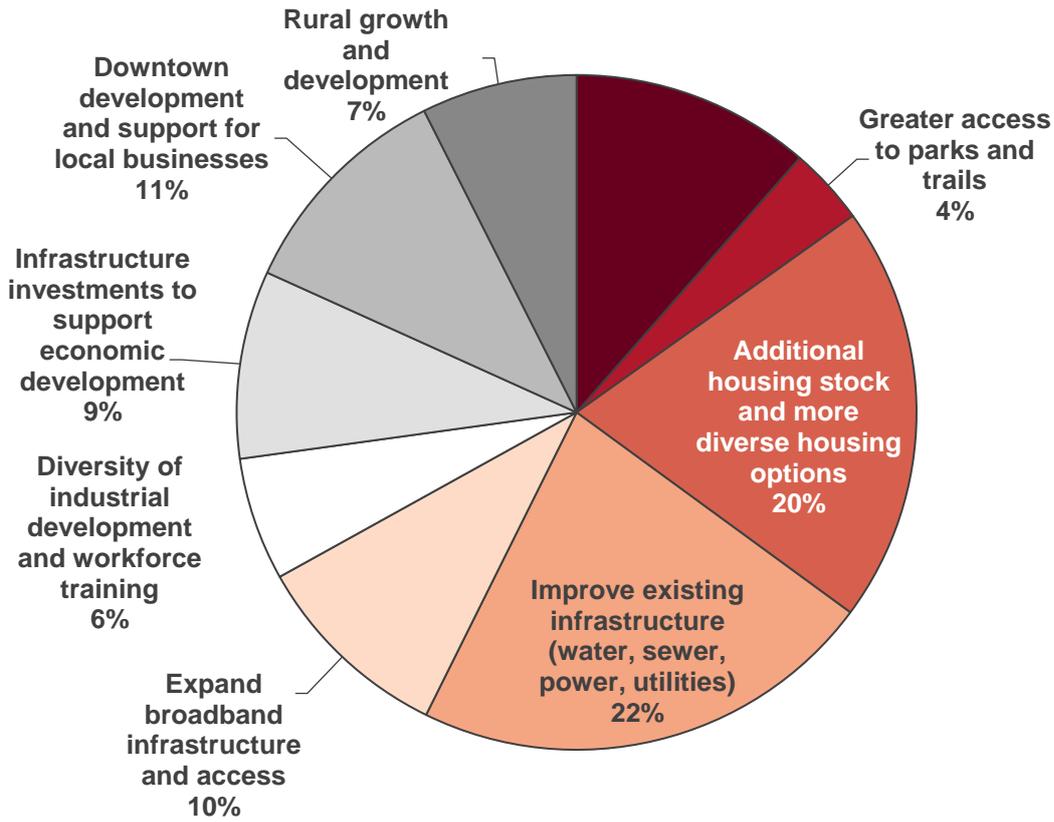
Value	Percent	Count
Extend and connect trails within the region and to adjacent regions	42.7%	229
Connect existing trails to downtowns with restaurants and lodging facilities	47.9%	257
Improve trailheads (lighting, parking, restrooms, etc)	61.9%	332
Add more load/launch ramps on water trails and blueways	18.1%	97
Build new local parks and recreation facilities	22.4%	120
Expand offerings at current parks and recreation areas (add pickleball, disc golf, etc)	40.3%	216
Improve access to existing areas (ADA accessibility, extended hours, etc)	29.9%	160

**10. For basic infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, utilities), what are the most urgent needs? (Select up to Three)**



Value	Percent	Count
Repair and upgrade existing infrastructure	76.2%	413
Use green infrastructure to address stormwater	14.9%	81
Improve infrastructure for flood and stormwater control	30.8%	167
Address drinking water quality issues	36.3%	197
Require new development to help fund infrastructure improvements	37.8%	205
Set up funding strategies to support new infrastructure (Tax Allocation Districts, local impact fees, etc.)	24.9%	135
Assistance with identifying state and federal funding opportunities, understanding that local governments are required to match up to 70%)	31.4%	170

11. What is the top priority for the region to address in the next five years?



Value	Percent	Count
Transportation improvements	11.4%	62
Greater access to parks and trails	3.7%	20
Additional housing stock and more diverse housing options	20.0%	109
Improve existing infrastructure (water, sewer, power, utilities)	22.2%	121
Expand broadband infrastructure and access	9.6%	52
Diversity of industrial development and workforce training	5.9%	32
Infrastructure investments to support economic development	9.0%	49
Downtown development and support for local businesses	10.8%	59
Rural growth and development	7.4%	40
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>544</b>

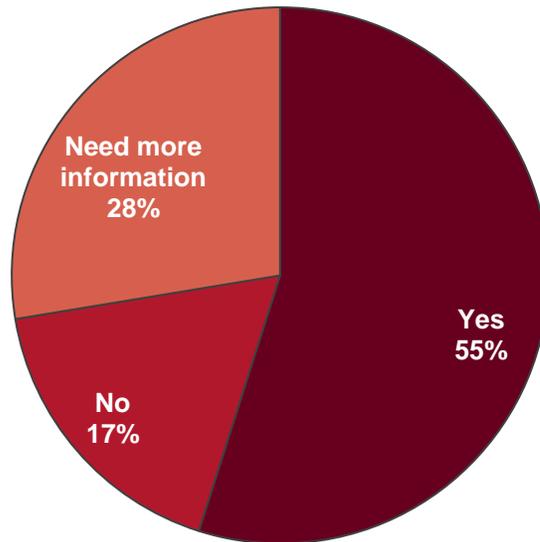
12. Four regions in Georgia have adopted a Regional Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (T-SPLOST). Those regions are:

- River Valley (Columbus, Vienna, Cordele, Americus, Butler, etc.)
- Southern Georgia (Valdosta, Fitzgerald, Douglass, Waycross, etc.)
- Heart of Georgia-Altamaha (Dublin, Metter, Baxley, Eastman, etc.)
- Central Savannah River Area (Augusta, Thomson, Sandersville, Millen, etc.)

Since 2013, these regional T-SPLOSTS have generated \$3,595,822,445 in construction funding for 1,799 projects. Any region in Georgia can adopt a regional T-SPLOST by voter referendum.

[\(https://www.ga-tia.com/\)](https://www.ga-tia.com/) A T-SPLOST in Northwest Georgia would generate an expected \$231,391,618 in year one, increasing each year, and more than \$2.4 Billion over the maximum ten years allowed for collection.

With that in mind, would you support a 1-cent Regional T-SPLOST for Northwest Georgia to fund and accelerate transportation projects of regional importance?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	54.9%	294
No	17.5%	94
Need more information	27.6%	148
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>536</b>

## Public and Stakeholder Involvement Report and Documentation

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission is charged with developing a long-term plan for the region which identifies regional goals, needs, and an implementation program including a five-year work program for the region. Components of the Regional Plan are updated annually, but every five years, a full update is prepared. In Fall 2023, the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council began the five-year update of the Regional Plan through a public planning process. The NWGRC Council served as the Regional Plan Steering Committee, which prepared the Regional Plan with input from NWGRC staff, stakeholders, and members of the public.



*L-R: Melinda Hadden, Jason Smith, and Carleen Ferguson discuss regional maps, Nov. 14, 2023.*

The Northwest Georgia Regional Agenda Update (2020-2024) was prepared with input from a Steering Committee which was the Northwest Georgia Regional Council, stakeholders, and the public. The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission website included an announcement of each meeting. The NWGRC Council is made up of an elected official from each of the fifteen counties and from the chief city in each county, a private sector appointee from each County, and appointees of the Governor's Office, Lieutenant Governor's Office, and Secretary of State. The Steering Committee met on September 21, 2023, October 19, 2023, January 18, 2024, and February 15, 2024. At the September and October 2023 meetings, the Steering Committee completed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, reviewed the maps and draft survey, and reviewed needs and opportunities. Draft needs and opportunities and survey results were reviewed at the January 18, 2024 meeting. The draft update of the regional plan was sent to the Steering Committee for review in early February and approved for transmittal to DCA at the February 15, 2024, NWGRC Council meeting. The draft of the updated Regionally Important Resource Plan was also presented and approved for transmittal at the February 15, 2024, Council meeting.

Four public and stakeholder meetings were held around the region: On October 3, 2023, at the Rome Civic Center; On October 30, 2023, at the Dalton office of the NWGRC; On November 14, 2023, at the Piedmont Community Center in Ellijay; and on December 4, 2023, at the Dallas Civic Center. Each meeting included a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, a review of regional maps, and a poll on the most important needs within the region. All meetings were open to the public and were advertised via local newspaper and media outlets, NWGRC and local social media, and the NWGRC website.

Two public hearings were held at the Rome Civic Center during NWGRC Council meetings: an initial public hearing was held on September 21, 2023, to begin the regional plan update; and a second hearing was held on February 15, 2024, on the draft plan.

Initial Public Hearing for the Regional Plan and Steering Committee Meeting, September 21, 2023, NWGRC Council Meeting, Rome, Georgia

A6 ♦ WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2023 ♦ ROME NEWS-TRIBUNE

**POLICE**

# Additional charges filed for teen accused of breaking into Shorter Avenue stores

A 17-year-old already facing charges for breaking into Ace Hardware on to steal guns is now facing additional charges burglarizing another store on Shorter Avenue on April 8, reports state.

According to Floyd County Jail reports: La'Darius Cardale Cunningham, 17, is charged with felony criminal damage to property regarding the break-in of X-Hale City vape store. The incident caused \$5,000 worth of damage when the front window was broken with a rock and \$1,500 worth of merchandise stolen. He is charged with

felony smash and grab burglary and criminal damage to property.

He remained in jail on \$7,900 bond as of Tuesday morning.

**LINDALE MAN ARRESTED ON DEAN AVENUE, CHARGED WITH AUTO THEFT**

A Lindale man was arrested Monday on Dean Avenue stemming from a July 23 incident where entered a vehicle at a home on Glenwood School Road, reports state.

According to Floyd County Jail reports:

Dustin Warren Ballard, 28, is charged with felony entering auto theft by taking articles from the vehicle and misdemeanor giving false name to a law enforcement officer.

Another person, James Colby Ray, 28, is charged with stealing the 2008 Range Rover. Ballard remained in jail without bond as of Tuesday morning.

**SILVER CREEK MAN CHARGED WITH METH**

A Silver Creek man faces drug charges after police found a baggie of meth on him

**RN-T.com**

Visit the Rome News-Tribune website to see more police reports. Also see PDFs of Floyd County Jail intake reports — including inmate photos — as they are released twice each day by the Floyd County Sheriff's Office.

when he was being placed under arrest on a warrant our of Polk County, reports state.

According to Floyd County Jail reports: Michael Larry Kines Jr., 43, is charged with felony possession of meth. He remained in jail without bond as of Tuesday morning.

*Adam Carey, Rome News-Tribune staff writer*

BIG SAVINGS!

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**WEEKLY ACTIVITIES**

**MONDAYS**

The NWGA Center for Independent Living holds a peer support call every Monday at 2 p.m. via the Zoom website and by phone. For the link and password, or for assistance, contact Christina Holtzclaw at 628-246-1825 or choltzclaw@nwgacl.org.

The Rome Georgia Mineral Society meets the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Rome-Floyd County Library, 205 River.

The Geot Mon 6 p.m 101 W

tance to veterans filing VA claims for their disabilities. For more information contact service officer Art Cook at 334-208-2736.

The Our Lady of the Three Rivers Chapter of the Society of Mary meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at St.

**PUBLIC NOTICE  
NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION**

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission will prepare an update to the Northwest Georgia Regional Plan in accordance with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning, Chapter 110-12-6. The Regional Plan update will include Regional Goals, Development Maps, Needs and Opportunities, and an Implementation Program for activities the Regional Commission will undertake in Northwest Georgia in 2024-2028.

The Regional Plan update will be prepared with guidance from a Steering Committee and will include a minimum of three public input meetings across the region. These meetings will be advertised and open to the public. Plan materials will be posted on the Regional Plan Update page at [www.nwgrc.org](http://www.nwgrc.org). The update must be approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and adopted by the Northwest Georgia Regional Council prior to July 1, 2024.

A public hearing on the Regional Plan update process will be held on Thursday, September 21, 2023, at the Rome Civic Center, 400 Civic Center Dr, Rome, GA 30161, during the meeting of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council, beginning at 11:00 am.

**Northwest Georgia Regional Plan Update**

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission will prepare an update to the Northwest Georgia Regional Plan in accordance with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning, Chapter 110-12-6. The Regional Plan update will include Regional Goals, Development Maps, Needs and Opportunities, and an Implementation Program for activities the Regional Commission will undertake in Northwest Georgia in 2024-2028.

The Regional Plan update will be prepared with guidance from a Steering Committee and will include a minimum of three public input meetings across the region. These meetings will be advertised and open to the public. The update must be approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and adopted by the Northwest Georgia Regional Council prior to July 1, 2024.

**Next Meeting:**

A public hearing on the Regional Plan update process will be held on Thursday, September 21, 2023, at the Rome Civic Center, 400 Civic Center Dr, Rome, GA 30161, during the meeting of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council, beginning at 11:00 am. / Public Hearing Notice / Steering Committee Packet / Presentation

**Future Meetings:**

A Public Meeting on October 11, 2023, at the Rome Civic Center Dr, Rome, GA 30161, during the meeting of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council, beginning at 11:00 am. / Public Meeting Notice

More meetings will be posted on the website. Please see the schedule below.

# NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL PLAN 2024-2028



**Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting**  
 Thursday, September 21, 2023 11:00 A.M.  
 Civic Center - 400 Civic Center Drive - Rome, Georgia  
 Sign-in Sheet (Page 1)

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**

County/City/Nonpublic	Name	Please Sign Below
Bartow County	Steve Taylor	<i>Steve Taylor</i>
City of Cartersville	Jayce Stepp	
Bartow County (Nonpublic)	Karl Lutgens	<i>Karl Lutgens</i>
Catoosa County	Larry C. Mack	
City of Fort Oglethorpe	Rhonda James	<i>Rhonda James</i>
Catoosa County (Nonpublic)	Steven Henry	
Chattooga County	Blake Eldberry	<i>Blake Eldberry</i>
City of Summerville	Harry Harvey	
Chattooga County (Nonpublic)	Jim Henry	<i>Jim Henry</i>
Dade County	Ted Rumley	<i>Ted Rumley</i>
City of Trenton	Alex Case	<i>Alex Case</i>
Dade County (Nonpublic)	George Williams	<i>George Williams</i>
Fannin County	Jamie Hershey	
City of Blue Ridge	Rhema Haight	
Fannin County (Nonpublic)	Charles Donaldson	



**Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting**  
 Thursday, September 21, 2023 11:00 A.M.  
 Civic Center - 400 Civic Center Drive - Rome, Georgia  
 Sign-in Sheet (Page 2)

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**

County/City/Nonpublic	Name	Please Sign Below
Floyd County	Allison Watters	<i>Allison Watters</i>
City of Rome	Craig McDaniel	
Floyd County (Nonpublic)	Edhan Ponder	
Gilmer County	Charlie Paris	<i>Charlie Paris</i>
City of Ellijay	Al Hoyle	
Gilmer County (Nonpublic)	Kent W. Sanford	
Gordon County	M.L. Bud Owens	
City of Calhoun	Ed Meyer	<i>Ed Meyer</i>
Gordon County (Nonpublic)	Flipper McDaniel	
Haralson County	Ronnie Riley	<i>Ronnie Riley</i>
City of Bremen	Vacancy	
Haralson County (Nonpublic)	Bob Birky	<i>Bob Birky</i>
Murray County	Greg Hagan	<i>Greg Hagan</i>
City of Chatsworth	K.W. Gong	<i>K.W. Gong</i>
Murray County (Nonpublic)	Steve Nolan	



**Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting**  
 Thursday, September 21, 2023 11:00 A.M.  
 Civic Center - 400 Civic Center Drive - Rome, Georgia  
 Sign-in Sheet (Page 3)

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**

County/City/Nonpublic	Name	Please Sign Below
Paulding County	David Carmichael	<i>David Carmichael</i>
City of Dallas	James Kelly	
Paulding County (Nonpublic)	David Austin	<i>David Austin</i>
Pickens County	Kris Stanel	
City of Jasper	Steve Lawrence	
Pickens County (Nonpublic)	Gary Reese	
Polk County	Linda Liles	
City of Cedartown	Sam Branch	<i>Sam Branch</i>
Polk County (Nonpublic)	Alan Dean	
Walker County	Shannon Whitfield	<i>Shannon Whitfield</i>
City of LaFayette	Andy Arnold	
Walker County (Nonpublic)	Chip Catlett	<i>Chip Catlett</i>
Whitfield County	Jevin Jensen	<i>Jevin Jensen</i>
City of Tunnel Hill	Ken Goslin	<i>Ken Goslin</i>
Whitfield County (Nonpublic)	Dave Hasey	<i>Dave Hasey</i>



**Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting**  
 Thursday, September 21, 2023 11:00 A.M.  
 Civic Center - 400 Civic Center Drive - Rome, Georgia  
 Sign-in Sheet (Page 4)

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**

County/City/Nonpublic	Name	Please Sign Below
Governor's Appointee	Nicholas Chester	
Governor's Appointee	David Goldschuh	<i>David Goldschuh</i>
Governor's Appointee	Michelle Taylor	
Lieutenant Governor's Appointee	Buddy Harrobin	<i>Buddy Harrobin</i>
Speaker of the House's Appointee	Vacancy	



**Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting**  
 Thursday, September 21, 2023 11:30 A.M.  
 Civic Center - 400 Civic Center Drive - Rome, Georgia  
 Sign-in Sheet (Page 5)

**NWGRS STAFF**

Staff	Name	Please Sign Below
Barbara Sneed		<i>Barbara Sneed</i>
Boyd Austin		<i>Boyd Austin</i>
Chase Holden		
Edhan Ponder		
Gretchen Lughart		
Jennifer Whorton		<i>Jennifer Whorton</i>
Jay Cumbie		<i>Jay Cumbie</i>
Joseph Davidson		<i>Joseph Davidson</i>
Kathleen Meadbert		<i>Kathleen Meadbert</i>
Lavia Lambert		<i>Lavia Lambert</i>
Lindsay Wilson		<i>Lindsay Wilson</i>
Lynne Reeves		<i>Lynne Reeves</i>



**Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting**  
 Thursday, September 21, 2023 11:00 A.M.  
 Civic Center - 400 Civic Center Drive - Rome, Georgia  
 Sign-in Sheet (Page 6)

**NWGRS STAFF**

Staff	Name	Please Sign Below
Phyllis Walker		
Samantha Bishop		<i>Samantha Bishop</i>
Shane Holden		<i>Shane Holden</i>
Kisha Morris		<i>Kisha Morris</i>
Tyler White		



**Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting**  
 Thursday, September 21, 2023 11:00 A.M.  
 Civic Center - 400 Civic Center Drive - Rome, Georgia  
 Sign-in Sheet (Page 7)

**VISITOR**

County, City or Organization	Name (Please Print)	Please Sign Below
City of Swainsboro	Steve Adams	<i>Steve Adams</i>
Paulding Co	James Stokes	<i>James Stokes</i>
Philip Elder	Tallahassee, GA	
Kirk Rutland	Travis	<i>Kirk Rutland</i>
GA Dept. Community Affairs	Patricia Walker	<i>Patricia Walker</i>
GA Dept. Community Affairs	Luz Hefner	<i>Luz Hefner</i>
Rome Funds Development Authority	Mary Grace Davis	<i>Mary Grace Davis</i>
DCA	Brittany Pittman	<i>Brittany Pittman</i>



**Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting**  
 Thursday, September 21, 2023 11:00 A.M.  
 Civic Center - 400 Civic Center Drive - Rome, Georgia  
 Sign-in Sheet (Page 8)

**VISITOR**

County, City or Organization	Name (Please Print)	Please Sign Below
State House	Katie Deppa	<i>Katie Deppa</i>
Montgomery	Noema	
Rebeca	Rebeca	<i>Rebeca</i>

September 21, 2023 NWGRS Council meeting/ public hearing sign in sheets.



2024 Regional Plan Update

Rome Civic Center, Rome GA October 3, 2023

Please Print Name	Title
1 David Clonts	Local
2 Bruce Wood	Rome/Floyd
3 Casey Inoue	Temple, Inc
4 Pam Powers Smith	Rome Floyd Chamber
5 Dianne Graham	concerned citizen
6 Angela Rubino	Concerned citizen
7 Benito Rubino	" "
8 <del>Frankie</del>	Concerned Citizen
9 Brad Barnes	Bon Vivant
10 Kira Forgan	concerned citizen
11 Kayla Knowles	concerned citizen
12	
13	
14	



2024 Regional Plan Update

Piedmont Community Center, Ellijay, GA November 14, 2023

Please Print Name	Title
1 Larry Callahan	Public Safety Director East Ellijay
2 Don Callihan	Mayor East Ellijay
3 Jim Smith	Director, Planning & Zoning Gilmer Co.
4 Mary Elizabeth Burgess	Development Director City of Jasper
5 Jim Looney	Council Jasper
6 MICHAEL ANDREWS	TIMES-COURIER NEWSPAPER
7 Karlean Ferguson	Habitat For Humanity, P&Z CO-CHAIR (P&Z)
8 Melinda Hadden	Ellijay TDA City Manager City of Jasper, GA
9 Sonia James	Brookdale Community Foundation ETC
10 Dianne Scoggins	
11 Jason Smith	
12 CHARLIE PARRIS	CHAIRMAN, GILMER BOC
13 Kent Sanford	Greater Gilmer JOA
14 Heather + Billy Campbell	Residents



Gretchen Lughart and Eric Pullen discuss regional trails, Oct. 30, 2023, Dalton.



2024 Regional Plan Update

NWGR, Dalton GA October 30, 2023

Please Print Name	Title
1 MELISSA TAYLOR	DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC LR PLANNING CHATTAHAMLTON CO. N.GA TRD RPA
2 Eric Pullen	Director of Econ Dev + Event in Chatham GA
3	



2024 Regional Plan Update

Dallas Civic Center, GA December 4, 2023

Please Print Name	Title
1 Tracy Hulsey	Project manager
2 Michael Harrison	Paulding EDR
3	
4 Marie Evans	CHAIRMAN, TOL POST 3
5 Virginia Stalvey	Paulding Co Commissioner
6 Frank Bauer	County Manager - Paulding
7 Ann Lippmann	Paulding Co Comm. Dev POST 4
8 Brian Stover	Paulding Co. Commissioner
9 Chris Robinson	PC P&Z/Comm. Dev Paulding count Director of Transportation
10 George Jones	
11 Sandy Kaecher	PBOC P&Z
12 Ricci Parish	Paulding Co. DET

Stakeholder sign in sheets.

February 15, 2024, NWGR Council Meeting, Rome, GA Public Hearing on Draft Plan.

ROME NEWS-TRIBUNE • WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2024 • A7

### Israel rules out freeing prisoners in hostage deal

By Alisa Odenheimer
Netanyahu is ruling out the freeing of thousands of prisoners or pulling troops out of Gaza as part of any hostage-exchange or cease-fire deal with Hamas.



A woman passes by a wall with photos of hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, in Tel Aviv, Israel.

### China and US start working group to combat flood of fentanyl

The talks underscore how ties between China and the U.S. have stabilized since Biden and Xi met in California in November. The working group was one of the main outcomes of that sitdown, and it was quickly followed by the U.S. lifting sanctions on a Chinese government forensic laboratory in return for Beijing's promise to clamp down on the fentanyl trade.

### NEWS BRIEFS

#### NYC Council bill aims to warn students of social media dangers

NYC Councilman Shaun Abreu plans to introduce a bill to require schools to provide warnings about the negative impact of social media on students. The bill would require the City Department of Education to distribute facts at the beginning of each school year about social media addiction, its potential health impacts, and how to protect oneself.

CANDIDATES IN REMATCHES DOMINATE 'RED TO BLUE' LIST
WASHINGTON — The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's "Red to Blue" list of 177 top congressional incumbents in swing House districts to its inaugural list of 100 seats for its 2024 reelection and transition strategy.

#### PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT FERRER DENIES DRUG ADDICTION

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. denied accusations of drug use with his professor Rodrigo Duterte in his first public rebuke of the former leader as the rift between the country's two most powerful political clans deepens.

### Surge in false 'swatting' calls adds to lawmaker security

WASHINGTON — The Christian County deputies who approached U.S. Rep. Eric Burlison's home in northwest Missouri this week needed only one question to determine that the Republican was the latest member of Congress to become a victim of "swatting."

swatting in so-called swatting incidents — when someone makes a false report about an alarming situation with the goal of prompting a SWAT team or other significant law enforcement response to a location — poses "a new challenge" in their mission to protect lawmakers.

Barlison said he reached out to his local authorities after Rep. Majorie Taylor Green, R-Ga., announced that she had been swatted in December. Over the holidays, Rep. Brandon Williams, R-N.Y., and Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., also publicly announced that they were swatted.

PUBLIC NOTICE
NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission has prepared a draft update to the Northwest Georgia Regional Plan in accordance with state requirements, including Regional Goals, Development Maps, Needs and Opportunities, and an Implementation Program for activities the Regional Commission will undertake in 2024-2028.

PUBLIC NOTICE
NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission has prepared a draft update of the Regionally Important Resources Plan in accordance with state requirements, including regionally significant historic, natural, environmental, and cultural resources, and recommendations to preserve and manage these resources.

has recommended that members reach out to their local law enforcement to share their home and district office locations and pro-

PUBLIC NOTICE
NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION
The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission has prepared a draft update to the Northwest Georgia Regional Plan in accordance with state requirements, including Regional Goals, Development Maps, Needs and Opportunities, and an Implementation Program for activities the Regional Commission will undertake in 2024-2028.



