



# Middle Georgia Regional Commission

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James A. Epps, Jr., Chairman

Laura M. Mathis, Executive Director

May 31, 2024

Ms. Lisa Westin  
Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
Community Development Division  
60 Executive Park South, NE  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Re: 2024 Regional Plan Update

Dear Ms. Westin:

Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC) has completed a full update to its Regional Plan for the period from July 1, 2024, until June 30, 2029. The complete plan is enclosed for review by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that MGRC held the required public hearing on this submission during the regularly scheduled MGRC Council meeting, April 11, 2024, at 5:30 pm. A draft of the minutes from this meeting has been included as evidence of this public hearing. No comments were received on the report.

I also certify that MGRC staff followed the requirements of the Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning, Chapter 110-12-6, dated October 1, 2017. This report considers other statewide and regional planning efforts, including but not limited to Georgia's Strategic Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Upper Oconee Regional Water Plan, Middle Ocmulgee Regional Water Plan, Middle Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS), Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS) MTP, and the regional plans of all regional commissions adjacent to Middle Georgia.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Greg Boike, Director of Planning and Public Administration, at (478) 751-6160 or [gboike@mg-rc.org](mailto:gboike@mg-rc.org).

Sincerely,

Laura M. Mathis  
Executive Director

Enclosures



# 2024 – 2029 MIDDLE GEORGIA REGIONAL PLAN

*Live, Innovate, & Thrive  
in Middle Georgia*



# 2024 – 2029 Middle Georgia Regional Plan

Prepared by:



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## Special Thanks ...

### Middle Georgia Regional Commission Council

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<b>Crawford County</b>	Dale Jump	Jay Andrews	Kerry Dunaway	Jackie McCowen	Dennis Kelly
<b>Houston County</b>	Dan Perdue	John Harley	George Slappey	LaRhonda Patrick	Clifford Holmes
<b>Jones County</b>	Chris Weidner	Ed Barbee	LaShunda Whipple	Francis Adams	Joy Carr
<b>Macon-Bibb County</b>	Lester Miller	Seth Clark	Carlos McCloud	Wallace Herring	Michelle Parks
<b>Monroe County</b>	Gregory Tapley	Eric Wilson	Trey Gavin	Mike Dodd	Lamarcus Davis
<b>Peach County</b>	Martin Moseley	Michael Chidester	James Khoury	James Richardson	Juanita Bryant
<b>Pulaski County</b>	Jenna Mashburn	Shelly Berryhill	Sara Myers	Staci Vickers	Sylandi Brown
<b>Putnam County</b>	Bill Sharp	John Reid	Maurice Hill, Jr.	Gary Sanders	Charles Gray
<b>Twiggs County</b>	Ken Fowler	Charles Williams	Virginia Lee	Kathryn Epps	Judy Sherling
<b>Wilkinson County</b>	Flint Shepherd	Joyce Denson	Marty Dominy	Lloyd Hatfield	Aprill-Adside Smith
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Middle Georgia consists of 11 counties and 20 cities located within approximately one hour of the geographic center in Macon-Bibb County. Each of these counties and associated cities have resources, challenges, and opportunities that cross their individual borders. Middle Georgia communities have grown in closeness and collaboration over the past several years with a focus on mutual work to strengthen the economy and push the development of the workforce into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The governments of the region have supported this regional planning process, as it fosters learning and understanding of each jurisdiction's strengths and weaknesses. The planning process also informs what are the needs and opportunities for the region. From this understanding, local leaders can foster regional solutions to local issues, building a diverse flourishing community and economy that promotes Living, Innovating, and Thriving.

This regional plan is mandated by the Georgia Planning Act (O.C.G.A. 45-12-200, et seq., and 50-8-1, et seq), and has been drafted under the standards established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). This future is articulated by completing a regional planning process with stakeholder guidance and steering committee oversight. Through the direction of these two groups, the following elements are included in the plan that was development by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC): a Vision Statement, Regional Goals, Needs and Opportunities, and an Implementation Program, consisting of Performance Standards and a Regional Work Program.

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### VISION STATEMENT

Through the public planning process of stakeholder engagement, a shared vision for Middle Georgia was determined. The shared vision reflects regional values and desired future outcomes of achieving an innovative, thriving, community for all. The final vision statement for the region is:

***Middle Georgia is a diverse region of opportunity where people want to live, innovate, and thrive. We are a region united by pride and mutual respect, where cooperation and collaboration expand the region's economic prosperity, provide an exceptional education for all residents, and ensure that every Middle Georgian has a high quality of life through the provision of effective local government services and the preservation of natural and cultural assets.***

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### STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

The 2024-2029 Middle Georgia Regional Plan was constructed with input from a diverse group of regional stakeholders of local citizens, local government officials, and business leaders collaborating on a common vision, identifying shared goals, and recognizing regional needs and opportunities. Information was received in the form of public hearings, regional stakeholder meetings, and county-based listening sessions. When implemented, the regional plan will address critical issues and opportunities while moving toward a unique, impactful vision for the future of the region. The schedule for all Regional Plan meetings can be seen on the following page.



<b>Public Engagement Process</b>		
<b>First Public Hearing</b>		
Middle Georgia	November 16, 2023	Middle Georgia Regional Commission, 175 Emery Hwy Ste C, Macon, Ga 31217
<b>First Stakeholder Meeting</b>		
Middle Georgia	December 6, 2023	Middle Georgia Regional Commission, 175 Emery Hwy Ste C, Macon, Ga 31217
<b>Local Listening Sessions</b>		
Wilkinson County	January 16, 2024	Commission Chambers, 100 Bacon Street, Irwinton, GA 31042
Pulaski County	January 18, 2024	Pulaski County Annex, 45 South Lumpkin Street, Hawkinsville, GA 31036
Monroe County	January 22, 2024	County Administrative Building, 38 West Main Street, Forsyth, GA 31029
Baldwin County	January 23, 2024	County Commission Building, 1601 North Columbia Street, Milledgeville, GA 31061
Putnam County	January 25, 2024	County Administration Building, 117 Putnam Drive, Eatonton, GA 31024
Peach County	January 31, 2024	Commission Chambers, 213 Persons Street, Fort Valley, GA 31030
Crawford County	February 1, 2024	County Administration Office, 640 GA Highway 128, Roberta, Georgia 31078
Jones County	February 6, 2024	County Commissioner Office, 166 Industrial Blvd, Gray, GA 31032
Houston County	February 11, 2024	Houston County Annex, 200 Carl Vinson Pkwy, GA 31088
Twiggs County	February 12, 2024	Twiggs County Courthouse, 425 N. Railroad St, Jeffersonville, GA 31044
Macon-Bibb County	February 21, 2024	Middle Georgia Regional Commission, 175 Emery Highway, Suite C Macon, GA 31217
<b>Second Regional Stakeholder Meetings</b>		
Middle Georgia	March 6, 2024	Middle Georgia Regional Commission, 175 Emery Hwy Ste C, Macon, Ga 31217
<b>Third Regional Stakeholder Meetings</b>		
Middle Georgia	March 19, 2024	Middle Georgia Regional Commission, 175 Emery Hwy Ste C, Macon, Ga 31217
<b>Final Public Hearing</b>		
Middle Georgia	April 11, 2024	Middle Georgia Regional Commission, 175 Emery Hwy Ste C, Macon, Ga 31217

The first public hearing was held on November 16, during the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting. This was followed by the initial Kick-off Regional Stakeholder Meeting, held at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission office on December 6, 2023. In this meeting, after a brief introduction to the planning process, the stakeholders were prompted to take part in a variety of brainstorming exercises, including a SWOT analysis.

Local engagement at each of the eleven Middle Georgia counties began following the initial regional meeting. These local meetings were held from January through the end of February. Each Middle Georgia county is challenged by different circumstances. As some counties' population is increasing, others are declining. Demographic data and SWOT analysis discussion was tailored to highlight differences in these conditions and to ensure that regional trends were accurate throughout the region's diverse communities. Demographics included data trends of educational attainment, housing conditions, income and employment, housing, and population dynamics. Further discussion included general comments, infrastructure conditions, and public service and response results from the SWOT. The final activity at each meeting was to review the county-focused Regional Development Map, Regional Conservation Map, and the Areas of Special Interest Maps to note any changes since the last Regional Plan process.

The second Regional Stakeholder Meeting was held on April 6, 2024, at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Office. During the second regional meeting, comments from the SWOT analysis and from the local listening session were presented for discussion. MGRC also developed draft goals, policies, and community excellence standards for consideration.

The Third (and final) Regional Stakeholder meeting was held on March 26, 2024, at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission as an open house. Stakeholders who attended any of the previous Regional Plan meetings were invited to attend. Display boards with priority needs, opportunities, and corresponding strategies were available. Stakeholders were encouraged to make comments and suggest changes. The Regional Development Map, Regional Conservation Map, and the Areas of Special Interest Maps were also presented for discussion and recommendations.

The final public hearing was held on April 11, 2024, during the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting to present the final elements of the plan and receive stakeholder feedback prior to transmission to DCA. MGRC staff addressed these comments and finalized the text of the plan in the following weeks.

In addition to the sixteen public meetings held during the process, additional information was received from the public-at-large through a public survey. The public survey was launched on March 12, 2024, and promoted to all stakeholders and on the MGRC social media outlines. In total, there were 230 responses. This survey helped to prioritize the goals of this plan, which is reflected by the order of topics. Furthermore, the public input received in this process helped to validate the comments received from regional stakeholders, ensuring that the plan presents an accurate reflection of the needs of the region. Additional information on this stakeholder process can be found in Appendix D, with the survey found in Appendix E.



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## REGIONAL GOALS SUMMARY

Through the stakeholder process ten regional goals and a list of corresponding priority needs and opportunities were developed. These goals, listed in order of priority according to public input are listed as below: Economic Development, Utilities, Housing, Transportation, Healthcare and Aging, Natural and Cultural Resources, Community Facilities and Services, Land Use, Public Administration and Regional Cooperation, and Broadband and Technology.

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## PRIORITY HIGHLIGHTS

The Middle Georgia Regional Plan also identifies a number of needs and opportunities present in the region. In many ways, these needs and opportunities could be interchangeable with the focus ultimately on topics where taking action would significantly improve the region's prosperity, resilience, and quality of life. In some cases, these would help Middle Georgia catch up to other regions within the state or nation (generally more reflective of needs) while others, Middle Georgia would get ahead (generally more reflective of opportunities).

Some of these priorities include the need for greater economic development and diversification, improved community services, increased housing stock, and better access to healthcare. Meanwhile, Middle Georgia is set up with many opportunities for the future, notably the chance to build upon growing economic sectors in high-tech career fields and tourism. In particular, the likelihood that Georgia's first national park could be located in Middle Georgia is a unique situation that can revolutionize the economic prospects of the region. The regional community is poised to take advantage of these opportunities, address the greatest needs, and achieve a brighter future.

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## HIGHLIGHTS OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS

The Regional Work Program (RWP) includes the most specific actions that the Middle Georgia Regional Commission expects to undertake within the next five years in support of meeting the regional needs, leveraging opportunities, and working toward common goals. The performance standards also encourage a high level of service delivery that will enable local governments to become more capable partners in implementing the Regional Work Program activities.

Some items in the RWP are actions that MGRC staff can implement at any time but will require a request for assistance from a local government partner. These projects are still included because of their value in meeting regional goals and priorities. However, MGRC would not execute those projects on their own. Some of the specific activity areas where the Middle Georgia Regional Commission will take the lead include those where the Regional Commission has a contract from a state agency for work (such as bicycle and pedestrian planning for the Georgia Department of Transportation). Finally, some projects are initiated by the MGRC Council because of their inherent regionality in scope. Examples of these projects include planning for a potential Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve, acquiring properties within the encroachment area of Robins Air Force Base, or implementing a plan to install electric vehicle chargers in any gaps throughout the region. All told, MGRC has a substantial opportunity to affect the future growth and development of Middle Georgia; however, partnerships will become ever more vital, especially as resources remain limited.

## REGIONAL GOALS AND POLICIES

The purpose of the Regional Goals element is to lay out a road map for the region's future, developed through a participatory process involving regional leaders, key stakeholders, and the public. This element of the plan is meant to be impactful, bold, and transformative for the future development of the region. Components of this element include regional goals, regional supporting policies, regional development maps, and a map of areas requiring special attention with defining narratives.

### LIST OF REGIONAL GOALS

Where the regional vision is an aspirational, desired outcome, the regional goals start to sketch the most basic map toward achieving that vision. Regional goals are intended to generate pride and enthusiasm for the future, ensuring stakeholders work toward achieving the regional vision. A goal for each of the plan's topic areas is listed below in the priority order ranked by those who completed the regional plan survey.

#### **Economic Development Goal:**

*Middle Georgia supports a growing and diverse regional economy. Workers are prepared for a variety of high-quality jobs that reflect the region's position as a hub of creativity and innovation.*

#### **Utility Infrastructure Goal:**

*All Middle Georgians have access to quality and affordable utility services to ensure a basic quality standard of living.*

#### **Housing Goal:**

*All residents in the region will have access to quality, safe, and affordable housing.*

#### **Transportation Goal:**

*Communities across Middle Georgia are well connected and benefit from an accessible multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all its users and serves to expand economic opportunities throughout the region.*

#### **Healthcare and Aging Goal:**

*Older at-risk individuals, families, and caregivers will be provided excellence in care and services for assistance in living healthy and vibrant lives.*

#### **Natural and Cultural Resources Goal:**

*The region is recognized for the uniqueness of its natural and cultural resources and is a greater draw for visitors who value its rich and diverse assets.*

#### **Community Facilities and Services Goal:**

*Community facilities and services will support efficient growth and development that protect and enhance the quality of life in Middle Georgia.*



### Land Use Goal:

*Land will be managed efficiently and sustainably to protect the health of citizens, improve economic vitality, and protect the natural resources of Middle Georgia.*

### Public Administration and Regional Cooperation Goal:

*Middle Georgia leaders prioritize strong regional collaboration while ensuring that each city and county can provide quality services in a professional manner.*

### Broadband and Technology Goal:

*Public services will be made more efficient and information will be widely accessible through innovation and technology, which will improve quality of life and economic vitality.*

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## REGIONAL POLICIES

To achieve the directives of the regional goals and address regional issues and opportunities, supporting policies are necessary to provide ongoing, consistent directions for regional leaders. From these various goals, common overarching themes emerged on the topics listed below.

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth should be welcomed in Middle Georgia regardless of its exact location.

- 1 Communities should coordinate their marketing strategies to highlight the benefits of Middle Georgia as a region with assets to leverage in all areas.

- 2 Both regionally and at a single-county level, communities should work to reduce dependence on any single economic sector and build resiliency to minimize the adverse impacts of plant closures, layoffs, and other market disruptions.

- 3 Appropriate businesses should be identified and targeted for industry recruitment and expansion efforts, based on the strategic assets of the community. Retention of existing industries should also be a priority.

- 4 Education systems should continue to align with the needs of local industry. Collaboration in the establishment of college and career academies should prepare students for employment in high-demand careers and allow them to prepare for Industry 4.0 technologies in support of the region's innovation ecosystem.

- 5 Livability should be considered as part of a community's contribution to workforce development. Neighborhoods should be developed (or redeveloped) not only with basic community services and amenities but also as places where talented professionals want to live—especially if remote work allows them to live untethered from a physical office.

- 6 Continue to support the mission of Robins Air Force Base and ensure the sustainability of operations and military readiness.

- 7 Promote and market the benefits and advantages associated with living in Middle Georgia.

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## UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1 Sustainment of existing utility systems should be prioritized with regular maintenance activities and adequate funding. Repairs and replacements should happen on the local government’s planned timeline, rather than waiting for repairs to be necessitated by public safety considerations or regulatory enforcement actions.
- 2 Where possible, utility services should be run to sites with important development potential in advance of an announcement of new private investment—especially at industrial sites, but also at large commercial or residential sites. Likewise, system capacity should be scaled to support new growth.
- 3 In response to the pressure of new growth and development, smart growth principles and infill development should be encouraged to reduce the demands of infrastructure expansion.
- 4 Local governments and/or authorities should plan for and implement improvements in local stormwater management, particularly in areas that lack existing drainage infrastructure.
- 5 Whenever feasible, intergovernmental agreements and partnerships should be explored with the goal of identifying new efficiencies in service delivery.



Photo 1: Utility repairs in the City of Jeffersonville (MGRC Staff Photo)

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## HOUSING

- 1 Provide a mix of housing types, for both ownership and rental, at various price points that can meet the needs of all residents.
- 2 Proactively work to reduce the amount of vacant, substandard, and dilapidated housing throughout the region.
- 3 Strengthen and stimulate the local housing market to support the economy and protect consumers.
- 4 Protect the most vulnerable population of low-income individuals, especially disabled and older adults, from rent increases that may result in homelessness.
- 5 Plan for priority redevelopment areas through small area studies that include strong community engagement.

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## TRANSPORTATION

- 1 East-west transportation and freight routes should be enhanced to alleviate congestion issues caused by the limited crossings over the Ocmulgee River. In coordination with GDOT, projects that are already under construction or listed in long-range transportation plans should be accelerated.
- 2 Transportation improvements should be designed to support usage by bicyclists and pedestrians, ensuring that infrastructure and surrounding land use are compatible.
- 3 Rail lines and crossings should be upgraded and made safer throughout the region to reduce delays and support safer usage, not only to meet current freight needs, but also to support future potential passenger rail opportunities.
- 4 Public transit (either as fixed-route or demand-response services) should be more widely available throughout the region. Extended hours, improved coordination, and greater knowledge of existing services should be pursued.
- 5 The region's aerospace assets should continue to be developed to support both private aviation and aircraft maintenance activities. Improvements at the Middle Georgia Regional Airport need prioritization, allowing for expanded commercial services.
- 6 Appropriation of additional funding for roadway maintenance and improvement, particularly for bridges and unpaved roads, should be pursued.

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## HEALTHCARE AND AGING

- 1 Provide resources to help older adults age in place and ensure the safety and wellbeing of older Georgians and persons with disabilities.
- 2 Empower older adults, persons with disabilities, caregivers, and families through access to reliable resources and services with a person-centered approach to service provision.
- 3 Promote innovation in accessible, affordable healthcare services.
- 4 Prioritize nutrition, food security, and quality health care for all residents, regardless of age, ability, or income to encourage good physical and mental health.
- 5 Increase the availability of affordable senior housing, and plan for activities that support the needs of an increasing older population.
- 6 Ensure that public facilities are accessible to people with disabilities.
- 7 Implement protections for seniors and people with disabilities from abuse and neglect.



Photo 2: Rendering of the proposed new Pulaski County Senior Center (Photo Credit: McCall Architecture)



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## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- 1 The designation of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve should be supported as the single most impactful investment in the region's tourism economy.
- 2 Investments should be prioritized to develop the tourism product of Middle Georgia by providing quality amenities at points of interest and a wide variety of experiences.
- 3 Communities should leverage growth in the film and tourism sectors of the economy to create new jobs and invest in community development.
- 4 Local governments should promote the protection and utilization of the region's natural, cultural, and historic resources while ensuring the region's water quality and air quality.
- 5 The region's existing Main Street communities should be highlighted, and additional communities should seek designations to enhance and promote downtown areas.
- 6 Cultural events and activities should be created or sustained in communities throughout the region as an added enhancement to quality of life.



Photo 3: Aerial view of the Echeconnee Creek, an important natural resource (MGRC Staff Photo)

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## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- 1 Public buildings should be adequately maintained to ensure that these facilities will be available to meet the future needs of residents.
- 2 Recreational facilities should have well-developed master plans for possible future improvements at current facilities and for the expansion of recreational opportunities.
- 3 Waste disposal and recycling systems should be evaluated and managed efficiently, so to meet future capacity needs associated with projected changes in population, and future commercial and industrial development.

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## LAND USE

- 1 Development styles and patterns should maintain a sense of place and respectfully support the surrounding historical context.
- 2 Encourage policies and practices for developing, redeveloping, and repurposing sites located closer to the core of a community through compatible infill and infrastructure investments.
- 3 Local governments should coordinate their land use planning across jurisdictional boundaries.
- 4 Natural resources and undeveloped land should be protected by prioritizing development in those locations where development already exists versus forested and open greenspaces.
- 5 Prioritize the redevelopment and further build-out of current commercial and industrial sites, helping to protect the environment from unnecessary new construction.
- 6 Implement smart growth principles, particularly in urban and suburban communities.

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## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

- 1 Mutual aid and sharing of services and facilities should be encouraged between jurisdictions, where appropriate, for mutual benefit.
- 2 Communities should invest in quality governance with well-trained and compensated professional staff.
- 3 Regional opportunities should be framed through the lens of equity for rural and traditionally disadvantaged communities.
- 4 Land use, transportation, development, and general planning decisions should consider the land use and growth patterns of surrounding jurisdictions.
- 5 Regular communication should occur between jurisdictions, and community leaders should intentionally seek to strengthen relationships with their peers in other communities.

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## BROADBAND AND TECHNOLOGY

- 1 Improve accuracy and efficiency in the decision-making process for local governments through the use of available data.
- 2 Prepare for a diversified, technology-based economy of the future.
- 3 Ensure availability of both physical and digital infrastructure to support future businesses and industry use and availability of broadband services for all businesses and residents.
- 4 Support initiatives, programs, and training that help close the digital divide and programs that help to bolster digital literacy.
- 5 Continue to support efforts to extend broadband access to all Georgia residents, especially those who remain disconnected.



## MAPS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVES

### REGIONAL LAND USE MAPS

As an element of the Middle Georgia Region’s vision, both *Regional Land Use Maps* and *Areas Requiring Special Attention Map* were developed in accordance with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Standard and Procedures for Regional Planning. The Regional Development Maps consisted of two maps, a *Regional Land Use Map* and a *Conservation and Development Map*. The Regional Land Use Map aggregates land use into three categories: Developed, Developing, and Rural. The Conservation and Development Map overlays a conservation layer to the Regional Land Use map. Details from the Regional Land Use Maps (as well as the Regionally Important Resources Plan) help to inform, the Areas Requiring Special Attention Map by focusing specifically on areas that have seen the greatest growth or are most in need of redevelopment. Threats to natural and cultural resources can also be evaluated on this map. Collectively, both the Regional Land Use Maps and Areas Requiring Special Attention Map were developed with public input, as stakeholders from each Middle Georgia county reviewed the maps and suggested modifications.

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### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MAP

The Regional Development Map shows the desired future land use patterns for the region. This map was first developed by making projections of future land use over the next 20 years. These predictions were based on local land use data from Comprehensive Plans, population projections, and observed settlement patterns from aerial imagery. Stakeholders were then asked to review the maps for accuracy and to reflect their desired development status. The map shows three categories:

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

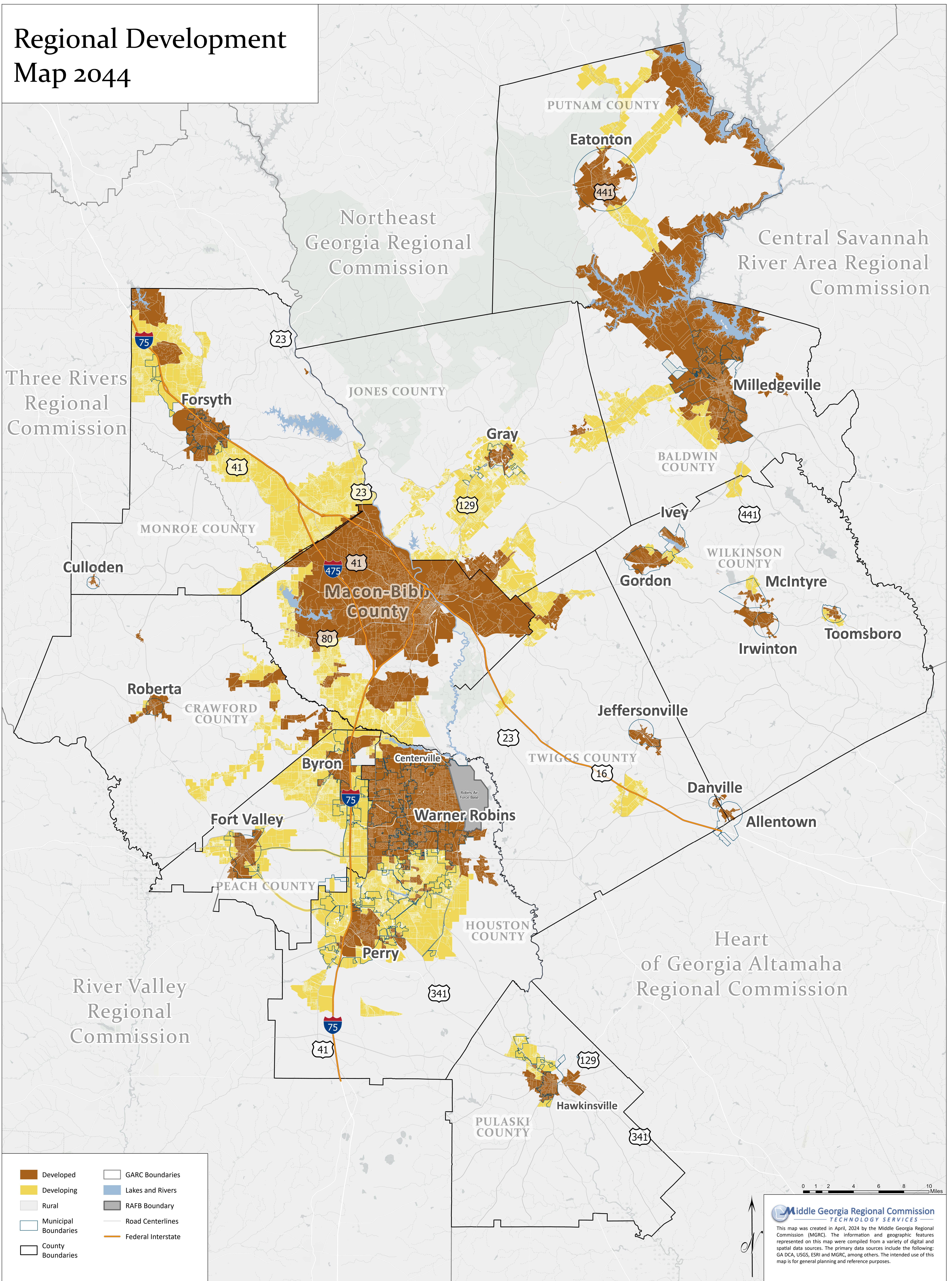
*Developing Areas:* Areas that are expected to become urbanized and will require the provision of new urban services (i.e., public services of water, sewer, etc.) during the next 20-year planning period.

*Rural Areas:* Areas not expected to become urbanized or require the provision of urban services (i.e., public services of water and sewer), during the 20-year planning period. These areas are characterized by sparsely developed nonurban areas where the land is primarily used for farming, forestry, very low-density residential, or open space uses.

Most of the region is expected to remain rural, with new development focused along I-75 corridor and the metropolitan areas of Macon-Bibb County and Houston County. Peach County, abutting Houston County, is expected to be developing over the next 20 years. Increases in development to the northern portion of the region are also expected to occur at locations along Highway 129 in Jones County, along Highway 441 in Putnam County and near Lake Sinclair, and along Interstate 75 in Monroe County. This map is provided on the following page.



# Regional Development Map 2044



- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Developed            | GARC Boundaries    |
| Developing           | Lakes and Rivers   |
| Rural                | RAFB Boundary      |
| Municipal Boundaries | Road Centerlines   |
| County Boundaries    | Federal Interstate |

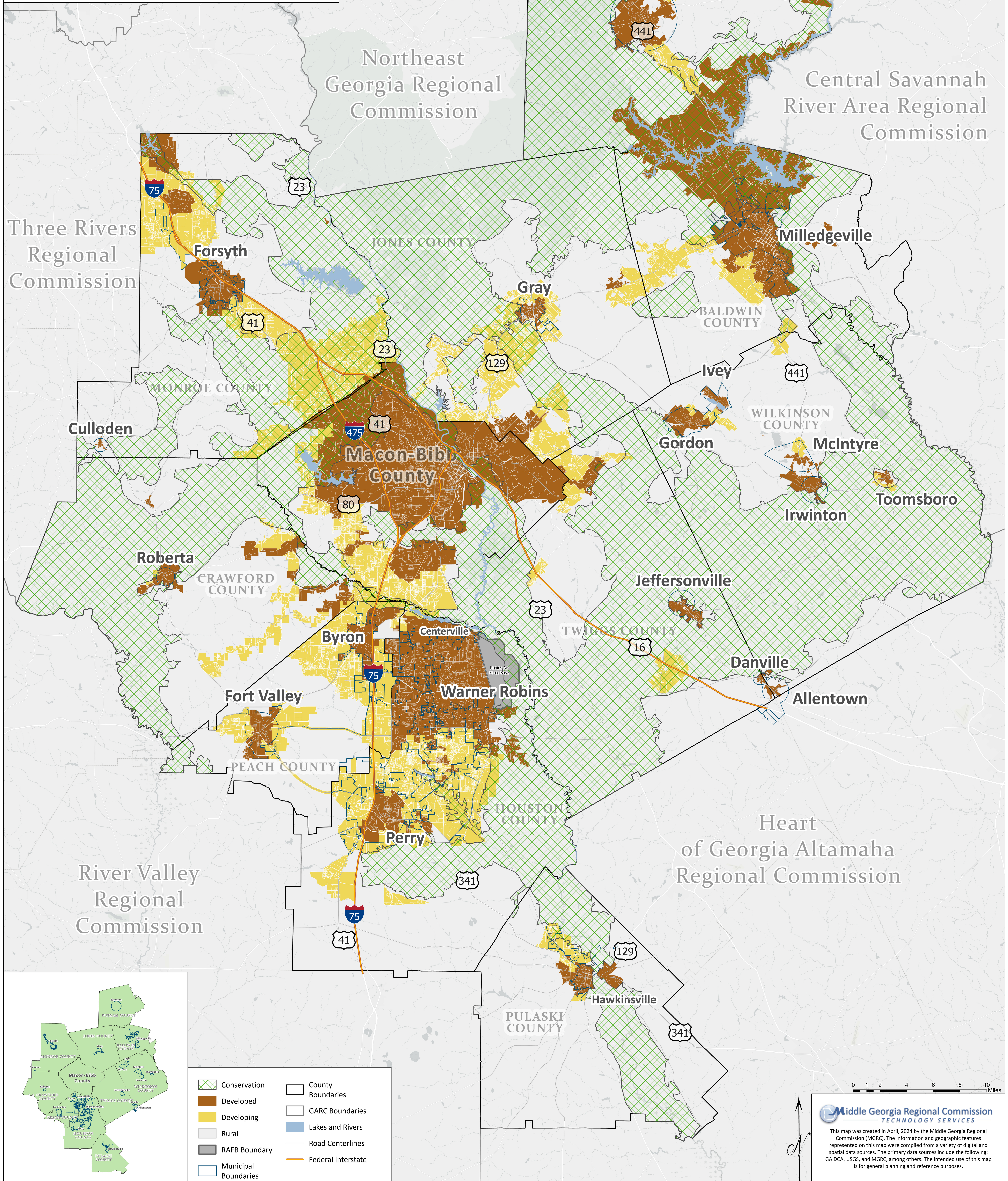
0 1 2 4 6 8 10 Miles

**Middle Georgia Regional Commission**  
TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

This map was created in April, 2024 by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC). The information and geographic features represented on this map were compiled from a variety of digital and spatial data sources. The primary data sources include the following: GA DCA, USGS, ESRI and MGRC, among others. The intended use of this map is for general planning and reference purposes.



# Conservation and Projected Development Map 2044



- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Conservation         | County Boundaries  |
| Developed            | GARC Boundaries    |
| Developing           | Lakes and Rivers   |
| Rural                | Road Centerlines   |
| RAFB Boundary        | Federal Interstate |
| Municipal Boundaries |                    |

0 1 2 4 6 8 10 Miles

**Middle Georgia Regional Commission**  
TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

This map was created in April, 2024 by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC). The information and geographic features represented on this map were compiled from a variety of digital and spatial data sources. The primary data sources include the following: GA DCA, USGS, and MGRC, among others. The intended use of this map is for general planning and reference purposes.







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## CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT MAP

The map on the preceding page adds a layer of priority conservation areas. Conservation areas were displayed as an overlay to the baseline developing and development locations displayed on the Regional Development Map. The Middle Georgia Region, being bisected by the Fall line, is diverse in landscape and geological structure. Because of the region's location, there are several areas of groundwater recharge, where pollution susceptibility is possible. Instead of focusing on mapping all areas of recharge, the Southern Ecological landscape model data was utilized to display places of environmental sensitivity. The green infrastructure network of ecological hubs and corridors displayed also overlapped areas of high susceptibility of pollution infiltration due to groundwater recharge. These measures allow more discretion in mapping than showing locations of groundwater recharge only. The Conservation and Development Map was constructed with public input, as stakeholders from each Middle Georgia County reviewed the map and suggested modifications.

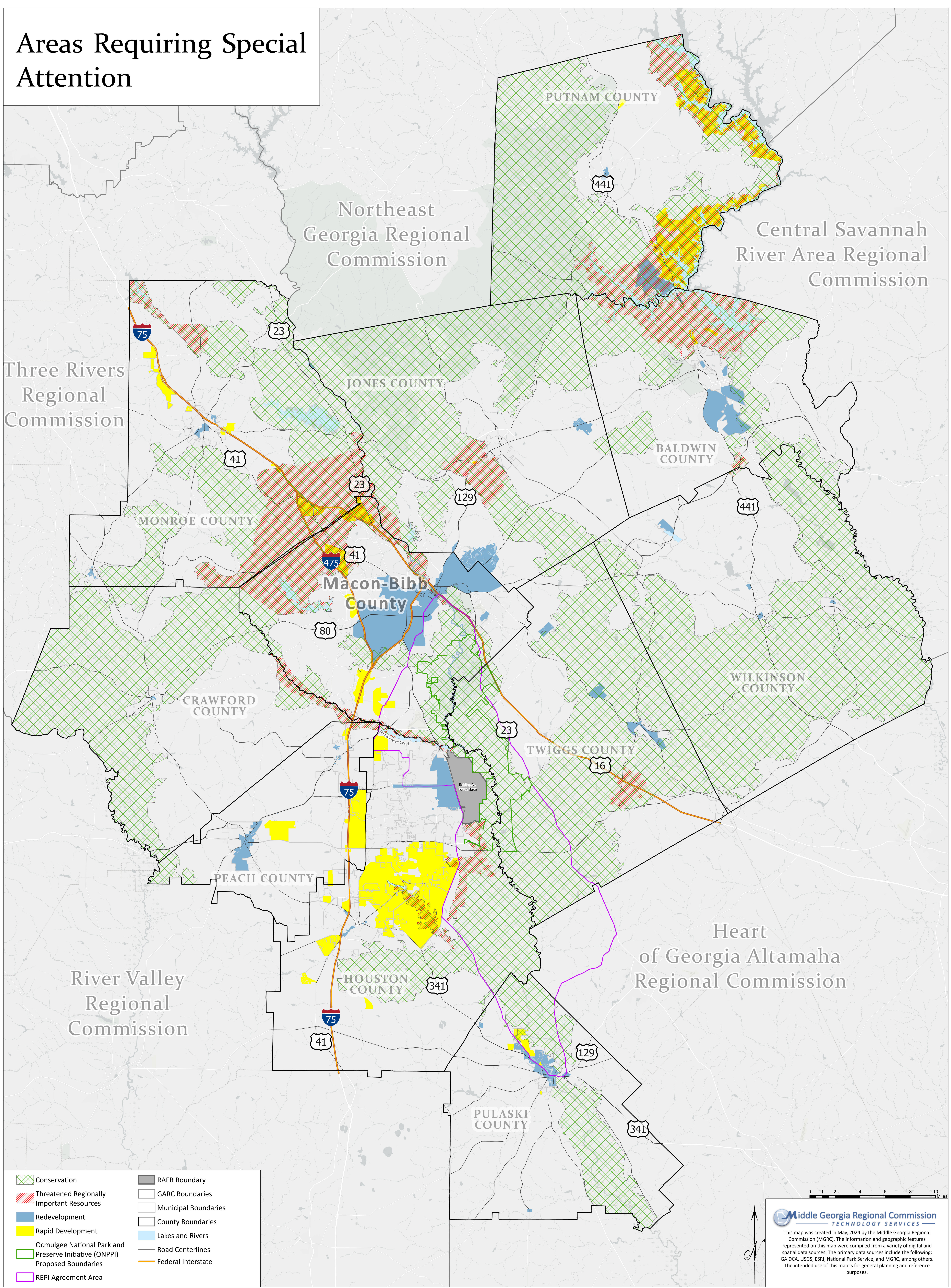
### AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION MAPS

While preparing the Regional Development Maps, areas in need of targeted monitoring and mitigation due to potential development conflict or opportunities for economic growth were identified and mapped. These areas were added to an Areas Requiring Special Attention Map. The required categories for this map include Threatened Regionally Important Resources, Rapid Development, and Redevelopment. A discussion of these topics accompanies the map in the form of defining narrative. Public assistance in identifying resources of significance was received locally at stakeholder meetings in each Middle Georgia Region County. A completed regional map showing these resources was displayed at the third regional level stakeholder meeting for further comment. These areas are defined further below. A map of these areas is also seen on the following page.