**Data and Mapping Supplement**  
**Sources of Information for Northwest Georgia 2050 Land Use Map**

Source of Information for Northwest Georgia Projected 2050 Regional Land Use Map from GLUT data and County Comprehensive Plans			
COUNTY/CITY	RURAL	DEVELOPING	DEVELOPED
Bartow County	Bartow County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Category: 1. Agriculture/forestry 2. Parks/Conservation 3. Mixed-use residential and Rural Estate that is not inside the developing line around Cartersville.	The area around Cartersville, Emerson, and Euharlee based on GLUT and our assessment	Bartow County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Category : 1. Industrial 2. Mining: three areas between I-75 and the east side of Cartersville 3. Mining: two areas on either side of Rt 20 on the east side of the county 3. Mining: area east of Adairsville Omit the area south of White
Adairsville			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Cartersville			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Emerson			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Euharlee			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Kingston	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		
Taylorville	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		
White		All Developing based on GLUT and our assessment	
Catoosa County	All Rural except Suburban Neighborhood Character Area	Catoosa County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Suburban Neighborhood	
Fort Oglethorpe	Catoosa County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas: 1. Natural Open Space 2. Urban Open Space		All developed except for Natural Open Space and Urban Open space Character Areas
Ringgold			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Chattooga County	All Rural except for the area around Summerville, the prison district, and small industrial areas	Chattooga County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas:	Chattooga County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area:

Source of Information for Northwest Georgia Projected 2050 Regional Land Use Map from GLUT data and County Comprehensive Plans

COUNTY/CITY	RURAL	DEVELOPING	DEVELOPED
		1. Suburban-Neighborhood around Summerville 2. District: Prison	1. District: Industrial
Lyerly	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		
Menlo	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		
Summerville			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Trion		All Developing based on GLUT and our assessment except for the industrial district character area	Chattooga County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. District: Industrial
Dade County	All Rural except for College, Mixed Use Commercial, and Industrial Character Areas	Dade County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Mixed Use Commercial	Dade County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas: 1. College 2. Industrial
Trenton			All were developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Fannin County	All Rural except for the developing corridor along SR 515	Based on GLUT data, the Developing corridor along SR 515/76 is 1.5 miles out on the west side of Blue Ridge, and 4 miles out from the east edge of Blue Ridge	
Blue Ridge			All were developed based on GLUT and our assessment
McCaysville		All developing except for the Developed corridor along SR 5	Developed Corridor along SR 5 to Tennessee line
Morganton	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		
Floyd County	Floyd County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Conservation 2. Rural Area	Floyd County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Urban Growth Area	Floyd County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: Urban Area
Cave Spring		All Developing based on GLUT and our assessment	
Rome	Floyd County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Conservation		All Developed except Conservation Character Area
Gilmer County	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment	In addition, the area east of Ellijay between SR 282 and SR 382 to Carter's Lake	

Source of Information for Northwest Georgia Projected 2050 Regional Land Use Map from GLUT data and County Comprehensive Plans

COUNTY/CITY	RURAL	DEVELOPING	DEVELOPED
East Ellijay			All were developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Ellijay			All were developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Gordon County	Gordon County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Greenspace 2. Hillside Conservation 3. Historic Resource Protection 4. Rural Agriculture Reserve 5. West Calhoun	Gordon County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Emerging Commercial 2. Emerging Mixed Use 3. Emerging Mixed Use Community 4. Emerging Suburban 5. Hwy 411 Multiuse	Comp Plan Future Development Character Areas: 1. County in city 2. Industrial 3. Interstate Commercial 4. Public Institutional Core
Calhoun			All were developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Fairmount	Gordon County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Greenspace 2. Hillside Conservation	All Developing except Hillside Conservation and Greenspace	Gordon County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Historic Downtown
Plainville	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		
Ranger	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		
Resaca	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		
Haralson County	All Rural except for Haralson County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Industrial Character Area between Buchanan and Bremen		Haralson County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Industrial Character Area between Buchanan and Bremen along SR 27
Bremen			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Buchanan		All Developing based on GLUT and our assessment	
Tallapoosa		Haralson County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas: 1. Mixed use 2. Industrial area by I-20	Developed in the core area (all the character areas except Mixed-use and the Industrial Character Area by I-20)
Waco	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		

Source of Information for Northwest Georgia Projected 2050 Regional Land Use Map from GLUT data and County Comprehensive Plans

COUNTY/CITY	RURAL	DEVELOPING	DEVELOPED
Murray County	All Rural except for Murray County Future Land Use Category Industrial and specific commercial areas as noted in the developing column	Murray County Future land use category: Area of Commercial across from Appalachian Inland Port. An additional area of commercial south of the port on Summerour Road	Comp Plan Land use category: 1. Industrial
Chatsworth			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Eton			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Paulding County	Paulding County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas: All Rural except Community Residential	Paulding County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Community Residential	
Braswell	All Rural based on GLUT and our assessment		
Dallas			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Hiram			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Pickens County	All Rural except Pickens County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area Suburban Infill	Pickens County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area 1. Suburban Infill area	
Jasper	Pickens County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area 1. East Pickens Conservation Area		All Developed except for Pickens County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area East Pickens Conservation Area
Nelson	All Rural from GLUT and our assessment		
Talking Rock	All Rural from GLUT and our assessment		
Polk County		SR 278 corridor between Cedartown and the hospital	Polk County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area 1. Industrial
Aragon	Polk County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Greenspace/conservation 2. Mixed residential on the north side		Developed except for the north side

Source of Information for Northwest Georgia Projected 2050 Regional Land Use Map from GLUT data and County Comprehensive Plans

COUNTY/CITY	RURAL	DEVELOPING	DEVELOPED
Cedartown			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Rockmart			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Walker County	All rural except the area east of Rossville	Developing area east of Rossville based on GLUT and our assessment	
Chickamauga			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
LaFayette	Walker County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Greenspace/conservation		All the other Walker County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas
Lookout Mountain			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Rossville			All were Developed based on GLUT and our assessment
Whitfield County	All Rural except Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas Industrial, Suburban Neighborhood, and Interchange	Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas: 1. Suburban Neighborhood 2. Interchange 3. Emerging suburban and exurban areas	Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area: 1. Industrial
Cohutta		All developing based on GLUT and our assessment	
Dalton	Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas: 1. Ridge Conservation The Farm Golf Course and Subdivision		All Developed except Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area Ridge Conservation and the Farm Golf Course and Subdivision
Tunnel Hill	All rural except for Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area Town Neighborhood		Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas: 1. Town Neighborhood
Varnell	All rural except for Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Area Town Neighborhood		Whitfield County Comprehensive Plan Future Development Character Areas: 1. Town Neighborhood

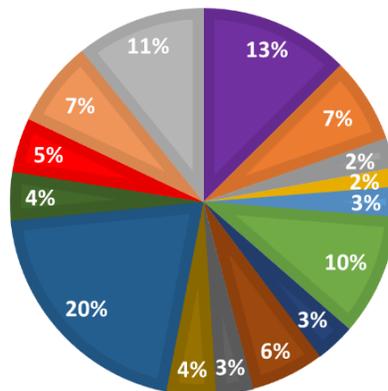
Northwest Georgia Population Data

County	2000	2010	2020	2023	2030	2040	2050	2060
Bartow	76,019	100,157	108,901	112,844	126,127	147,115	157,764	163,747
Catoosa	53,282	63,942	67,872	69,130	71,895	75,626	78,947	82,995
Chattooga	25,470	26,015	24,965	24,948	25,216	25,988	26,156	25,642
Dade	15,154	16,633	16,251	16,218	15,986	15,967	15,839	15,196
Fannin	19,798	23,682	25,319	25,593	25,310	24,816	24,686	24,982
Floyd	90,565	96,317	98,584	99,439	101,623	104,046	107,076	110,424
Gilmer	23,456	28,292	31,353	32,386	33,673	35,042	35,221	35,491
Gordon	44,104	55,186	57,544	58,988	61,729	64,541	66,708	68,554
Haralson	25,690	28,780	29,919	30,667	31,396	33,549	36,212	39,468
Murray	36,506	39,628	39,973	40,468	41,553	42,284	43,358	46,112
Paulding	81,678	142,324	168,661	179,937	204,866	238,725	269,150	299,646
Pickens	22,983	29,431	33,216	35,153	40,743	48,288	50,038	47,061
Polk	38,127	41,475	42,853	43,799	45,595	47,519	48,866	49,228
Walker	61,053	68,756	67,654	69,221	72,179	76,142	79,387	80,733
Whitfield	83,525	102,599	102,864	103,806	108,759	114,163	116,941	119,217
<b>Total:</b>	<b>697,410</b>	<b>863,217</b>	<b>915,929</b>	<b>942,597</b>	<b>1,006,650</b>	<b>1,093,811</b>	<b>1,156,349</b>	<b>1,208,496</b>

Source: <https://opb.georgia.gov/census-data/population-projections>

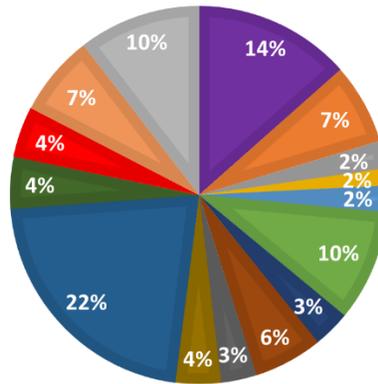
2030 NORTHWEST GEORGIA PROJECTED POPULATION

- Bartow
- Catoosa
- Chattooga
- Dade
- Fannin
- Floyd
- Gilmer
- Gordon
- Haralson
- Murray
- Paulding
- Pickens
- Polk
- Walker
- Whitfield



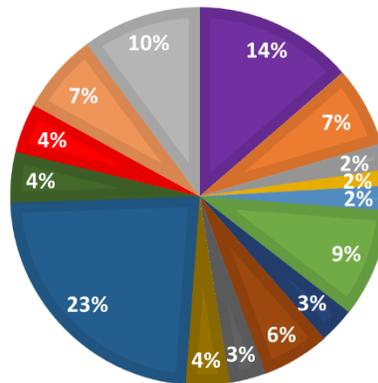
### 2040 NORTHWEST GEORGIA PROJECTED POPULATION

- Bartow
- Catoosa
- Chattooga
- Dade
- Fannin
- Floyd
- Gilmer
- Gordon
- Haralson
- Murray
- Paulding
- Pickens
- Polk
- Walker
- Whitfield



### 2050 NORTHWEST GEORGIA PROJECTED POPULATION

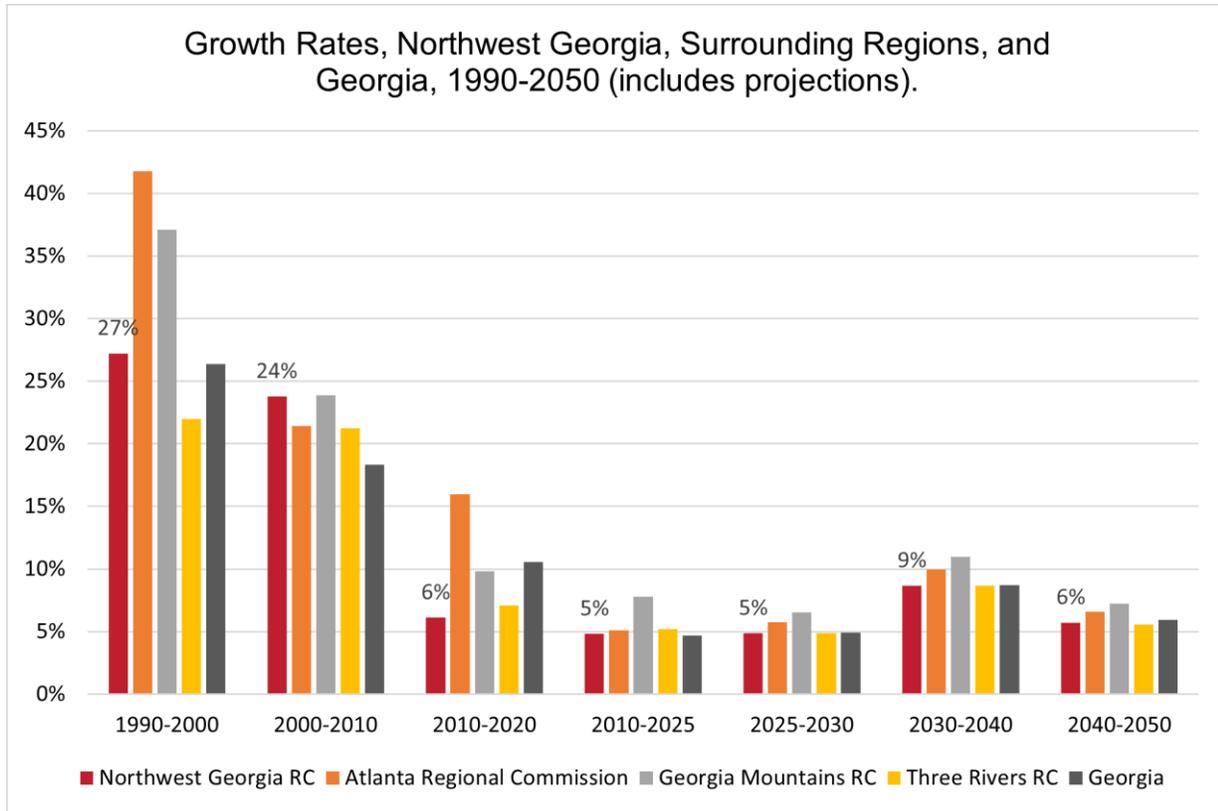
- Bartow
- Catoosa
- Chattooga
- Dade
- Fannin
- Floyd
- Gilmer
- Gordon
- Haralson
- Murray
- Paulding
- Pickens
- Polk
- Walker
- Whitfield



The region's population is projected to reach a total of 1,156,349 by 2050. Counties seeing the most growth from 2020-2050 will be Paulding County (60%), Pickens County (51%), and Bartow County (45%).

The region itself will grow by 26% from 2020-2050, reaching 1 million persons by 2030, and 1.5 million by 2050. Only the Atlanta Regional Commission will have a higher regional population.

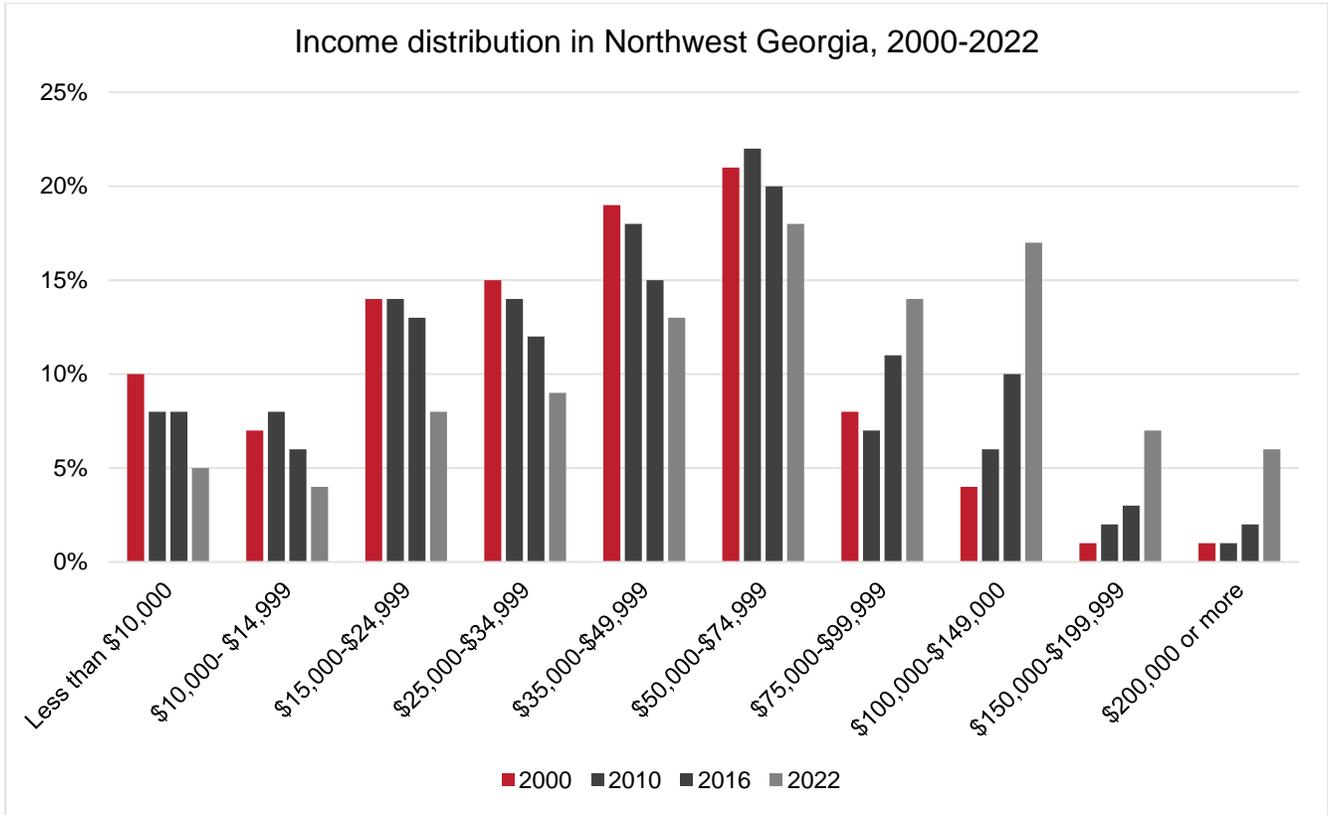
The period of highest growth rates is anticipated from 2030-2040, at 9% growth, or 86,000 added persons during this decade. Similar growth rates are anticipated for surrounding regions and the state as a whole. Sources: US Census 2020 Decennial Census, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget.



Source: Decennial Census 2010 & 2020, DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171), DEC 2000 Summary File 2 Demographic Profile, Summary of General Char. of Persons: 1990; Gov. Office of Planning & Budget.

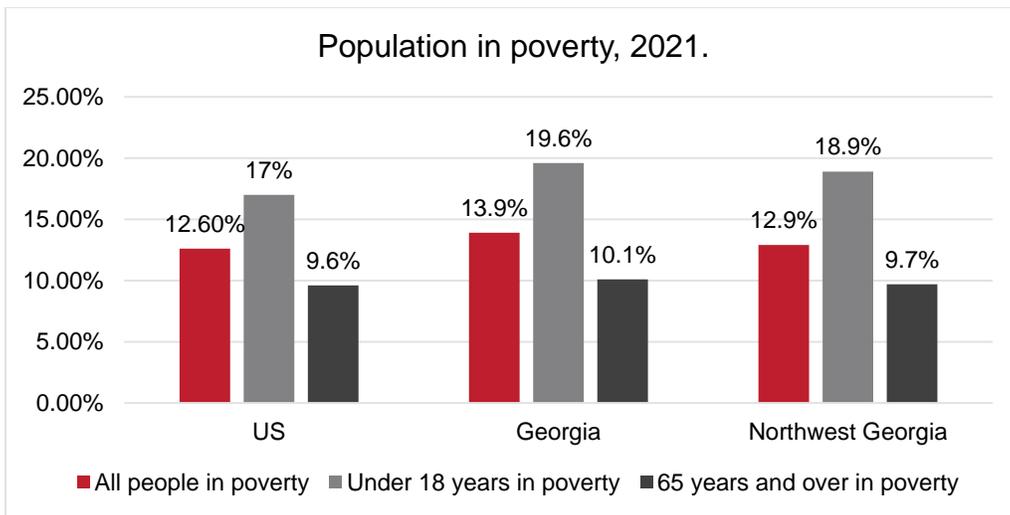
The median age in Northwest Georgia is 41. The population is aging, with the largest bracket being those 45-59, but the population under 18 is significant as well. Male and female populations are fairly evenly distributed from age 20-59; however, for ages 0-5, 10-14, and 15-19, the male population is greater than the female population, while from ages 60 and over, the female population is larger.

**Income and Poverty**



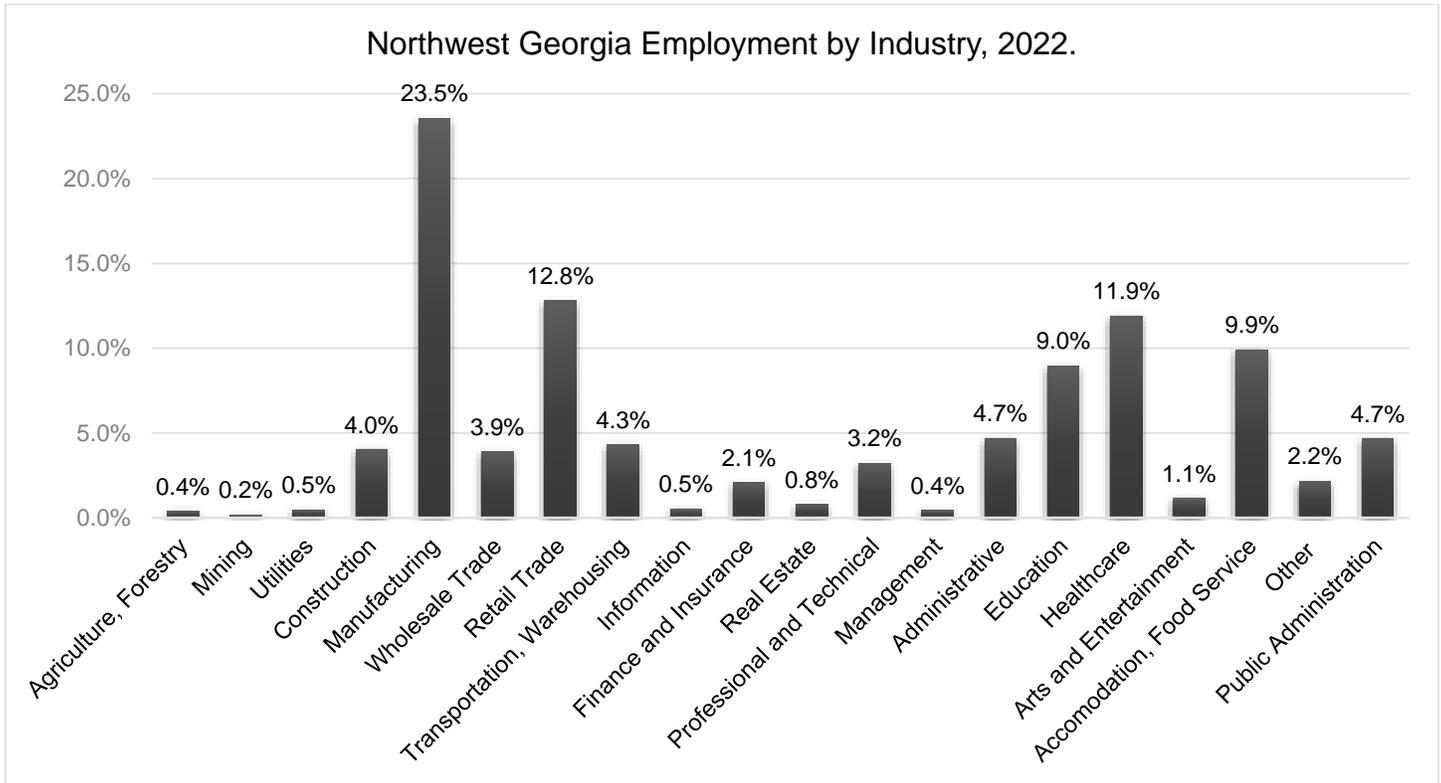
Sources: 2000 Census SF3; 2010 Census SF1; 2017 American Community Survey, 2022 American Community Survey.

Incomes grew from 2000-2022. Household incomes over \$100,000 made up 30% of all incomes in 2023, while 9% had incomes of less than \$10,000. The median household income in 2022 for the region was \$62,644, an increase from \$43,421.07 in 2015. In 2023, 13% of households in Northwest Georgia were in poverty, as were 13% statewide, and 12% nationwide. Overall in Northwest Georgia, the percentages of all persons in poverty (12.9%), children under 18 (18.9%), and people over 65 (9.7%) are slightly less than the state of Georgia percentages and similar to the US percentages.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 5-year ACS estimates.

**Employment**



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages - Bureau of Labor Statistics, Second Quarter 2023.

In Northwest Georgia by industry sector, 24% were employed in manufacturing, 13% in retail trade, 12% in healthcare, and 10% in accommodation and food services.

**Regional and State Employment Data, 2018-2023.**

	Employment 2018	Employment 2023	% Change 2018-2023 Employment	Average Weekly Wage 2018	Average Weekly Wage 2023	% Change 2018-2023 wage
Georgia	4,439,368	5,176,059	17%	\$993	\$1,247	26%
Northwest Georgia RC	268,841	287,334	7%	\$763	\$932	22%
Georgia Mountains RC	248,160	188,793	-24%	\$821	\$979	19%
Three Rivers RC	168,892	185,678	10%	\$782	\$965	23%

Sources: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Quart. Census of Employment Wages Program 3rd Quarter 2018; Georgia Area Labor Profiles, 2023; Georgia LaborMarket Explorer, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Nov 2023; US BLS Quart. Census of Employment Wages 2nd Quarter.

## Area Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment Data, 2022.

Data	Georgia	Northwest Georgia RC	Three Rivers RC	Georgia Mountains RC
Civilian Labor Force	5,339,257	439,776	262,262	249,743
Number Employed	5,160,270	425,661	253,515	242,774
Number Unemployed	178,98	14,115	8,747	6,969
Unemployment Rate	3.4%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%

*Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Georgia Labor Force Estimates, 2022.*

Unemployment rates are low in Georgia, Northwest Georgia, and surrounding regions, as most people in the labor force are currently employed.

## Long-term Industry Projections, Northwest Georgia, 2020-2030, Most Growing Industries.

#	Industry Title	2020 Employment	2030 Employment	% Change Employment	Projected annual increase
1	Food Services and Drinking Places	22,700	29,420	29.6%	2.6%
2	Ambulatory Health Care Services	11,280	14,520	28.7%	2.6%
3	Educational Services	23,900	26,180	9.6%	0.9%
4	Administrative and Support Services	10,320	12,560	21.7%	2.0%
5	General Merchandise Stores	9,030	11,140	23.4%	2.1%
6	Hospitals	9,940	11,710	17.9%	1.7%
7	Warehousing and Storage	3,110	4,400	41.5%	3.5%
8	Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	5,470	6,760	23.7%	2.2%
9	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	5,330	6,600	23.6%	2.1%
10	Social Assistance	3,860	5,080	31.7%	2.8%
11	Food and Beverage Stores	6,810	7,810	14.7%	1.4%
12	Professional, Scientific, Technical	7,640	8,640	13.0%	1.2%
13	Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	7,160	8,020	11.9%	1.1%
14	Self-employed/Unpaid Family Workers	12,010	12,700	5.8%	0.6%
15	Truck Transportation	4,660	5,350	14.7%	1.4%
16	Plastics/ Rubber Products Manufacturing	4,520	5,150	13.6%	1.3%
17	Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation	1,700	2,310	36.3%	3.1%
18	Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	1,320	1,810	36.9%	3.2%
19	Food Manufacturing	3,320	3,780	14.0%	1.3%
20	Repair and Maintenance	2,660	3,120	17.0%	1.6%

*Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Georgia Labor Market Explorer, 2022.*

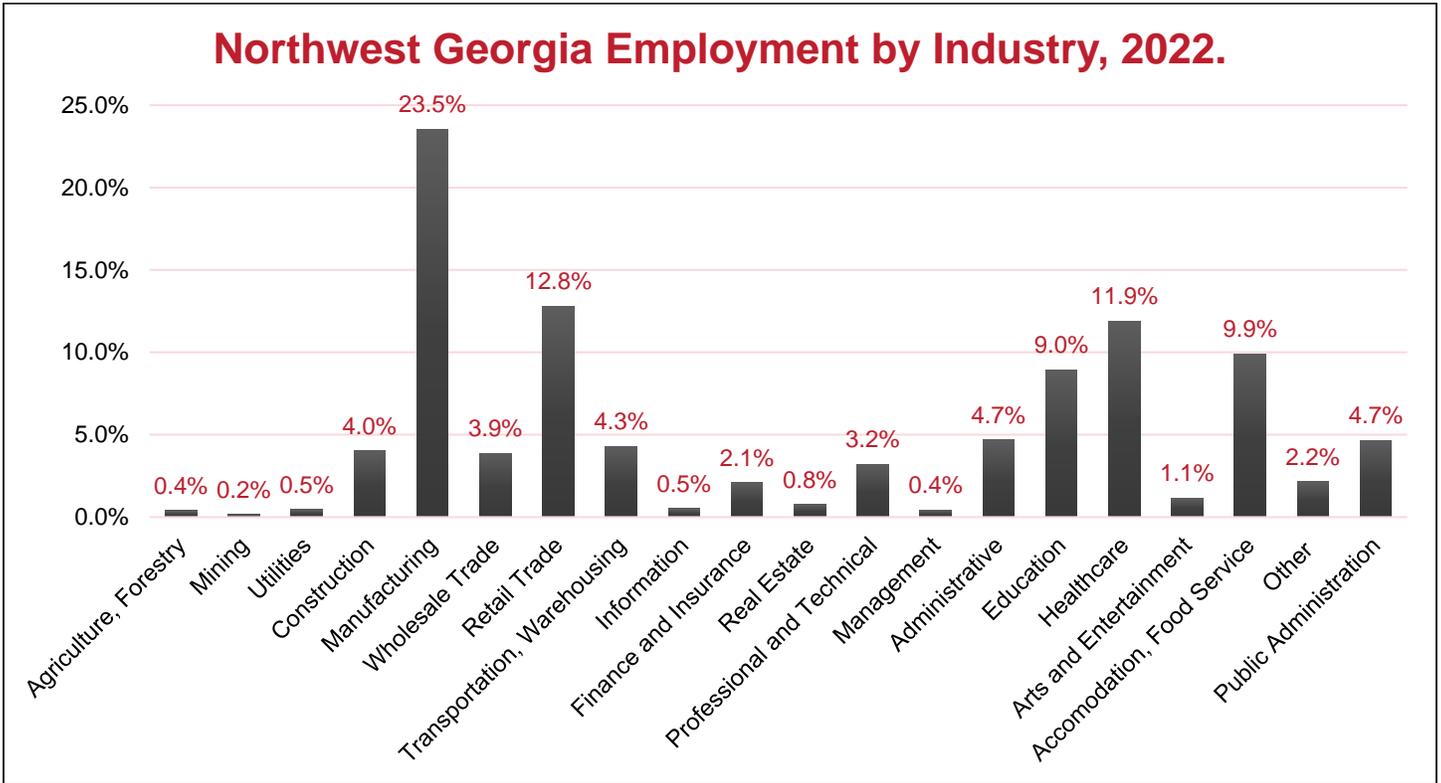
The industry sectors in Northwest Georgia projected to see the most growth are Warehousing and Storage (41.5%), Clothing and Clothing Accessories (36.9%), Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries (36.3%), Social Assistance (31.7%), and Food Service (29.6%).