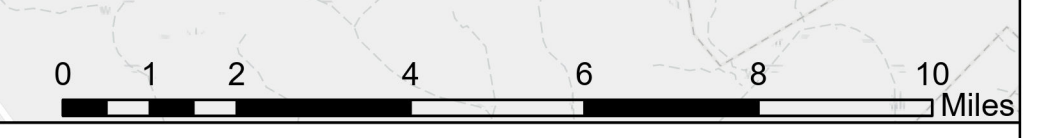
-  **Threatened Regionally Important Resources:** locations of significant natural and cultural resources likely to be impacted by development; as such, these resources are also identified on the Regionally Important Resources map of the Regionally Important Resource Plan. These resources were identified by the overlap of Regionally important Resources and locations of conservation with developed and developing locations.
-  **Rapid Development:** areas where rapid development or change in land uses where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services.
-  **Redevelopment:** Those locations in need or currently experiencing redevelopment. Needed improvements may arise from issues of blight and or disrepair along corridors; or there are opportunities that arise for infill development, reinvestment, and revitalization. In locations of disinvestment, opportunity zones, urban redevelopment areas, and revitalization strategies may be leveraged to improve conditions.
-  **Special Land Acquisition and Conservation Targets:** Significant areas not otherwise addressed but are shown on the map and explained further in the narratives below.



# Areas Requiring Special Attention



- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Conservation   | RAFB Boundary        |
| Threatened Regionally Important Resources                                  | GARC Boundaries      |
| Redevelopment  | Municipal Boundaries |
| Rapid Development  | County Boundaries    |
| Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative (ONPPI) Proposed Boundaries | Lakes and Rivers     |
| REPI Agreement Area  | Road Centerlines     |
|  | Federal Interstate   |



**Middle Georgia Regional Commission**  
 TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

This map was created in May, 2024 by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC). The information and geographic features represented on this map were compiled from a variety of digital and spatial data sources. The primary data sources include the following: GA DCA, USGS, ESRI, National Park Service, and MGRC, among others. The intended use of this map is for general planning and reference purposes.



## AREA DEFINING NARRATIVES

The Middle Georgia Region focused on the categories of threatened resources, rapid development, redevelopment (which included both redevelopment and new investment opportunities), and special land acquisition and conservation target areas. From these categories, subcategories were determined based upon needs and opportunities. Within each subcategory, areas in need of specific targeted monitoring and mitigation due to potential development conflicts.

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## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND THREATENED REGIONAL RESOURCES

The green infrastructure layer was developed as part of the 2024 Regionally Important Resources Plan. To create this green infrastructure network, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission evaluated all factors called for in the DCA Rules for Regionally Important Resources. This included a wide range of elements from protected rivers, lakes, and parks to densely developed areas that also had higher groundwater pollution susceptibility.

These data sources helped to define the final layer for the plan. While one option would have been to designate any area with any single conservation value as part of the green infrastructure layer, that would have proved impractical in many areas—leaving some communities with little to no developable land. The result is that sites with multiple conservation factors were prioritized along with those lands that could connect disparate parts of the green infrastructure network. This network hopes to maintain natural ecological processes, link urban settings to rural ones, and contribute positively to the health and quality of life for the communities and citizens of Middle Georgia.

Additional details on the management of green infrastructure lands can be found within the aforementioned Regionally Important Resources Plan. This document provides a comprehensive look at a variety of resources, including those that may not be threatened today, but which could still benefit from protective measures. Additional information on the threatened areas can also be found below within the “rapid growth” areas, as many of the most threatened areas exist in that state because of development pressures. This is true in southern Monroe County/northern Macon-Bibb County, along the Towaliga River/High Falls Corridor, lakes Oconee and Sinclair, and along several river corridors in Houston County. Among the updates from the last plan are a recognition of development pressures from Butts County affecting the High Falls area and the potential that new development in the Gray Highway corridor may adversely affect the historic character of the Old Clinton community.

### RECOMMENDED LAND USES

- 📍 Parks/Recreation/Conservation
- 📍 Agricultural and Forestry



Photo 4: Towaliga River at High Falls (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)

## QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

- 📌 Sense of Place
- 📌 Regional Cooperation
- 📌 Economic Prosperity
- 📌 Efficient Land Use

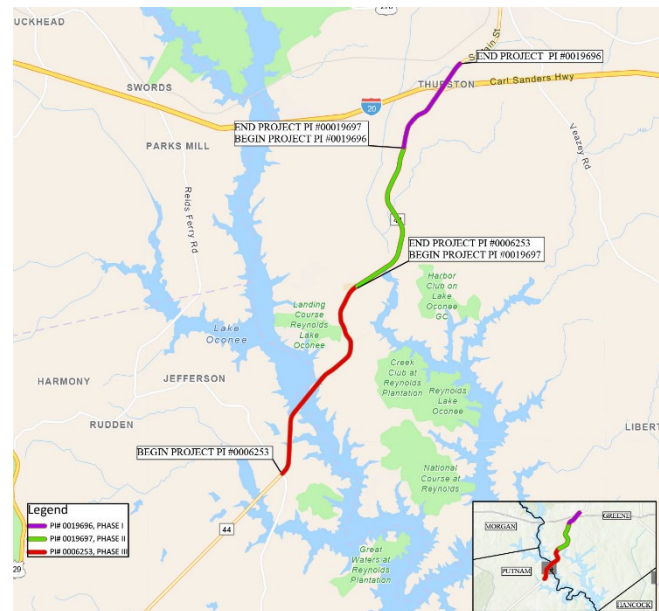
## PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

- 📌 Preserve environmentally sensitive areas by setting them aside as parks, trails, or greenbelts.
- 📌 Connect large, existing greenspaces by preserving adjacent undeveloped land.
- 📌 Activate greenspaces and undeveloped areas with large, regional park areas.
- 📌 Link new developments to existing residential areas via trail systems.
- 📌 Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
- 📌 Participate in state and federal programs for acquisition (fee simple or easements) of priority conservation areas identified by a greenspace plan.
- 📌 Low impact development that preserves the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites will be promoted.
- 📌 Adopt an ordinance that protects and replenishes the significant tree canopies within one mile of the water resources.
- 📌 Preserve the rural character and provide opportunities for agriculture, parks, and forestry.
- 📌 Encourage more compact urban development to preserve protected lands.

## AREAS OF RAPID DEVELOPMENT



Much of the rapid growth in Middle Georgia has come as an expansion outward from the urban areas of Macon-Bibb County and the City of Warner Robins south towards the City of Perry. This increase in population and development has especially followed Interstate 75 and other major corridors—with some of the northernmost growth in the region representing an expansion south from Atlanta. Other locations of rapid growth include the areas surrounding Lakes Oconee and Sinclair, and several other localized nodes of development.



Some of these locations are being annexed into surrounding municipalities when services, such as water or sewer are available to be provided. When growth outpaces infrastructure and services, and there are limited funds to provide needed infrastructure, challenges will arise. Of particular concern is rapid growth around environmentally sensitive areas, such as the lake areas in Putnam County. In these instances, growth has the potential to outpace planning. This is especially challenging around the lakes due to the high cost of water and sewer services in that area. More on these specific areas is listed below.



**Photo 5: Lake area transportation improvements responding to recent growth (Photo Credit: GDOT)**

### RECOMMENDED LAND USES










-  Mixed Use
-  Commercial

-  Residential
-  Public/Institutional

### QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

-  Local Preparedness
-  Sense of Place
-  Efficient Land Use
-  Resource Management
-  Housing Opportunities
-  Transportation Opportunities

### PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

-  Promote creative design for higher density projects.
-  Analyze financial impacts of various development styles in patterns.
-  Perform smart growth audits of communities.
-  Rezone or permit the encouragement of mixed-use developments.
-  Adopt flexible and shared parking standards.
-  Account for bicycle and pedestrian safety through use of Complete Streets policies.
-  Establish traffic-calming in residential neighborhoods and at connectivity points.
-  Allow New Urbanist developments “by right” in zoning code.
-  Ensure adequate availability of infrastructure prior to permitting new development.

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## RAPID GROWTH AREA: NORTH MACON-BIBB/SOUTH MONROE COUNTIES

North Macon-Bibb County and south Monroe County continue to experience rapid growth. The three primary locations of development are along the Zebulon Road corridor in Macon-Bibb, Bass Road corridor in Macon-Bibb, and the Bolingbroke community in Monroe County. In the Macon-Bibb County areas, the growth is primarily commercial, with shopping centers having been constructed over the past decade. In Monroe County, most of the growth has been residential subdivision-oriented and this growth is expected to continue. Larger lots, typically in the 3 to 7-acre range, are the type of growth this area has experienced. As development pressures for this area continue to mount,

however, it is of particular importance that both county governments along with the Macon Area Transportation Study, which serves as the MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) for the area, pay attention to the infrastructure needs that will face this portion of the region.



Photo 6: Prospective development in north Macon-Bibb County including a proposed wholesale club location (Photo Credit: Macon-Bibb P&Z)



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## RAPID GROWTH AREA: CENTRAL HOUSTON COUNTY

The area between the cities of Perry and Warner Robins continues to see significant development occurring in previously unincorporated portions of Houston County. This land is readily serviceable for water and sewer, located near major employers (notably Robins Air Force Base), and is located within a quality public school district. As a result, Houston County has been seen as very desirable for residential growth and is the fastest growing community in Middle Georgia. These factors indicate that the trend of growth is likely to continue. Both Warner Robins and Perry have entered into a Service Delivery Strategy that clearly outlines which cities are allowed to serve the various portions of unincorporated Houston County, and both governments have a policy of required annexation for properties that are served in those areas. The infrastructure provision policies can be used to channel and direct growth in some areas. However, the traditional willingness to continue growing and expanding is most likely to continue in the future, as population projections from the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget indicate.



Photo 7: A new water park near the intersection of GA-96 and Lake Joy Road is among the focal points of continued growth in Houston County (Photo Credit: Rigby's Entertainment Complex)

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## RAPID GROWTH AREA: GEORGIA'S LAKE COUNTRY

In Putnam County, the areas surrounding Lake Oconee and Lake Sinclair were identified in the 2011 and 2016 plans as unique areas experiencing rapid growth. Growth in these areas has primarily been residential, although a dip in activity did take place due to the housing crisis. With the recovering economy and housing markets, growth has returned, along with a focus on more dense, mixed-use developments that can draw a variety of residents and visitors into the area. Unsurprisingly, Georgia's Lake Country (consisting of the areas around Lake Oconee and Sinclair) has continued to see growth unmatched by many other areas outside of Metro Atlanta. The result is that major investments (like roadway widenings) have already begun in preparation for additional growth.



**Photo 8: The proposed campus for Helms College on Lake Oconee is one of several mixed-use developments proposed in the Lake Country in recent years (Photo Credit: Goodwill Industries of Middle Georgia and the CSRA)**

Also complicating growth in this area is the topography of the lake areas, which make public sewer services difficult to run. Most homes built on the lakes are served by septic systems, which are privately owned. The proximity of these systems to the lakes, a source of water and recreation, makes relevant the dangers of failure associated with aging septic systems. In the future, investment may be needed to provide public sewer access to residents of this rapidly growing area.



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## RAPID GROWTH AREA: MAJOR TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS AND OTHER AREAS

Rapid growth is also occurring in areas of Middle Georgia that do not fit easily into a general category. Transportation corridors, such as I-75, continue to see a mix of residential and commercial growth, primarily occurring around interstate exits, such as those in southern Macon-Bibb County, Byron (Peach County), and Forsyth (Monroe County). Undeveloped areas around the Houston County Airport are also expected to see growth associated with the airport and other industries. Finally, spotty areas of rapid growth in Pulaski County, near the Middle Georgia State University Campus in western Macon-Bibb County, and the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Monroe County, are expected to develop soon. The local governments of these areas should act early to ensure that growth occurs in a manner which makes it possible to provide necessary public services while maintaining community character.



Photo 9: Amazon warehouse in a rapid growth corridor of Macon-Bibb County along I-75 (Photo Credit: Choose Macon)

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## REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

The Middle Georgia Region has various sites and neighborhoods in need of redevelopment. The overarching theme tying each of these locations together is the need for investment in local improvements for the transformation in appearance and nature. These locations can be categorized based on similarities. At the smallest scale are former industrial or institutional sites and unfinished subdivisions. On a larger scale, there are historic rural communities, small town centers, and major urban corridors in need of improvements.

### RECOMMENDED LAND USES

- ✘ Mixed Use
- ✘ Commercial
- ✘ Residential
- ✘ Public/Institutional

### QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

- ✘ Economic Prosperity
- ✘ Efficient Land Use
- ✘ Sense of Place
- ✘ Community Health
- ✘ Housing Opportunities
- ✘ Transportation Opportunities



Photo 10: Dannenberg Lofts in downtown Macon, during redevelopment. The building became a catalytic mixed-use redevelopment. (MGR Staff Photo)

### PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

- ✘ Development strategies and pursue financing for brownfield development.
- ✘ Explore strategies for reuse of underutilized parking lots or strip malls (also called grayfields).
- ✘ Adopt and implement urban redevelopment codes.
- ✘ Enact residential infill development codes.
- ✘ Pursue development of pocket parks on potential infill lots.
- ✘ Enact historic preservation design standards for new infill development.
- ✘ Analyze financial impacts of various development styles in patterns.
- ✘ Perform smart growth audits of communities.
- ✘ Promote creative design for higher density projects.
- ✘ Launch a comprehensive infill development strategy.
- ✘ Rezone or permit the encouragement of mixed-use developments.
- ✘ Adopt flexible and shared parking standards.

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### REDEVELOPMENT AREA: FORMER INDUSTRIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SITES

Nearly every county in Middle Georgia is or was, at some point, home to one to a large industrial or institutional site. These locations present a major opportunity for any community due to their size and availability of existing infrastructure. Often these locations are associated with large plots of land for potential redevelopment, or demolition and new construction. Aggressively marketing of these sites may result in a high reward. Many of these industrial sites may also be contaminated brownfield sites. Remediation of these sites can be costly; however, funding is available for local governments to assist in environmental assessments and cleanup. Government investments in these sites can clear administrative hurdles, reduce costs, and mitigate risk for the private sector. Government investments assisting in brownfield remediation have the potential to lessen costs for those seeking to redevelop the site. Governments may also choose to purchase former industrial/institutional sites for new community facilities for office space, public buildings, or parks to speed up redevelopment.



Among the most well-known examples of an institutional site that has become mostly vacant is the old Central State Hospital property in Milledgeville. Other areas such as the old Tift College Campus in Forsyth could have experienced similar fates if not sizeable state investment in the site. In addition, many former industrial sites need additional redevelopment. The former site of Plant Branch in Putnam County is one particularly large location in need of further work.



Photo 11: Central State Hospital campus in Milledgeville (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)

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### REDEVELOPMENT AREA: URBAN INFILL AND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION SITES

Within the Middle Georgia region, Macon-Bibb County and the City of Milledgeville has the largest number of these opportunities. Both communities are older established cities with an established urban form. There are several different strategies, most notably, new mixed-use developments. Mixed-use developments can increase a sense of identity of a location, while also providing walkability and new shopping opportunities. Following the decline of downtowns in post-WWII era, locations that were once considered the central business district of white-collar professions are now locations of restaurants, theaters, and local retail. Infill development works well in these locations, to preserve traditional downtowns and limit potential sprawl type development.



**Photo 12: Commercial Circle in Warner Robins. An infill opportunity is available at right and the main building is slated for demolition due to both the loss of historic integrity and its rundown condition (MGRC Staff Photo)**

In the modern context, Warner Robins is now beginning to take advantage of these similar opportunities to (re)develop areas that can form the core of its downtown. Warner Robins, as well as its neighboring community of Centerville, both developed in the automobile-centric era following World War II. The result is that neither city had a traditional, walkable downtown developed. Instead, efforts have now come to focus on building a new downtown where only the rough framework may have existed before. By embracing the Commercial Circle area, Warner Robins has opened up the possibility for a new urban development that is more attractive to young professionals and that can spur greater economic investment.

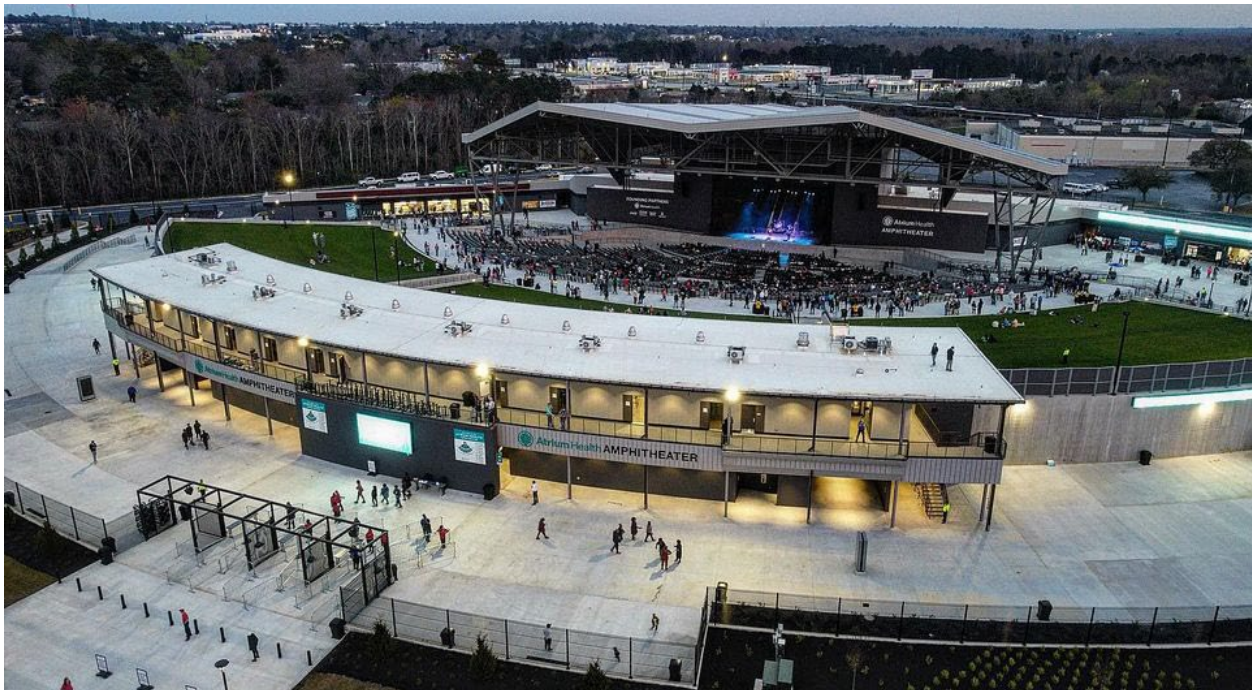
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### **REDEVELOPMENT AREA: MAJOR URBAN CORRIDORS**

Located along larger arterial corridors, redevelopment is quite frequently met with several challenges requiring significant investments from public and private sector alike. As road widths increase, lack of connectivity grows, resulting in a lack of clear identity or sense of place. Being mostly generic commercial structures, these locations lack unique identity in the wake of conformity in design. Limited sidewalk availability and a lack of safe road crossings, these locations become uninviting when falling into conditions of blight. Commercial structures often suffer from higher vacancy rates. Example locations in the Middle Georgia Region include Pio Nono Avenue and Eisenhower Parkway corridors of Macon-Bibb County.



Although there are many challenges, certain prescriptive steps are available for urban corridor revitalization, with the possibility of drastic changes in appearance, traffic conditions, and development patterns. Strategies include urban revitalization plans, as well as accompany reinvestment zones for Federal and State funding. Creation of self-taxing districts and its utilization may also ensure success of redevelopment efforts. Funding and implementation of infrastructure improvements of sidewalks, wayfinding signage, and greenery can make significant positive impacts, encouraging motorists to stop and patronize an establishment. Corridor middle lanes may be retrofitted with streetscape improvements and greenery, resulting in creating a different atmosphere while also slowing traffic. Retrofitting and infilling of areas adjacent to the corridor may also be accomplished, creating a new town center.



**Photo 13: The Atrium Health Amphitheater is one of the newest tourist attractions for Middle Georgia and is a good example of public investment beginning to transform a distressed urban corridor (Photo Credit: Macon-Bibb County)**

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## REDEVELOPMENT AREA: SMALL TOWN CENTERS

Often associated with their own rich history in the development of the region, many small towns have since suffered population loss to urban centers. Changing population dynamics have resulted in blight, dilapidation, and vacancy of structures in certain locations. Despite population decline and building disrepair, reinvestment in these locations is vital. In the wake of a declining population there remain families and individuals living in these locations, all of which need adequate housing and commercial services. Investments in housing improvements and infill development in these small-town centers can rejuvenate and reactivate these sites. Transportation investments can also create a more cohesive living environment by improving walkability and connectivity. Finally, funding improvements in community facilities and the historic resources of a small town will also help address redevelopment by adding a sense of vitality.



Within Middle Georgia, several rural communities have established urban redevelopment plans that allow them to focus on redeveloping areas of blight. In particular, some of the smaller downtowns (population under 20,000) that have utilized this targeted approach to planning include Byron, Eatonton, Forsyth, Fort Valley, Hawkinsville, and Milledgeville.

These are certainly not the only rural town centers to need redevelopment attention. In fact, many more, such as Jeffersonville, Roberta, and Toombsboro also lack the financial resources to administer such a redevelopment plan, despite the serious needs. As a result, revitalizing rural communities remains a significant focus that requires special attention from the region.





**Photo 14: Abandoned storefronts in downtown Fort Valley (MGRC Staff Photo)**



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## **SPECIAL LAND CONSERVATION AND ACQUISITION TARGETS**



In addition to the required considerations for regional planning of areas requiring special attention, Middle Georgia has two important (and somewhat overlapping) land acquisition target areas. In these locations, additional care, and focus, beyond what would be required for a regionally important resource, is warranted. These are the buffer corridors around the Ocmulgee River for the future Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve as well as to limit encroachment of incompatible uses around Robins Air Force Base. Additional information on each area is provided below.



### RECOMMENDED LAND USES

-  Parks/Recreation/Conservation
-  Agricultural and Forestry









-  Undeveloped/Vacant
-  Others, Dependent on Overlay Rules

### QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

-  Sense of Place
-  Regional Cooperation

-  Economic Prosperity
-  Transportation Opportunities

### PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

-  Preserve environmentally sensitive areas by setting them aside as public parks, trails, and/or greenbelts.
-  Connect large, existing greenspaces by preserving adjacent undeveloped land.
-  Activate greenspaces and undeveloped areas through the location of large, regional park areas.
-  Link new developments to existing residential areas via trail systems.
-  Traditional downtown areas maintained as the focal point of the community.
-  Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards.
-  Preserving significant historic or cultural features, structures, or character, and adaptively reusing or incorporating them into modern uses
-  Develop design standards for historic areas based on existing historic buildings

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### OCMULGEE NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE INITIATIVE

The Ocmulgee River corridor between Macon and Hawkinsville provides a unique opportunity for the Middle Georgia Region. The river itself is identified as a Regional Water Resource, as are some of the surrounding areas at either end, namely the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and Bond Swamp in Macon-Bibb and Twiggs counties. This corridor is home to the Ocmulgee Old Fields Traditional Cultural Property, which was designated by the National Register in 1999, containing approximately 14,000 acres significant to the Creek people.