## Personal and Household Income, Northwest Georgia, 2014-2022.

	Per capita income 2014	Per Capita Income 2022	% Change 2014-2022	Median Household Income 2014	Median Household Income 2022	% Change 2014-2022
Bartow	\$33,483	\$32,102	-4.12%	\$48,306	\$ 74,812	55%
Catoosa	\$31,531	\$33,515	6.29%	\$50,180	\$ 68,896	37%
Chattooga	\$27,704	\$21,576	-22.12%	\$32,496	\$ 43,556	34%
Dade	\$28,643	\$30,078	5.01%	\$44,992	\$ 59,531	32%
Fannin	\$30,036	\$36,058	20.05%	\$35,441	\$ 54,857	55%
Floyd	\$33,705	\$30,523	-9.44%	\$41,046	\$ 57,868	41%
Gilmer	\$30,288	\$34,412	13.62%	\$39,581	\$ 70,334	78%
Gordon	\$30,872	\$29,787	-3.51%	\$42,414	\$ 57,555	36%
Haralson	\$31,007	\$31,342	1.08%	\$41,482	\$ 65,940	59%
Murray	\$26,057	\$27,383	5.09%	\$34,478	\$ 60,617	76%
Paulding	\$31,713	\$35,242	11.13%	\$61,153	\$ 89,237	46%
Pickens	\$39,730	\$37,686	-5.14%	\$50,452	\$ 72,558	44%
Polk	\$28,366	\$26,843	-5.37%	\$39,121	\$ 51,956	33%
Walker	\$28,266	\$28,554	1.02%	\$39,688	\$ 52,276	32%
Whitfield	\$32,435	\$28,594	-11.84%	\$40,081	\$ 59,659	49%
NWGRC	\$30,922	\$30,913	-0.03%	\$42,862	\$ 62,643	46%
Georgia	\$38,980	\$37,836	-2.93%	\$49,347	\$ 71,355	45%
US	\$41,261	\$41,261	0.00%	\$53,482	\$ 75,149	41%

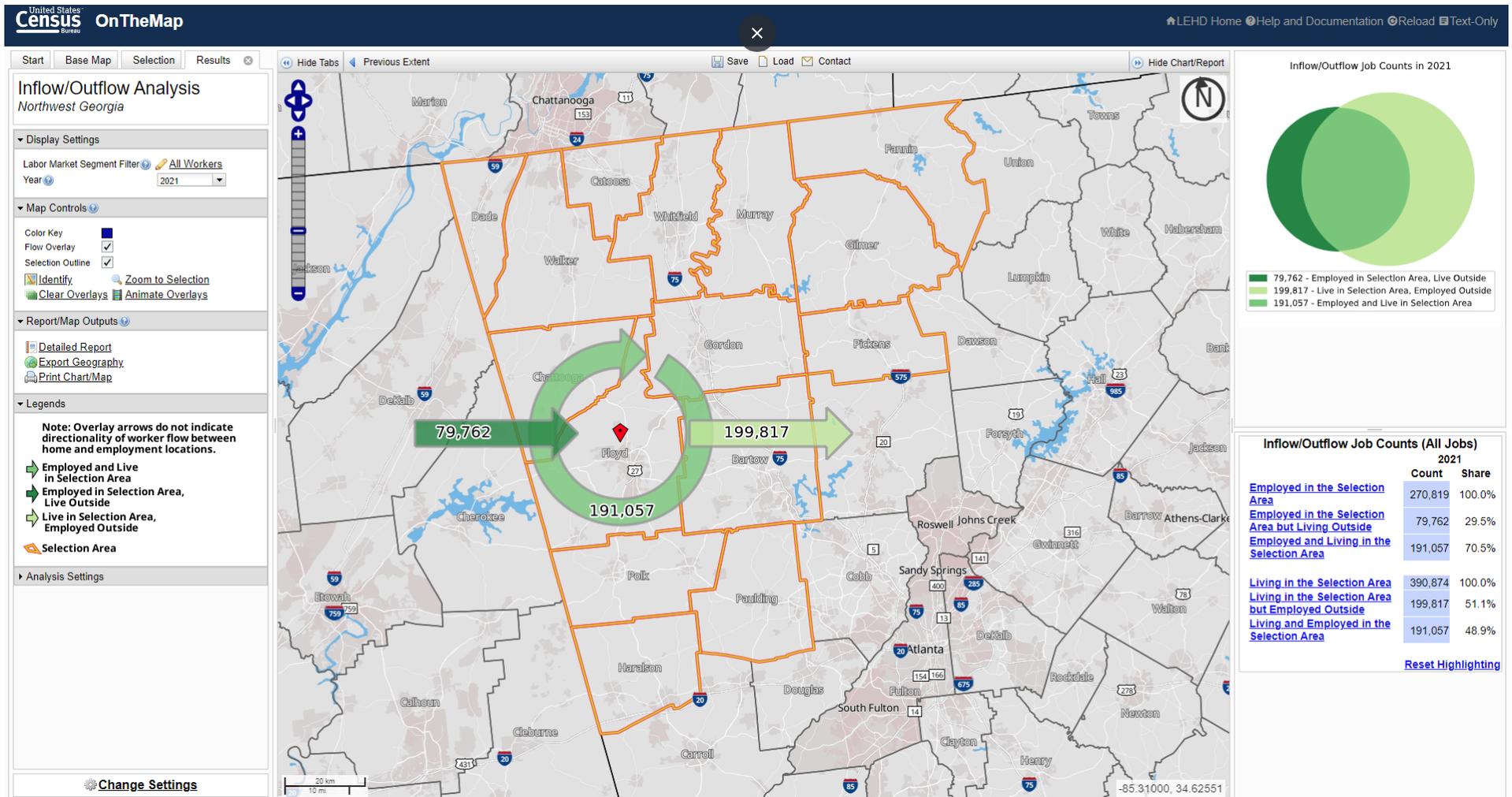
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Est, and 2022 5-Year Est.

Since the previous update of the regional plan, per capita incomes in several counties have decreased, some significantly, while median household incomes have increased across the board.



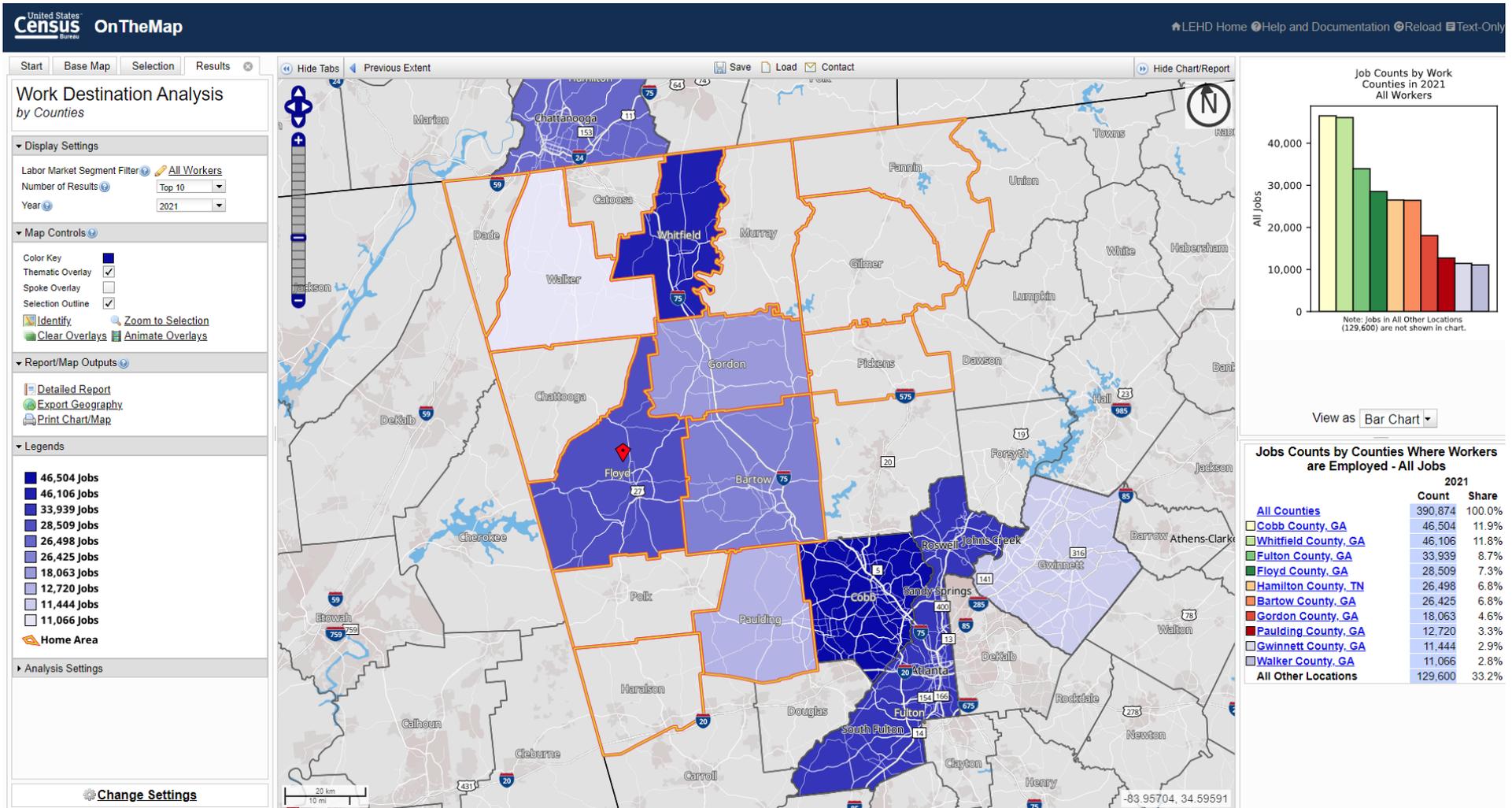
Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, 2022.

In 2022, manufacturing was the strongest industry sector in terms of employment at 23.5%, followed by retail trade at 12.8% and healthcare at 11.9%.



Source: On The Map Inflow and Outflow, Northwest Georgia, 2021.

In 2021, almost 80,000 workers who lived outside Northwest Georgia commuted into the region to work; twice that number lived in Northwest Georgia and commuted out of the region to work. One hundred ninety thousand people lived and worked within the region in 2021. Each group increased from 2015. In 2015, 72,405 persons living outside the region commuted to Northwest Georgia to work, while 171,403 people lived in Northwest Georgia and worked outside the region; 180,598 people lived and worked in Northwest Georgia.



Source: On The Map Inflow and Outflow, Northwest Georgia, 2021.

In 2021, employment centers for those living in the region included Cobb, Whitfield, Fulton, and Floyd Counties in Georgia, and Hamilton County, TN. Cobb County drew 46,504 Northwest Georgia residents for work; Whitfield County followed at 46,106, while Fulton drew 33,939, and Floyd drew 28,509 workers. This is an annual count, but this illustrates both the employment centers in and around the region and the amount of commuter traffic generated. While some types of employment can be done from home, many jobs in healthcare, education, retail trade, manufacturing, professional, and warehousing/transportation/logistics, will continue to require in-person work.

Northwest Georgia Workforce Flows and Employment, 2023.

Worker Total and Flows	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	270,819	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	79,762	29.5%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	191,057	70.5%
Northwest Georgia Labor Force (2022)	428,620	
Employed (2022)	415,786	
Unemployed (2022)	12,834	3.0%
Living in the Selection Area	390,874	100.0
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	199,817	51.1%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	191,057	48.9%

Sources: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application; Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profile, Nov. 2023.

Technical College Certificates Graduates, Northwest Georgia, 2022.

Programs	Total Graduates			Percent Change	
	2020	2021	2022	2020-2021	2021-2022
Welding Technology/Welder	747	657	841	-12%	28%
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	590	991	687	68%	-30.7%
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	395	406	462	2.8%	13.8%
Child Care Provider/Assistant	315	260	326	-17.5%	25.4%
Accounting Technology and Bookkeeping	227	238	281	4.8%	18.1%
Automobile Mechanics Technology /Technician	319	371	250	16.3%	-32.6%
Business Administration & Management, General	184	202	228	9.8%	12.9%
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Operator and Instructor	139	195	209	40.3%	7.2%
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	162	147	142	-9.3%	-3.4%
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation & Refrigeration	112	100	134	-10.7%	34%

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

Technical College Diploma Graduates, Northwest Georgia, 2022.

Programs	Total Graduates			Percent Change	
	2020	2021	2022	2020-2021	2021-2022
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	82	114	122	30.9%	7%
Business Administration & Management, General	78	93	111	19.2%	19.4%
Welding Technology/ Welder	33	50	80	51.5%	60%
Industrial Mechanics & Maintenance Technology	140	118	65	-15.7%	-44.9%
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	77	69	65	-10.4%	-5.8%
Medical/ Clinical Assistant	44	68	45	54.5%	-33.8%
Automobile/ Auto Mechanics Technology/ Technician	56	90	36	60.7%	-60%
Accounting Technology and Bookkeeping	29	32	33	10.3%	3.1%
Early Childhood Education and Teaching	53	28	27	-47.2%	-3.6%
Aircraft Powerplant Technology/ Technician	22	31	26	40.9%	-16.1%

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

Technical College Degree Graduates, Northwest Georgia, 2022.

Programs	Total Graduates			Percent Change	
	2020	2021	2022	2020-2021	2021-2022
Business Administration & Management, General	128	145	136	13.3%	-6.2%
Accounting Technology/ Technician and Bookkeeping	48	61	71	27.1%	16.4%
Registered Nursing/ Registered Nurse	86	84	64	-2.3%	-23.8%
Early Childhood Education and Teaching	66	50	52	-24.2%	4%
Industrial Mechanics & Maintenance Technology	41	47	47	14.6%	0%
Health Information/Medical Records Technology	25	29	38	16%	31%
Radiologic Technology/Science- Radiographer	41	44	31	7.3%	-29.5%
Data Processing & Data Processing Technology	27	23	28	-14.8%	21.7%
Criminal Justice/ Safety Studies	30	37	26	23.3%	-29.7%
Network and System Administration/ Administrator	34	33	25	-2.9%	-24.2%

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

Graduation Rates, Northwest Georgia and Statewide, 2023.

System Name	Graduation Class Size	Total Graduated	Graduation Rate
Bartow County	866	823	95.0%
Catoosa County	863	771	89.3%
Chattooga County	121	109	90.1%
Dade County	160	139	86.9%
Fannin County	228	212	93.0%
Floyd County	512	488	95.3%
Gilmer County	252	234	92.9%
Gordon County	489	473	96.7%
Haralson County	211	204	96.7%
Murray County	468	449	95.9%
Paulding County	2,578	2,317	89.9%
Pickens County	265	238	89.8%
Polk County	576	499	86.6%
Walker County	557	510	91.6%
Whitfield County	1,006	858	85.3%
Bremen City	164	156	95.1%
Calhoun City	268	268	100.0%
Cartersville City	345	318	92.2%
Chickamauga City	113	108	95.6%
Dalton Public Schools	615	501	81.5%
Rome City	460	419	91.1%
Trion City	77	76	98.7%
*Northwest Georgia	11,194	10,170	91%
All Schools in Georgia	134,822	113,735	84.4%

Source: Georgia Department of Education, October 10, 2023; NWGRC total calculated by staff.

HOUSING OCCUPANCY	Number	%
<b>Total housing units</b>	377,240	
<b>Occupied housing units</b>	333,690	88%
Vacant housing units	43,550	12%
Homeowner vacancy rate	1.3	
<b>Rental vacancy rate</b>	7.1	

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

HOUSING TENURE	Number	%
<b>Occupied housing units</b>	333,690	
<b>Owner-occupied</b>	243,029	73%
Renter-occupied	90,661	27%
Average household size of owner-occupied unit	44.49	2.97
Average household size of renter-occupied unit	44.35	2.96

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT	Number	%
<b>Total housing units</b>	377,240	
<b>Built-in 2020 or later</b>	2,327	1%
Built 2010 to 2019	28,340	8%
Built 2000 to 2009	86,296	23%
Built 1990 to 1999	77,018	20%
Built 1980 to 1989	53,982	14%
Built 1970 to 1979	47,042	12%
Built 1960 to 1969	30,085	8%
Built 1950 to 1959	21,430	6%
Built 1940 to 1949	12,940	3%
Built 1939 or earlier	17,780	5%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

UNITS IN STRUCTURE	Total	Percent
Total housing units	377,240	
1-unit, detached	287,547	76%
1-unit, attached	7,231	2%
2 units	9,298	2%
3 or 4 units	9,515	3%
5 to 9 units	7,287	2%
10 to 19 units	5,975	2%
20 or more units	7,976	2%
Mobile home	42,145	11%
Boat, RV, van. Etc	266	0%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

VALUE of Housing	Value	%
<b>Owner-occupied units</b>	\$243,029	
<b>Less than \$50,000</b>	\$17,275	7%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$27,014	11%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$33,855	14%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$43,255	18%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	\$59,749	25%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	\$45,896	19%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	\$13,737	6%
\$1,000,000 or more	\$2,248	1%
Median (dollars)	\$191,807	

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

SELECTED MONTHLY OWNER COSTS (SMOC)	Cost Range	%
<b>Housing units with a mortgage</b>	<b>143,303</b>	
<b>Less than \$500</b>	1,571	1%
\$500 to \$999	27,240	19%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	52,990	37%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	34,033	24%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	13,994	10%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	7,382	5%
\$3,000 or more	6,093	4%
Median (dollars)	\$1,342.73	
<b>Housing units without a mortgage</b>	<b>99,726</b>	
<b>Less than \$250</b>	13,111	13%
\$250 to \$399	28,848	29%
\$400 to \$599	33,091	33%
\$600 to \$799	14,331	14%
\$800 to \$999	5,959	6%
\$1,000 or more	4,386	4%
Median (dollars)	\$439.07	

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

<b>SELECTED MONTHLY OWNER COSTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME (SMOCAPI)</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Housing units with a mortgage (excluding units where SMOCAPI cannot be computed)</b>	142,617	
<b>Less than 20.0 percent</b>	75,658	53%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	21,494	15%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	13,393	9%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	8,147	6%
35.0 percent or more	23,925	17%
Not computed	686	0%
<b>Housing unit without a mortgage (excluding units where SMOCAPI cannot be computed)</b>	98,183	
<b>Less than 10.0 percent</b>	50,451	51%
10.0 to 14.9 percent	18,550	19%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	9,740	10%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	5,888	6%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	3,281	3%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	2,195	2%
35.0 percent or more	8,078	8%
Not computed	1,543	2%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

<b>GROSS RENT</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Occupied units paying rent</b>	83,504	
<b>Less than \$500</b>	7,216	9%
\$500 to \$999	41,958	50%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	24,588	29%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	6,650	8%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	1,956	2%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	870	1%
\$3,000 or more	266	0%
Median (dollars)		\$911.07
No rent paid	7,157	9%
<b>GROSS RENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME (GRAPI)</b>		
<b>Occupied units paying rent (excl units where GRAPI cannot be computed)</b>	82,035	
<b>Less than 15.0 percent</b>	13,596	17%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	11,981	15%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	10,357	13%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	9,865	12%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	7,433	9%
35.0 percent or more	28,803	35%
Not computed	8,626	11%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

In the region, 25% of homeowners and 35% of renters are paying more than 30% of their incomes on housing costs. This indicates a discrepancy between housing costs and incomes/ wages. Owner occupancy vacancy rates are at 1.3% which indicates a lack of supply, as does the fact that only 1% of the total housing supply, or 2,327 houses has been built since 2020. While rental vacancy rates are at 7.1%, indicating some availability, over one-third of renters are cost-burdened, which indicates there is a lack of affordable rental housing in the region.

## **Transportation**

### **Regional Transit**

In late 2023, the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission began a collaboration with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and several consultants on the development of a Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP). The Regional TDP will allow the Regional Council to evaluate the options for supporting the operation of transit on a regional scale. Whereas current transit operations are done through the urban/MPO (5303), small urban (5307), and rural (5311) programs on a localized (county or city) level, the possibilities of a combined regional operation of transit will be evaluated in the Regional TDP.

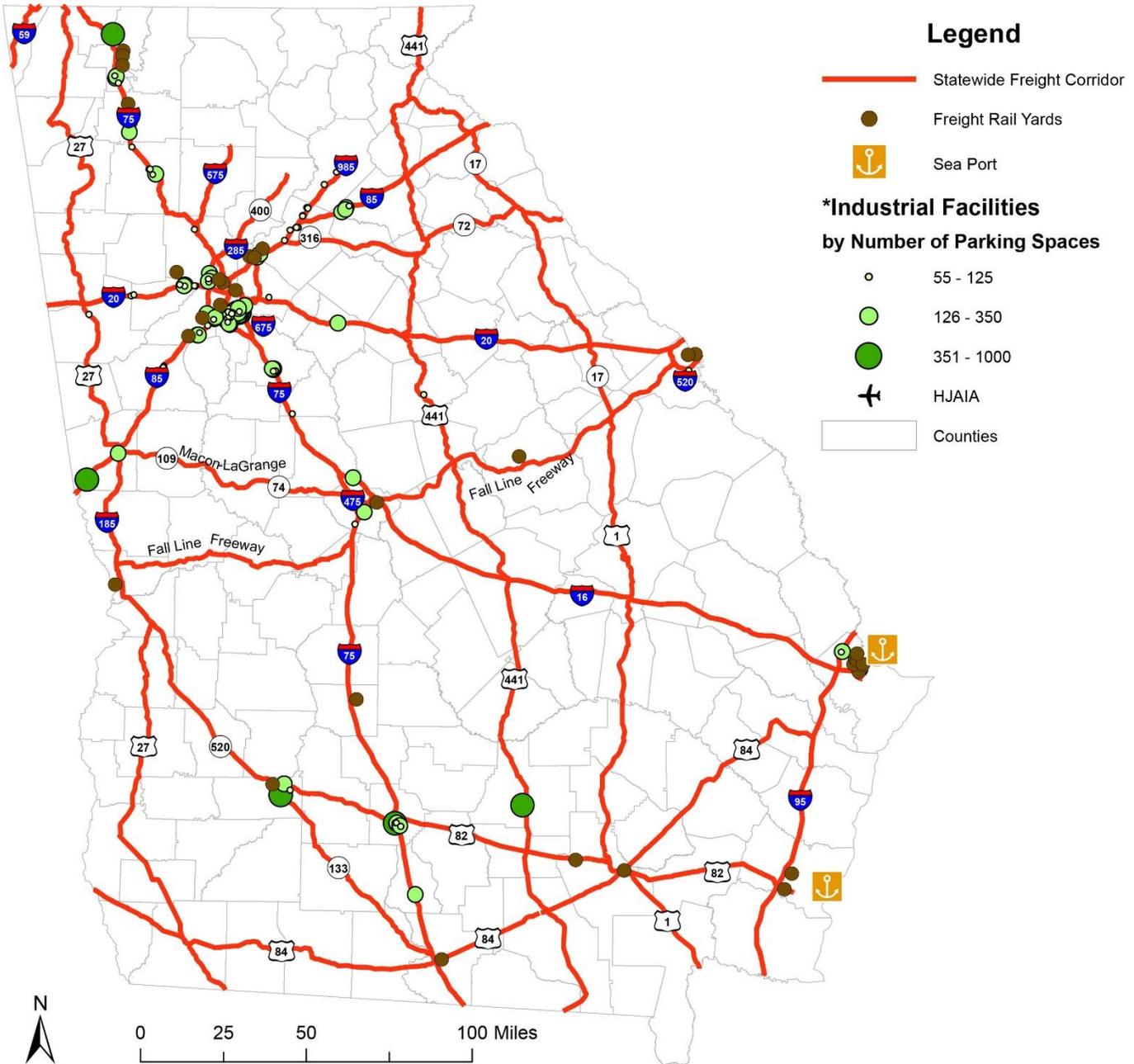
A 2021 study by Georgia's Rural Center and RSH on vanpool feasibility assessed various workforce transportation models, finding that there was almost 66% of the current and emerging labor pool that could use a private-party vanpool operation in conjunction with the employer, where costs would be fair but not prohibitive.

### **Ports and Rail**

The Appalachian Regional Port on CSX Rail on US 411 north of Eton in Murray County provided Northwest Georgia with a direct rail link to the port of Savannah. Each container moved through the inland port round-trip saves 710 truck miles; the port now handles 50,000 containers/ year and offsets 14,200,000 miles/year, which will double over 10 years.

The region is served by rail through Norfolk Southern and CSX rail, connecting the region to Atlanta and Chattanooga.

According to Georgia's 2023 Freight Infrastructure Analysis/ Plan, I-75 remains one of the state's most heavily traveled freight corridors, with over 10 million tons moved in 2019, and planned investments in safety and reliability. Highway 27 is also planned for additional investment as a freight corridor, as is I-59 (Dade County). Both I-75 and Highway 27 corridors are also identified in the Georgia National Electric Vehicle Investment Plan (NEVI) for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.



**Regional transportation corridors and land use**

The Rome-Cartersville Development Corridor (RCDC) will connect US 411 and I-75 in Bartow County, providing greater transportation efficiency, commuter connectivity, and mobility. The RCDC is also expected to relieve congestion along the existing US 411/SR 20 to I-75 corridor. According to the GDOT Preconstruction Status Report, the department expects to submit the final plans for approval in the latter part of 2024.

In conjunction with the RCDC, GDOT is also preparing for improvements along the SR 20 corridor from its I-75 intersection in Bartow County to its I-575 intersection in Cherokee County. The 17-mile-long project will widen the corridor linking Cartersville and Canton from two to four lanes; it includes the widening of bridges over Stamp and Boston Creeks and the replacement of the Knox Bridge over the Etowah River.

An additional project is the improvement of the I-75/I-24 interchange just north of the Georgia state line in Tennessee. The existing I-75/I-24 interchange is a heavily traveled corridor that serves Tennessee and Georgia. Interchange modifications are necessary to increase capacity and improve flow.

As traffic continues to increase, transportation technology solutions will be more widespread adjacent to metro areas where denser populations may drive increased automation or other data-heavy solutions. Intermodal transportation within the region remains a priority, providing safe and connected pedestrian, cyclist, transit, and commuter options.

From the Chattanooga-Hamilton County/North Georgia 2045 Regional Transportation Plan Update, “Preparing for and understanding freight movement will become increasingly important over the planning horizon, with total freight tonnage expected to grow from 25.7 million tons in 2012 to 54.9 million tons in 2040...Freight movement by truck will retain the highest mode share in the region, transporting an estimated 83 percent of total tonnage and 88 percent of total freight value in 2040 (p. 107).”