There is evidence of continuous habitation of these areas for the past 17,000 years. An expanded boundary and designation as the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve would provide a major draw for those outside of the region to visit, as well as a great expansion of recreation opportunities for those who live within the region. Economic development opportunities arising from the need to serve those visitors to the park would provide possibilities for employment in the underdeveloped areas surrounding the river corridor.

On May 1, 2024, bipartisan and bicameral legislation was introduced in Congress that would establish the Georgia's first National Park. Middle Georgia communities will continue to support these efforts as they progress through Congress. At the same time, communities along the corridor will need to partner on resource conservation and effective land management, especially where properties may be under consideration for purchase to be included within a future park boundary. For these reasons, management of this corridor will be of the utmost importance.





Photo 15: Aerial photo of the Ocmulgee River at the Macon-Bibb County—Twiggs County line (MGRC Staff Photo)

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### **ROBINS AFB: READINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION INTEGRATION (REPI)**

Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) is a critical fixture in the Middle Georgia economy, culture, and way of life. RAFB employs more than 22,000 people and generates an economic impact of over \$3.8 billion each year in the State of Georgia. Located just to the east of the City of Warner Robins in Houston County, RAFB draws hundreds, even thousands in some cases, of employees from each county in the region, every day. According to an economic multiplier model developed by Mercer University and the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, each job created or lost at RAFB creates or loses an additional 1.44 jobs in the regional economy. Because of the vital role RAFB plays in the regional economy, it is crucial for regional leaders to give special attention to the base, its needs, and its unique contributions to the region.





**Photo 16: Aerial photo of Robins Air Force Base looking out toward the encroachment area at the north end of the runway where more dense residential development has been replaced by solar panels (MGRC Staff Photo)**

Over the past several years, regional leaders have taken steps to ensure that the mission of Robins Air Force Base can be effectively sustained in the years ahead. These efforts dated back to 2004, when several Middle Georgia governments convened with RAFB leadership to discuss current land use and joint land use planning in the area around the base. They believed that a proactive approach would help to prepare RAFB for BRAC. In the resulting Joint Land Use Study (JLUS), residential encroachment in the area surrounding Robins AFB was identified as a potential problem for the future of the base.



Residential encroachment refers to development of residential properties in the Air Force designated Accident Potential Zones and high-decibel noise contours surrounding RAFB. In the years since the 2004 JLUS, regional leaders have addressed many of the concerns of the JLUS through coordinated zoning policies and the ongoing land acquisition efforts of the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority (CGJDA). Using funds from three Middle Georgia counties, the State of Georgia, and the US Department of Defense, the community (led by the CGJDA) was able to purchase more than 1,100 acres of land and clear them of incompatible uses.

In 2018, the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority leased most of the land to the Georgia Power Company, which invested more than \$200 million to build a 128 megawatts solar facility and upgrade the electrical infrastructure. The solar facility went operational in 2020. Through this project, Robins AFB is one of the most energy-resilient and energy-secure installations in the entire US Air Force portfolio. With this backdrop, the region embarked on an update to the old 2004 JLUS, which came in the form of the 2022 Middle Georgia – Robins Air Force Base Sustainability Plan. This document addresses seven different topic areas including land use, transportation, airspace, infrastructure, security, economic and community impact, and environment and cultural resources.

A natural recommendation from this Regional Plan is to pursue the implementation of recommendations from the Sustainability Plan. As it pertains to the land use elements that align with this plan, there is an important focus on managing development within the REPI agreement area. Within this boundary, federal funds can support programs to either acquire or otherwise protect properties from adverse development impacts. This makes the REPI boundary another area requiring special attention within the region.

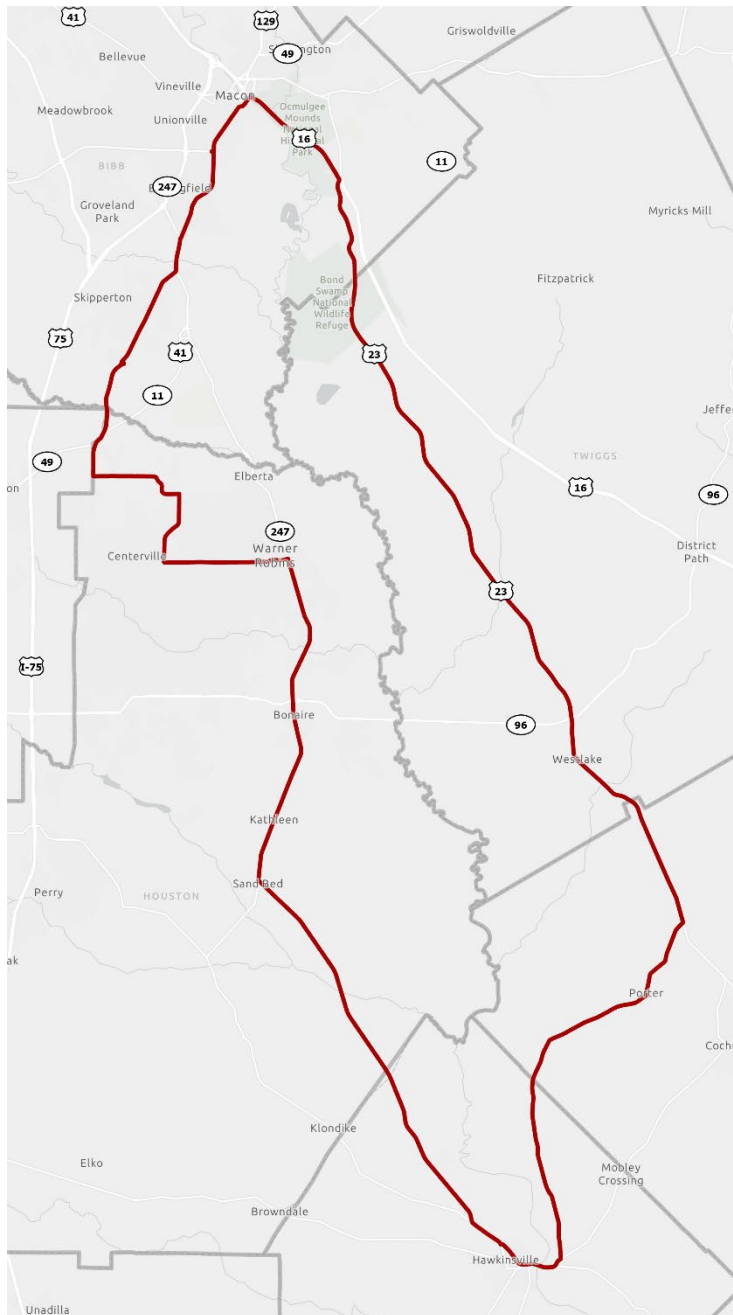


Photo 17: Updated REPI boundary for Robins AFB, approved following the 2022 Sustainability Plan (MGRC Map)

## REGIONAL NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The identification of regional needs and opportunities are critical to the development of the Middle Georgia Regional Plan. A region's needs and opportunities are the topics where definitive action will improve the region's prosperity, resilience, and quality of life. In some cases, these would help Middle Georgia catch up to other communities (generally more reflective of needs) and in others, Middle Georgia would get ahead (generally more reflective of opportunities).

The following sections include a listing of needs and opportunities, as well as a brief description of why these items were listed. **Several needs and opportunities are shown in a bold font.** These represent the highest priorities for Middle Georgia communities and are referenced further in the Regional Work Program element of this plan. Other items remain as needs or opportunities however, these do not reach the level of the highest priorities for the next five years

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### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Middle Georgia's regional economy has grown in notable ways since the last plan update. While impacts were certainly seen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Middle Georgia has recovered any pandemic-related job losses and is no longer lagging behind the remainder of the nation in terms of employment. However, in spite of this momentum, quality of life can still be lacking in parts of the region, and poverty remains persistently high—even while being lower than it was several years ago. As such, the region generally has a greater number of economic development needs than opportunities. The region also has more needs related to economic prosperity than to other topics.

#### NEEDS

**(ED-1) Greater economic diversification, both within counties and across the entire region.**

**(ED-2) Revitalization of both commercial corridors and historic downtowns.**

**(ED-3) Solve the workforce labor crunch that has employers struggling to find workers.**

(ED-4) Address issues that lead to a wage gap in Middle Georgia compared to other regions.

(ED-5) Reduce the degree of “brain drain” that tends to draw talented workers away to larger markets such as Atlanta.

(ED-6) Increase the overall skill level of the workforce, with a particular focus on soft skills.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

(ED-7) Build on the framework of the Middle Georgia Innovation Project to attract and support higher paying engineering and technology jobs.

(ED-8) Leverage new job growth in the electric vehicle manufacturing sector to attract suppliers and increase the number of green jobs.

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## UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The regional infrastructure needs of Middle Georgia run deep, as highlighted by the public survey results identifying utility infrastructure as one of the highest priority goals for the region. Notably, many communities lack the density to support the expansion of water or sewer improvements that are necessary to attract new investments in business or housing. This also impacts the quality of life, as residents may lack access to reliable and quality services. Many funding streams have already been made available for local governments to enhance services like water and sewer. However, grant funding often only goes so far and maintenance needs may also fall behind.

### NEEDS

#### **(U-1) Regular system maintenance, repairs, and upgrades.**

(U-2) More reliable and higher quality water, sewer, and natural gas services.

(U-3) Greater investments in developing and maintaining stormwater infrastructure.

(U-4) Identify service charges that best maintain infrastructure while also not cost burdening residents and customers.

### OPPORTUNITIES

#### **(U-5) Increase utility capacity to ensure access for new developments.**

(U-6) Leverage the region's good availability of water supply to support economic growth.

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## HOUSING

Housing serves as a chief indicator of a community's economic vitality and quality of life. As the Middle Georgia region's population grows and as its economy develops, its housing stock must be further developed, maintained, and redeveloped to ensure residents of the region have the shelter necessary to prosper. While Middle Georgia generally has less expensive housing than some other areas, this benefit is offset by the lower incomes in the region. As a result, Middle Georgia homes can sometimes be more attainable for outside investors than for the community's residents. Furthermore, blighted housing also reduces the available housing stock for the region. The end results are problematic. Communities experience a "Missing Middle" of housing, where the only available units are either low-income subsidized apartments or are unobtainable single-family, detached homes. The end result is that what homes are available do not match the needs or resources of the community. Not surprisingly, those moving to Middle Georgia are having an increasingly challenging time in finding quality, livable housing. Again, the needs and opportunities are relatively simple to state, but more difficult to enact—particularly as it relies on encouraging activity within the private sector in order to build more units.



## NEEDS

**(H-1) Improvements to substandard housing and the removal or remediation of structures in disrepair.**

(H-2) Reduce rates of homelessness and the risk of further homelessness for those of lower income levels.

(H-3) Enforce standards for property maintenance on all types of development that are appropriate for the community.

(H-4) Build greater understanding of challenges in the housing market.

## OPPORTUNITIES

**(H-5) Increase the number and variety of available units in the regional housing stock.**

(H-6) Strengthen the home building market to protect consumers from rising costs.

(H-7) Pursue downtown and urban housing developments to provide another housing option.

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## TRANSPORTATION

The region's transportation needs and opportunities are varied and complex. As part of maintaining an accessible network of transportation options, Middle Georgia leaders recognize many opportunities. This naturally includes a need for maintenance of the traditional roadway infrastructure, which is a recurring challenge throughout the region. Most communities will attest to the fact that there is never sufficient funding to address all needs including ongoing operations for transit services. At the same time, investments in alternative forms of transportation are also extremely important as stakeholders noted throughout the planning process. The future of mobility in Middle Georgia will involve adaptation to meet the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, and those who take public transit. Combined with investments in electric vehicles, the transportation framework of the region is set to go through a rapid transition that can hopefully lead to a more sustainable future.

## NEEDS

**(T-1) Address regular roadway maintenance.**

**(T-2) More easily accessible, efficient, and convenient public transit services.**

(T-3) Complete major infrastructure improvements that adversely affect communities and commuters while under construction.