### **Georgia DOT Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP)**

The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program or STIP is Georgia’s four-year transportation and capital improvements program for federally-funded transportation projects outside the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) boundaries. The FY24-2027 STIP contains critical projects for Northwest Georgia:

- Rome-Cartersville Development Corridor (realignment of Hwy 411 to I-75 north of Cartersville)
- Roundabouts where safety and traffic flows call for their placement
- SR 1/US 27 Bridge Replacement @ Chattooga River (Chattooga County)
- SR 136 Bridge Replacement @ Lookout Creek (Dade County)
- SR 5 Bridge Replacement @ Toccoa River (Fannin County)
- SR 140 Widening (connecting Chattooga/north Floyd County/ to I-75)
- SR 52 Bridge Replacement @ Licklog Creek (Gilmer County)
- SR 156 Bridge Replacement @ Salacoa Creek (Gordon County)
- SR 113 widening (connecting Bartow and Polk Counties)
- 5311 Capital and Operations (Haralson County, et al.)
- SR 2 Bridge Replacement @ Conasauga River (Murray County)
- SR 53 Bridge Replacement @ Long Swamp Creek (Pickens County)
- CR 211/Everett Road Bridge Replacement @ Simpson Creek (Polk County)
- East Armuchee Road Bridge Replacement @ East Armuchee Creek (Walker County)

### **Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

According to the 2020 Census, Northwest Georgia counties fall within five urbanized areas with populations over 50,000 which are required to participate in a metropolitan planning organization (MPO). The five such organizations are the Greater Dalton MPO, the North Georgia portion of the Chattanooga TPO (Catoosa, Walker, Dade Counties), the Rome-Floyd MPO, the Cartersville Bartow MPO, and the Atlanta Regional Commission (Paulding County). Each MPO receives federal funding to prepare and implement transportation programs using a public process that is guided by a Technical Coordinating Committee and approved by an Executive Committee of elected officials. These programs include: An annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which is the annual plan outlining planning and administrative tasks to be completed in the upcoming fiscal year; the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) which is updated every five years; and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which is a four-year short-term work program. The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission serves on each MPO and assists with regional coordination between MPOs and with the Atlanta and Chattanooga regions.

**Greater Dalton MPO**

Projects programmed in the FY24-2027 include \$44M in funding including lump sum, bridge replacements, transit operations, and traffic and safety improvements.

**Chattanooga-Hamilton County-North Georgia TPO**

North Georgia counties in the TPO are Dade, Walker, and Catoosa Counties. Included allocations for the FY23-2026 TIP include \$11M in Metropolitan Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG-M) and \$2M in Transportation Alternative (TA-M) funding.

**Rome-Floyd MPO**

Projects in the FY24-2027 TIP include \$40M in funding including lump sum, bridge replacements, transit operation, and traffic and safety improvements.

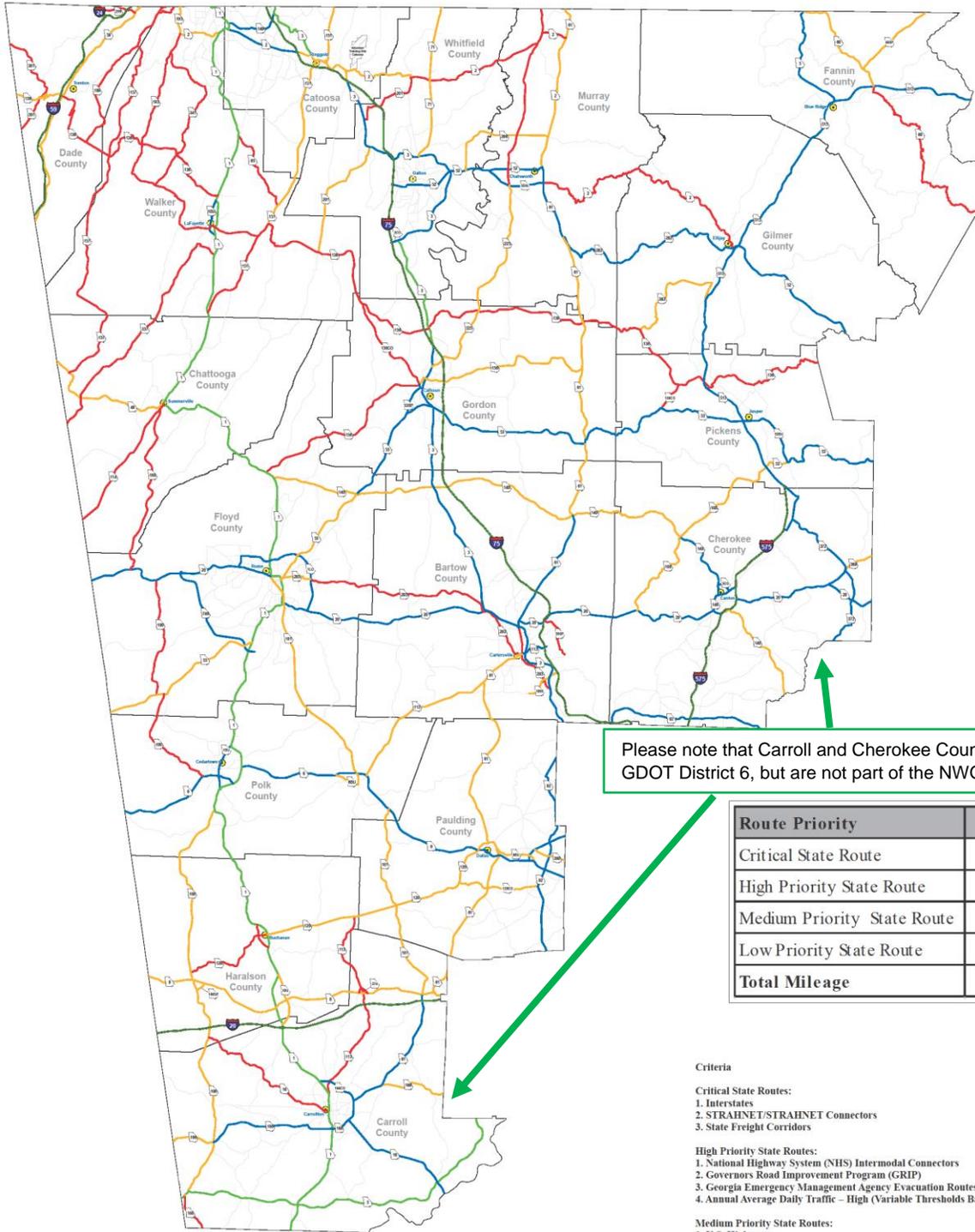
**Cartersville-Bartow County MPO**

Projects included in the FY21-2024 TIP include \$214M in funding including lump sum, bridge replacements, transit operation, and traffic and safety improvements.

**Atlanta Regional Commission**

Projects included in the FY18-2023 (updated in 2019) TIP include the widening of SR 61 Villa Rica Hwy (Paulding), the widening of SR92 Hiram Acworth Hwy widening (Paulding), and express lanes for I-20 and I-285.

The Georgia Department of Transportation has developed a list of priority routes for each DOT district to be maintained and improved for freight transport (shown on the following map). Many East-West routes are shown in red, indicating a low-priority route. However, other East-West routes such as SR 20 and SR 146, Cloud Springs Road in Catoosa County, are programmed for improvement.



Please note that Carroll and Cherokee Counties are in GDOT District 6, but are not part of the NWGRC region.

Route Priority	Mileage
Critical State Route	330
High Priority State Route	540
Medium Priority State Route	540
Low Priority State Route	480
<b>Total Mileage</b>	<b>1,890</b>

**Criteria**

**Critical State Routes:**

1. Interstates
2. STRAHNET/STRAHNET Connectors
3. State Freight Corridors

**High Priority State Routes:**

1. National Highway System (NHS) Intermodal Connectors
2. Governors Road Improvement Program (GRIP)
3. Georgia Emergency Management Agency Evacuation Routes
4. Annual Average Daily Traffic – High (Variable Thresholds Based on Geographic Area)

**Medium Priority State Routes:**

1. U.S. Highways
2. Four or More Lanes
3. Annual Average Daily Traffic – Medium (Variable Thresholds Based on Geographic Area)

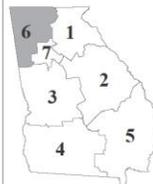
**Low Priority State Routes:**

All other "Unclassified Routes" that include less than (4) Lanes and those that an Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volume rated as "low" (Variable Thresholds Based on Geographic Area)

**Legend**

- Interstates
- Critical Priority Route
- High Priority Route
- Medium Priority Route
- Low Priority Route
- Local Roads
- County Boundary
- County Seats
- ⊠ Military Installations
- + MilePost Markers

**Georgia State Route Prioritization District 6**



## Community Facilities

### Municipal Public Water Systems in the NWGRC Region.

COUNTY	# Permittees	POPULATION	WATER SOURCE
<b>Bartow</b>	12 permittees	109,410	1 GU, 1 SW, 3 SWP, 7 GW
<b>CATOOSA</b>	3 permittees	68,052	2 SWP, 1 SW
<b>CHATTOOGA</b>	8 permittees	24,902	5 GWP, 1 SWP, 1 GWP, 1 SW
<b>DADE</b>	1- DADE COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY	16,239	SW
<b>Fannin</b>	31 permittees	25,436	2 SW, 5 SWP, 1 GWP, 23 GW
<b>Floyd</b>	6 permittees	98,541	3 GW, 3 SW
<b>GILMER</b>	25 permittees	31,519	2 SWP, 1 SW, 22 GW
<b>GORDON</b>	3 permittees	57,785	1 SW, 2 SWP
<b>HARALSON</b>	4 permittees	31,178	2 SW, 2 SWP
<b>MURRAY</b>	8 permittees	40,063	1 SW, 7 GW
<b>PAULDING</b>	2 permittees	169,898	1 SWP, 1 GW
<b>PICKENS</b>	7 permittees	33,439	1 SWP, 3 SW, 3 GW
<b>POLK</b>	4 permittees	43,019	3 SWP, 1 GU
<b>WALKER</b>	7 permittees	68,065	2 SWP, 1 SW, 4 GW
<b>WHITFIELD</b>	1- DALTON UTILITIES	99,315	SW

**GW-groundwater, GWP-groundwater purchase, GU-groundwater under influence of surface water, SW-surface water, SWP-surface water purchase**

Source: Georgia EPD, Active Permitted Drinking Water System List, Dec 2023.

## Existing Municipal Permitted Water Supplies

Within the NWGRC region, including both surface water and groundwater, almost 244 MGD of municipal permitted water supply (on a monthly average basis) is available. The region relies primarily on surface water from rivers and storage reservoirs for this water supply. The most significant water supply source for the region is the Coosa River system, including the Etowah, Conasauga, Coosawattee, and Oostanula Rivers, and Lake Allatoona.

Georgia EPD Non-Farm Surface Water Withdrawal Permits, NWGA.

River Basin	Surface Water Withdrawal Permit Holder	Permit Limit Max Day MGD	Permit Limit Monthly Average MGD
<b>Coosa</b>	47 Permittees	1,371.18	565.69
<b>Tallapoosa</b>	8 Permittees	37.55	33.69
<b>Tennessee</b>	13 Permittees	30.55	26.47
<b>Total in region</b>	68	1,439.28	625.85

Source: Georgia EPD, Non-Farm Surface Water Withdrawal Permit List [Revised Nov 2020]

Existing Non-Farm Permitted Ground Water Supplies in NWGA Region.

River Basin	Permittees	Permit Limit Yearly Average MGD	Permit Limit Monthly Average MGD
<b>Coosa</b>	28 permittees	42.452	43.723
<b>Tallapoosa</b>	1 permittee	0.82	0.82
<b>Tennessee</b>	8 permittees	13.125	13.297
<b>Total</b>	36 permittees	56.397	57.84

Source: List of Georgia EPD Non-Farm Groundwater Withdrawal Permits (Revised October 2022)

**Water Demand Forecasts**

The *Coosa-North Georgia Regional Water Plan* (June 2023) provides municipal water demand forecasts for twelve of the NWGRC region’s fifteen counties, including publicly-supplied and self-supplied demands from surface water and groundwater sources, but not from major industries.

Municipal Water Demand Forecast, NW GA.

County	Average Annual Demand (AAD) - Millions of Gallons/Day (MGD)				
	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
<b>Catoosa</b>	6.8	7.1	6.9	6.4	5.9
<b>Chattooga</b>	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.2
<b>Dade</b>	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.9
<b>Fannin</b>	2.7	2.7	2.3	1.9	1.7
<b>Floyd</b>	12.6	12.9	12.3	11.3	10.3
<b>Gilmer</b>	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.0	3.9
<b>Gordon</b>	10.1	10.6	10.9	11.0	11.2
<b>Murray</b>	3.9	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.2
<b>Pickens</b>	4.2	4.8	5.0	5.2	5.4
<b>Polk</b>	6.0	6.2	6.1	5.8	5.4
<b>Walker</b>	7.6	7.6	7.5	7.3	7.3
<b>Whitfield</b>	27.1	27.7	28.1	28.1	27.8

Source: Coosa-North Georgia Regional Water Plan (June 2023)

Northwest Georgia includes the Coosa-North Georgia Water Planning Region (Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Fannin, Floyd, Gilmer, Gordon, Murray, Pickens, Polk, Walker, and Whitfield Counties), the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (Bartow, Paulding), and the Middle Chattahoochee Water Planning Region (Haralson). The Coosa-North Georgia Water Plan, updated in 2023, summarizes the potential gaps.

Summary of Potential Water Gaps, Coosa-North Georgia, 2023.

County	Water Supply Challenges (# Facilities) <sup>a</sup>	Wastewater Assimilation Challenges (# Facilities) <sup>a</sup>	Municipal Water Needs (MGD) <sup>b</sup>	Municipal Wastewater Needs (MGD) <sup>b</sup>	Agricultural Water Potential Shortages	Assimilative Capacity Challenges for Dissolved Oxygen (# Segments) <sup>c</sup>	Miles of 303d Not Supporting Reaches and (# segments) <sup>d</sup>
Catoosa	Yes (1)						79 (14)
Chattooga	Yes (2)	Yes (2)					57 (12)
Dade	Yes (1)	Yes (1)			Yes		29 (6)
Fannin		Yes (1)					71 (4)
Floyd	Yes (3)	Yes (1)					198 (28)
Gilmer						Yes (1)	93 (22)
Gordon	Yes (1)	Yes (1)					112 (22)
Murray		Yes (1)					62 (10)
Pickens	Yes (1)	Yes (1)				Yes (1)	48 (10)
Polk	Yes (1)	Yes (2)					25 (5)
Walker	Yes (1)	Yes (1)					66 (14)
Whitfield	Yes (2)						52 (15)
Total	9 (13)	9 (11)			1	2 (2)	892 (162)

<sup>a</sup> "Yes" indicates that there is at least one day of a water supply or wastewater assimilation challenge in the indicated county.

<sup>b</sup> A municipal "need" is where the current permitted water withdrawal capacity or wastewater discharge, respectively, is less than the future forecast demands.

<sup>c</sup> Potential challenges in assimilative capacity due to dissolved oxygen are for streams modeled to have "At Capacity," or "Exceeding Capacity."

<sup>d</sup> Includes only 303(d) reaches with no supporting status that is fully within each respective county. An additional 430 miles, or 50 stream reaches, are shared between two or more counties. Some reaches are shared with counties outside of the CNG region.

Source: Coosa-North Georgia Regional Water Plan, June 2023.

Since the 2017 Water Plan, additional counties in the Coosa-North Georgia region have been found to have water and wastewater challenges. In 2017, only four counties had a potential water supply gap; only five had water quality assimilative capacity challenges. It identifies 892 stream miles and 162 segments of streams in Northwest Georgia that are not supporting their designated use of fishing, drinking water, or recreational usage (303d designated streams); both increased from 2017 when the total was 762 miles of non-supporting streams and 139 segments.

Water Supply Challenges Indicated in Assessment Results for Tallapoosa River Basin in the Middle Chattahoochee Region.

Scenario				
Facility	Metric		Baseline	Baseline drought
City of Bremen	% Time		0.03%	0.02%
	Shortage million gallons	Model period	0.6	0.3
		2007-2008 Drought	0.6	0.3
		2011-2012 Drought	0	0
Haralson County Water Authority	% Time		2.80%	2.80%
	Shortage million gallons	Model period	1,586	1,546
		2007-2008 Drought	435	426
		2011-2012 Drought	356	357

% Time is calculated as a proportion of the full model period (1939-2018). Shortage is the total volume for the full model period.

Source: 2023 Middle Chattahoochee Water Plan.

According to the 2023 Middle Chattahoochee Water Plan, potential water supply challenges were noted during times of severe drought for Haralson County Water Authority’s withdrawal from the Tallapoosa River. If agricultural withdrawals from surface water increase in Haralson County, this could affect the potential deficit during drought conditions.

The 2022 Water Resources Management Plan for the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District includes Bartow and Paulding Counties. The plan assesses current and future water and wastewater capacities and demands, as well as septic system effluent, stormwater, and biosolids treatment demands. The plan includes required management practices and ordinances that local governments and utility providers must adopt and follow to ensure future water resources are available. Depending on their population size, smaller local governments and utilities may not be required to implement certain categories of action items.

**Municipal Stormwater**

Under the Georgia EPD’s MS4 permit program, local governments in regulated areas are required to establish a comprehensive stormwater management program (SWMP) and to develop a plan and program to control stormwater pollution discharges. There are no Phase 1 MS4 communities in the region. In 1999, federal regulations extended the NPDES MS4 permit program to smaller (Phase II) communities in “urbanized areas,” as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (Figure 48).

NWGRC Local Governments in Phase II MS4 Designated Areas, 2020

Cartersville	Eton	Rome	Dade Co. (waiver pending)
Chatsworth	Euharlee	Rossville	Floyd County
Chickamauga	Fort Oglethorpe	Tunnel Hill	Murray Co.
Dallas	Hiram	Varnell	Paulding County
Dalton	Lookout Mountain	Bartow County	Walker County
Emerson	Ringgold	Catoosa County	Whitfield County

Source: Georgia Environmental Protection Division

The Phase II rules require a designated Phase II (small) MS4 community’s SWMP to consist of six elements, termed minimum control measures: (1) public education and outreach, (2) public participation/ involvement, (3) illicit discharge detection and elimination, (4) construction site runoff control, (5) post-construction runoff control, and (6) pollution prevention / good housekeeping best management practices and goals.

**Solid Waste Management Facilities**

All jurisdictions in the NWGRC region have adopted comprehensive solid waste management plans prepared according to state requirements. Many counties that previously operated landfills now rely on registered transfer stations that collect and transport MSW to regional landfills. Except for a construction and demolition landfill in Pickens County, all landfills and disposal facilities are publicly owned.

Remaining Capacity of Landfills in the NWGRC Region, 2022.

Permit Number	Facility	Facility Description	Remaining Capacity (yd3)	Average Daily Tons	Rate of Fill (yd3/day)	Year Remaining	Estimated fill Date
008-016D(SL)	Bartow County Board of Commissioners	Municipal Solid Waste Landfill	13,269,675	637.41	951.36	47.92	5/20/2070
057-020D(MSWL)	Walker Mountain Road	Municipal Solid Waste Landfill	4,375,005	451	902	11.93	5/31/2034
064-016D(SL)	Gordon Co - Redbone Ridges Rd (SL)	Municipal Solid Waste Landfill	15,909,813	1,072.00	1,495.12	31.63	8/17/2053
071-006D(C&D)	Haralson Co - HCSWA US 78	Construction &Demolition Landfill	335,343	113.68	227.36	4.2	11/15/2025
105-014D(MSWL)	Murray County Landfill	Municipal Solid Waste Landfill	17,877,440	168.9	322.02	148.45	12/30/2170
112-008D(C&D)	Whitestone Valley C&D Landfill	Construction &Demolition Landfill	3,026,294	499	804.84	12.36	11/11/2034
115-008D(SL)	Polk County Solid Waste Management	Municipal Solid Waste Landfill	15,412,388	2,419.00	3,721.54	14.48	6/27/2036
146-013D(L)	LaFayette-Coffman Springs Rd (L)	Construction &Demolition Landfill	99,696	0.01	0.02	14,835.71	12/31/9999
146-015D(MSWL)	Walker Co - Marble Top Rd Site 2 MSWL	Construction &Demolition Landfill	0	0.32	648.8	0	8/18/2020
155-047D(SL)	OLD DIXIE SANITARY LANDFILL	Municipal Solid Waste Landfill	4,556,939	834.89	1,164.42	12.79	4/11/2035
<b>155-048D(LI)</b>	Whitfield Co - DWRSWA Old Dixie Hwy Carpet	Industrial Landfill	25,587	59.02	167.43	0.5	12/29/2022

Source: Georgia Environmental Protection Division, Land Protection Branch, Solid Waste Management Program.

**Fire Protection Services**

There are fifty-six various entities providing fire protection services in the NWGRC region. These fire departments vary by type of entity (e.g., municipal corporation, nonprofit corporation, for-profit corporation, association), organizational status (e.g., agent of municipality or county fire district, volunteer fire company), source of funding, and employment status of personnel (e.g., career, volunteer, paid per call, combination). Most are public sector organizations such as municipal and county fire departments. Many of the region’s fire departments have taken on expanded roles, routinely providing emergency medical services, technical rescue, and hazardous materials response.

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), in 2001, launched the ongoing National Fire Department Census Database that provides an online address listing of fire departments registered with the USFA. Below is the percentage of USFA-registered fire departments by department type for the NWGRC region, state, and nation.

Percentages of USFA-Registered Fire Departments by Department Type

Area	Fire Department Type			
	Volunteer	Mostly Volunteer	Mostly Career	Career
<b>NWGRC Region</b>	38.5%	29.7%	14.8%	17%
<b>Georgia</b>	48.8.0%	22.5%	10.2%	18.5%
<b>United States</b>	70.0%	15.5%	5.0%	9.5%

Source: U.S. Fire Administration, National Fire Department Census.

**Law Enforcement Services**

There are sixty-eight local law enforcement agencies in the NWGRC region. These include county sheriff agencies, county police agencies, county constable agencies, county marshal agencies, municipal police agencies, municipal marshal agencies, and school police agencies.

**Emergency Medical Services/ Healthcare**

Emergency medical services (EMS) are a type of public safety/emergency service dedicated to providing out-of-hospital acute medical care, transport to definitive care, and other medical transport to ill or injured patients unable to transport themselves. There are 37 EMS agencies in the region (Region 1). Region 1, which includes all of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission counties plus Cherokee County, has 14 acute care hospitals, 6 designated trauma centers, 4 designated cardiac centers, and 10 designated stroke centers. In 2023 the state’s only stand-alone Emergency Department opened in Chattooga County.

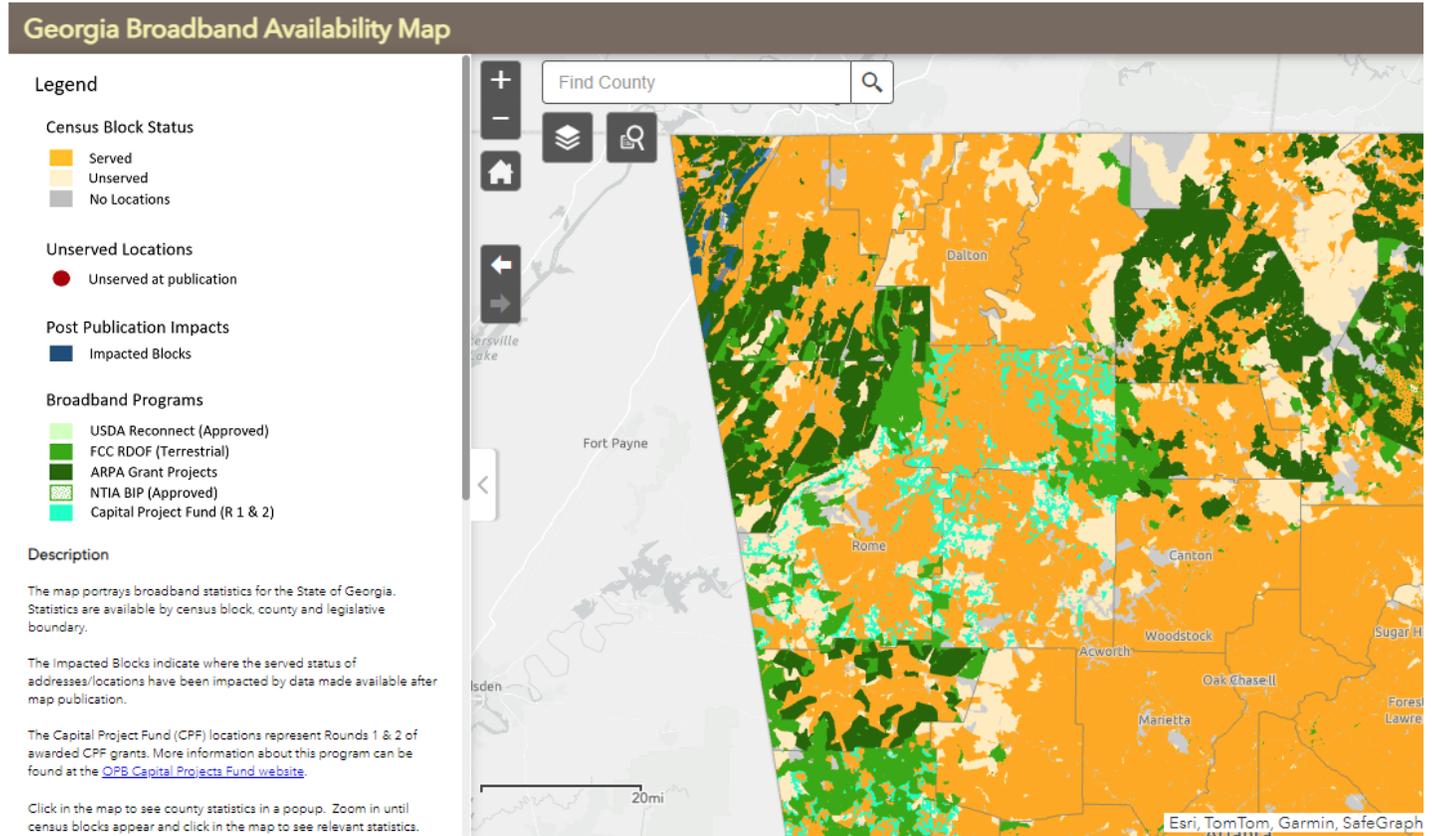
**Parks and Recreation**

While many local parks, trails, water trails, and recreation facilities currently exist in the region, there is a great need to expand recreational offerings and add water and trail access and connectivity. Developing access to the Silver Comet Trail from downtowns will spur greater economic activity and increase recreational opportunities. There is a need for greater regional connectivity for bike paths, hiking trails, and water trails.

**Broadband**

Georgia’s 2023 Broadband Availability map shows that most areas of the Northwest Georgia region are served; however, significant gaps still exist, for example, in rural areas of Bartow, Chattooga, Fannin, Gilmer, Gordon, Murray, Paulding, and Polk Counties. For Bartow, Chattooga, Dade, Fannin, Gilmer, Gordon, Pickens, Polk, and Walker Counties, a combination of ARPA, FCC FDOF, and Capital Project Fund monies have assisted in bringing broadband services to the unserved areas. However, gaps still exist, and each jurisdiction’s joint comprehensive plan broadband element will help that community and the region achieve greater connectivity in partnership with the Georgia Technology Authority and providers, through funding opportunities.

# 2023 Georgia Broadband Availability Map



Source: <https://broadband.georgia.gov/2023-georgia-broadband-availability-map>