(T-4) Reduce traffic congestion through system efficiencies, roadway improvements, and the provision of transportation alternatives.

## OPPORTUNITIES

**(T-5) Invest in a greater network of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.**

**(T-6) Connect Middle Georgia to Atlanta, Savannah, and the Southeast U.S. by passenger rail.**

**(T-7) Prepare for the electrification of vehicles with adequate infrastructure.**

(T-8) Expand and enhance facilities that the various regional airports throughout Middle Georgia.

(T-9) Pursue opportunities to develop infrastructure that leverages and supports the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project.

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## HEALTHCARE AND AGING

The healthcare and aging service needs of the region continue to grow as the region sees an ever-increasing number of older residents. Aging in place is a top priority as it allows older adults to spend a longer time near friends and family and contributing to the vibrancy of the regional community. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted many of the health disparities that exist across the region. Inequitable access to preventative care and basic nutrition are threats to wellness for the residents of Middle Georgia and present a challenge for community leaders. Several communities have already begun responding to these needs, providing positive case studies for future actions that can be taken.

## NEEDS

**(HA-1) Access to nutritional services and preventative health care.**

**(HA-2) Resources to support aging in place, particularly as the population of seniors grows.**

**(HA-3) Caregiver support resources, aid, and techniques to improve the capacity of providing care.**

(HA-4) Educational resources from reliable sources to help avoid scams, exploitation, or abuse.

(HA-5) Additional resources for mental health services.

## OPPORTUNITIES

(HA-6) Implement local development standards that make communities accessible for those of all ages to make more vibrant communities.

(HA-7) Improve local government services, especially transit, to keep seniors in a community longer.

(HA-8) Further communicate and publicize counseling and advocacy services available to older residents.

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## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The State of Georgia is known for its rich natural beauty, and Middle Georgia provides one of the best samplings of this geographic diversity available. From the cascades of High Falls to the rich peanut farms of Pulaski County, from peach trees to pine trees, Middle Georgia has exceptional land and water resources for both recreation and environmental conservation. This is further heightened by the commitment to historic preservation within many communities and the protection of sacred Native American sites. In sum, no topic within this plan provides more opportunities than the region's natural and cultural resources. If successfully leveraged, Middle Georgia will continue to become more well known for these features, leading to economic growth and regional pride.

### NEEDS

**(NCR-1) Continue improvements in the regional air quality.**

(NCR-2) Address impaired waterbodies that are not meeting their designated uses.

(NCR-3) Evaluate potential loss of agricultural lands and retain prime working lands.

### OPPORTUNITIES

**(NCR-4) Host the nation's 64th national park at Ocmulgee Mounds.**

**(NCR-5) Leverage tourism to support a growing regional economy.**

**(NCR-6) Better preserve regional culture through preservation of historic sites and districts.**

(NCR-7) Implement legal mechanisms to protect important lands or historic properties.

(NCR-8) Explore connections between long-distance transportation alternatives and the potential growth of the recreational economy in the region.

(NCR-9) Regularly review the region's resources for additional focus or protection.

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## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Quality community services are a cornerstone of providing a high quality of life to residents across the many cities, towns, and counties of Middle Georgia. In recent years, violent crime has surged throughout the nation, with many speculating that violence was an outgrowth of the social isolation experienced in the COVID-19 pandemic. Building a safe and thriving community requires public space, a "civic commons," where people can befriend one another, develop trust, and engage in collective action for the betterment of a community. The Macon Violence Prevention program highlights the capability of a community to create its own safety when empowered. In the historically disadvantaged community of Pleasant Hill, the work of Cure Violence Macon to interrupt cycles of violence by engaging directly with gang members and troubled youth has put an end to homicides over the past year with their work continuing to strengthen the social fabric.



Indeed, local governments are also vital in providing the physical spaces where contact and collaboration can occur. Quality recreational facilities (both indoor and outdoor), senior centers, community centers, and more are a tremendous asset to communities not only for their health benefits, but also for how they build a sense of community. Even the basic civic buildings such as a courthouse or city hall can be symbols of shared interest and a mutual desire to work for the good of the community.

#### NEEDS

**(CF-1) Crime prevention and public safety resources, especially where high rates of violent crime exist.**

**(CF-2) Improve fire protection, especially in rural areas.**

(CF-3) Training resources and funding for law enforcement to improve effectiveness while keeping officers safe in the line of duty.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

**(CF-4) Expand recreational programs, parks, trails, facilities, and greenspace.**

**(CF-5) Enhance community resilience and disaster response efforts.**

(CF-6) Identify improvements in general governmental facilities.

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## LAND USE

As alluded to when discussing the region's natural and cultural resources, the effective use and management of land is important for regional prosperity. A clear priority exists to promote patterns of smart growth, which is marked by sustainability, walkability, and a person-focused approach to patterns of development. Sprawl is not uncommon to Middle Georgia as it is a national phenomenon aided by the ubiquity of personal automobiles. However, in many areas of Middle Georgia, higher rates of poverty make the provision of services across a larger area even more difficult to maintain. Utility services, roadways, and fire response times are all impacted by the distance that must be traversed between the origin of a service and its destination. A focus on more economically sustainable development should also help create unique places that differentiate Middle Georgia from other areas of the country.

#### NEEDS

(LU-1) Maintain a sense of place and identity through compatible new development.

(LU-2) Use land efficiently to avoid cost and problems associated with undisciplined growth.

(LU-3) Address current conditions of dilapidation and blight while building capacity to prevent future challenges.

## OPPORTUNITIES

**(LU-4) Encourage sustainable development and redevelopment practices to minimize sprawl.**

(LU-5) Increase knowledge, public education, and staff training related to common zoning and code enforcement challenges.

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## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

Effective governance is key for every one of the topics that is discussed within the Regional Plan. This naturally starts with the decision of the general public to elect quality civic representatives; however, the importance of professional staff clearly becomes self-evident as well. Many smaller communities may not be able to secure the full amount of staff resources that they need due to limited financial resources. This is a key area where MGRC can come to not only fill in service gaps for a local government, but also identify new opportunities for regional collaboration that can result in better outcomes. As state and federal funds also increase in scarcity, basic compliance and the proverbial “homework” become key to successfully competing for much-needed funds. Finally, the opportunity to work as a region is a common theme from state and federal leaders. The more the Middle Georgia community can work together as one entity, the more opportunities each individual member will be able to leverage in the future.

## NEEDS

**(PAR-1) Strong professional, technical, and administrative support staff for local governments.**

**(PAR-2) Ensure local governments remain compliant with all state and federal reporting requirements, particularly as relevant for securing grant funding.**

## OPPORTUNITIES

**(PAR-3) Continue to build a shared regional identity through close collaboration.**

(PAR-4) Leverage the region’s shared borrowing and bargaining power for major public works construction projects.

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## BROADBAND AND TECHNOLOGY

Lastly, but certainly not least, Middle Georgia communities need access to digital connectivity and literacy to prepare residents for the opportunities that lie ahead. This begins by ensuring that broadband services reach every resident of the region, knowing that reliable internet access is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. Beyond that, however, it also means utilizing the full capabilities of technology, including even artificial intelligence and machine learning, to support the most effective utilization of public resources. Smart city technologies are already present in many ways and can be further deployed to continue improving day-to-day life in Middle Georgia.

## NEEDS

**(BT-1) Improved digital connectivity and broadband services to unserved locations.**

(BT-2) Provide affordable and quality internet access to all customers, regardless of current services.

## OPPORTUNITIES

**(BT-3) Enhance technological literacy in the region, particularly for local government staff.**

(BT-4) Develop education services and technical curricula to meet the workforce needs of tomorrow.

(BT-5) Increase operational efficiency of public services through adoption of modern technology.

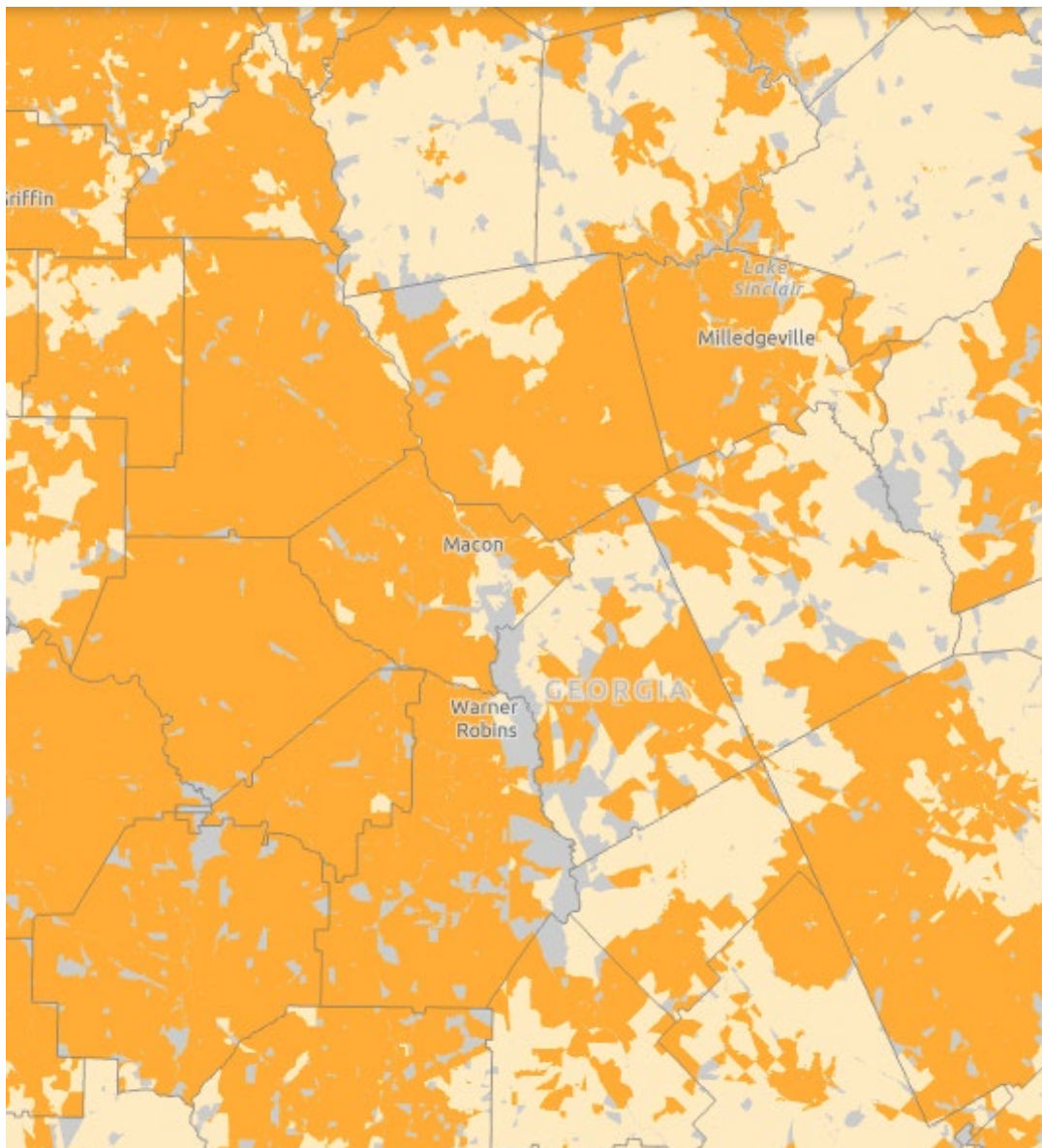


Photo 18: The status (as of June 2023) of broadband access in Middle Georgia. Orange areas are served with cream areas remaining unserved. Significant grant funds are already deployed to help fill remaining gaps, especially in Twiggs County and Wilkinson County. (Map Credit: Georgia Technology Authority)



## IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The previous sections of the Regional Plan have provided an opportunity to envision the ideal future state of the region and have analyzed the pathways and potential obstacles for progress in Middle Georgia. This section, the Implementation Program, is perhaps the most important piece of the Regional Plan, as it spells out concrete steps and action items that can be taken in pursuit of the Regional Vision. Within this section are standards by which achievement can be measured and a Regional Work Program of strategies and actions that can be taken and developed by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission and its partners to implement regional goals.

## PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Middle Georgia Regional Commission is given the responsibility and authority to set levels of performance for local governments of the region. In doing so, MGRC recognizes that all local governments of the region are different and that some standards may be quite easily attainable for larger, well-funded governments, but more difficult to meet for other cities and counties. For this reason, the regional plan entails both Essential Standards and Excellence Standards. These standards are identical for all governments with the Essential Standards being easily attainable by all. In contrast, the Excellence Standards are more difficult and may require increased planning, coordination, and financial commitment. The first report on attainment of the performance standards under this plan will be compiled in March 2025.

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### ESSENTIAL (MINIMUM) STANDARDS

While all local governments have the option to pursue Excellence Standards, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission expects Essential Standards to be met by all local governments in the region. These represent the minimum actions that must be taken by a local government to function. As stated in the Regional Vision, a thriving Middle Georgia should include “the provision of effective local government services.” These Essential Standards are a necessary precursor to ensuring that local governments of the region can provide services in an effective manner.

Annually, Middle Georgia Regional Commission staff will engage with each local government to review their alignment with these standards. The Middle Georgia Regional Commission is dedicated to ensuring that every local government is able to meet the Essential Standards of the Regional Agenda. Regional Commission staff will assist local governments with any tasks necessary to attain the Essential Standards at minimal or no cost. These standards are articulated below.

- ✓ Local Comprehensive Plans shall be updated with all required elements on their respective timelines, as approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.
- ✓ A Service Delivery Strategy shall be negotiated and agreed upon as required under state law.
- ✓ Local governments shall participate in the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Middle Georgia Region.
- ✓ Local governments shall comply with all Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria.

- ✓ A pre-disaster mitigation plan shall be approved by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and adopted by each local government in accordance with state guidelines.
- ✓ Local governments shall comply with Georgia Department of Community Affairs State Reporting Requirements, particularly the Government Management Indicators Survey, the Report of Local Government Finance, and (if applicable) the Hotel/Motel Tax Report.
- ✓ All local governments shall comply with the appropriate audit requirements set forth in O.C.G.A. §36-81-7.
- ✓ Each local government shall periodically review its expenses and revenues and adopt a budget that balances projected revenues and expenditures, consistent with the timeframe required by its local Charter, Code of Ordinances, or other relevant regulations.
- ✓ Each city and county shall have a functioning, up-to-date website, which provides basic contact information for local government staff and elected officials.

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## EXCELLENCE STANDARDS

In addition to the regular evaluation of Essential Standards that will be conducted each year, MGRC will also partner with local communities to review alignment with the following Excellence Standards. Local governments that meet 32 of the 64 Excellence Standards, including at least one of the excellence standards in each of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission's ten categories below will be designated as a Middle Georgia Community of Excellence. All local governments are encouraged to implement as many of these best practices as possible, and Regional Commission staff will assist local governments with attainment of these standards upon request.

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### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The community has dedicated staff capacity and a well-defined strategy for business recruitment, retention, and expansion.
- Community leaders have a targeted focus on industry recruitment that ties to specific sectors or types of businesses well suited for the area.
- The city or county leverages state and or federal incentive programs to support business development or expansion, particularly in economically distressed areas.
- The community prioritizes and plans for the revitalization of downtown areas and/or major corridors—particularly with a focus on establishing active and vibrant public spaces.
- Economic developers maintain an available inventory of sites and/or buildings with development opportunities and proactively seek to increase the marketability of key sites.
- Community and business leaders work together to address barriers to employment such as access to childcare and transportation.

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### UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Local officials and staff participate in the development of Regional Water Plans and adopt best practices related to water conservation and water supply management.
- The community's local development standards require water and sewer system connections where service is available.

- The community maintains balanced water and/or sewer rates that ensure system sustainability without overburdening residents with excessive costs.
- The community invests in maintaining its utility infrastructure and leverages state and federal funding opportunities as available to improve services.
- The local government maintains a Capital Improvements Plan or similar document to plan for future community infrastructure needs.
- A community receives the WaterFirst program designation from GEFA.

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## HOUSING

- Utilize the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Community HOME Improvement Program (CHIP), Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), and other Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs that address local housing needs and provide housing alternatives at multiple income levels.
- Permit and encourage reuse of existing housing stock and adaptive reuse of former commercial, office, and industrial structures in good condition for reuse or remodeling.
- Implement zoning reform and local incentives to equitably improve access to safe and affordable housing and residential rental.
- Undertake and routinely update housing assessments to identify existing conditions and housing stock needs.
- Support and invest in housing programs, allowing for an increase of total housing on the market and helping to control rising housing costs.
- Address issues of dilapidation and blight through implementing building codes, health and sanitation codes, or nuisance ordinances to improve the safety and appearance of the community.
- Support initiatives, programs, services, and legal assistance whose focus is to resolve issues of titles, heirship, land tenure and evictions.
- Establish or participate with a local housing authority, as appropriate, as an avenue for access to housing by low-income persons.

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## TRANSPORTATION

- The city or county adopts and implements a Complete Streets Policy.
- Local government staff members coordinate with local school districts and GDOT to develop or maintain a Safe Routes to School program.
- The community's development ordinances include design standards for new private road development to prevent sub-standard roads from being taken over by the local government.
- Development and design standards ordinances for new private developments are maintained and/or updated to prevent sub-standard roads, which will eventually be transferred to local governments for maintenance.
- The community maintains a priority list of bridges, culverts, and roads within the community that have the greatest need for improvement projects.
- Public transit systems offer extended services beyond core business hours and to in-demand locations within neighboring jurisdictions.
- The community has an inventory of sidewalks and/or a plan for connectivity.



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## HEALTHCARE AND AGING

- Follow guidance of policies, plans, and initiatives to increase the availability of affordable senior housing and the construction of public facilities that conforms to Americans Disability Act (ADA) accessible.
- Work closely with state and federal agencies and advocacy groups for, such as the Department of Community Health and the Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Development Disabilities, Statewide Independent Living Council, Georgia Citizen Coalition on Hunger, the Mental Health Planning Advisory Council, the Georgia Council, and the Georgia Supportive Housing Association.
- Senior Citizens have access to a variety of Senior Center services in quality facilities and with sustained funding for programming.
- Incorporate universal design standards into comprehensive plans and local zoning policies.
- City or county creates and adopts an ADA transition plan and assesses the compliance of public facilities with Section 504.
- County and city leadership engage with partnerships to provide health care resources to those in need, particularly for expanding senior and/or dementia care in the region.
- City or county supports local or regional programming in support of being an age friendly community or region.
- The community invests in avenues to expand the provision of basic healthcare services.

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## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Provide quality public parks and recreational facilities at convenient locations in the community.
- Apply for funding to support improved recreational access and amenities.
- The city or county receives a Certified Local Government designation from DCA.
- Community maintains an updated historic resource survey.
- The community adopts a Historic Preservation Ordinance consistent with the Georgia Historic Preservation Act and maintains an active Historic Preservation Commission.
- Adoption of ordinances to encourage the protection of open space, wetlands, natural resources, and wildlife habitat.

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## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- Leverage state and federal grant and loan funding for improvements to community facilities infrastructure, and public buildings.
- Rehabilitate dilapidated structures throughout the region for new community facilities.
- Invest in new innovative techniques and infrastructure for recycling, waste management and disposal, and minimizing toxic chemicals and gases to nearby air, soil, and groundwater.
- Regularly evaluate and update Service Delivery Strategies and Mutual Aid Agreements for service efficiency and best use of resources.
- Establish a capital improvement plan or similar document for management of resources.
- Develop a recreation master plan, either individually or jointly, by county and city governments.

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## LAND USE

- When feasible, utilize existing infrastructure for new construction versus expanding services to undeveloped locations, reducing the cost of construction and maintenance of infrastructural components.
- Strategically plan the expansion of public infrastructure, so to limit the potential loss of natural resources to sprawl development patterns.
- Adopt and enforce zoning policies whose intention is to support development of a mix of uses at the neighborhood scale, reducing sprawl type growth and protecting both the rural character and natural resources of a location.
- Local zoning ordinances include a statement on manufactured home condition and architectural compatibility with adjacent residential uses.
- Mixed use and Planned Unit Development zoning codes include ordinances for the preservation of portion of greenspace.
- Residential development of certain density at locations where sidewalks are available should be required to have new sidewalks.

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## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

- Communities partner on the sharing of services and facilities to ensure greater efficiency and high-quality services.
- Local officials provide input and feedback, as applicable, during the review process for planning documents and Developments of Regional Impact.
- Communities implement grade and step compensation systems and participate in DCA's Wage and Salary Survey.
- Finance and administration departments prepare an Annual Comprehensive Financial Report.
- Cities and Counties participate collectively in developing a Joint Comprehensive Plan and monitor their progress in a Plan Implementation Meeting.
- Communities participate in regional collaborative organizations such as the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority, Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition, etc.

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## BROADBAND AND TECHNOLOGY

- Invest in advanced technology employment sectors for a diversified economy of the future.
- Community implements smart technology improvements to address governance challenges.
- Local government maintains staff capacity knowledgeable of GIS skills and technologies.
- City or county invests in technological literacy for its workforce and/or residents more broadly.
- Expand broadband services and digital connectivity throughout the region, improving both quality of life and employment opportunity.
- To increase operational efficiency and improve the quality of life of citizens, local governments will invest in technology-based infrastructure or "Smart City Technology."
- Community receives a broadband ready designation from DCA.

## REGIONAL WORK PROGRAM

Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
<b>Economic Development</b>				
<b>Priority Need (ED-1): Greater economic diversification, both within counties and across the entire region.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Undertake long-term planning to ensure the availability of resources for economic development.</i>				
Research, prepare and administer grants and loans to support economic development.	MGRC			Staff Time
Assist with the implementation of projects identified in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region.	MGRC, EDA			Staff Time
Assist with the implementation of projects identified in the State Strategic Plan for the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC).	MGRC, SCRC			Staff Time
Assist the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Partnership and its efforts to support Robins Air Force Base, its activities, expansion efforts, and new missions.	MGRC, 21st Century Partnership			\$30,000 Annual
Support the work of the Middle Georgia Innovation Project as part of the larger GA-AIM Partnership.	MGRC, 21st Century Partnership, Ga. Tech, DAHC, EDA	YRS 1-2 \$50,000		
<i>Strategy: Identify appropriate businesses for targeted industry recruitment and expansion efforts, based on strategic assets.</i>				
Provide technical assistance to local governments, development authorities, and chambers of commerce for economic development and industrial recruitment.	MGRC, EDA, GDEcD			Staff Time
Conduct economic impact analyses to determine cost-benefit for economic development projects.	MGRC, SCRC			Staff Time
<b>Priority Need (ED-2): Revitalization of both commercial corridors and historic downtowns.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Pursue appropriate funding opportunities to support economic development initiatives, locally and regionally.</i>				
Apply for and administer grants for the assessment, cleanup planning, and remediation of brownfield sites.	MGRC, EPA, Local Governments	YRS 1-3 \$1.5 Million		
Administer an EDA Revolving Loan Fund to provide much-needed capital to businesses in Middle Georgia.	MGRC, EDA			Staff Time
<i>Strategy: Develop focused strategies with state and federal partners to meet community needs for reinvestment.</i>				
Provide technical assistance for the creation of state Opportunity Zones, Rural Zones, local Enterprise Zones, and Redevelopment Plans.	MGRC, DCA			Staff Time
Assist with development of downtown development or redevelopment plans, and special tax districts.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time



Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
<b>Priority Need (ED-3): Solve the workforce labor crunch that has employers struggling to find workers.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Provide tools and assistance to develop the workforce for the region's existing industries.</i>				
Support work of the Middle Georgia Consortium (MGC) to provide workforce development services.	MGRC, MGC			Staff Time
Study and analyze workforce data to provide information on current workforce trends, needs, and opportunities.	MGRC, MGC			Staff Time
Utilize and market the resources from the Living in Middle Georgia initiative to attract new prospective employees into the region.	MGRC, MGEA, 21st Century Partnership			Staff Time
Identify and help to provide or connect people to potential wraparound services such as transportation or childcare.	MGRC, Local Governments, MGC			Staff Time
Implement Economic and Community Impact (ECO) recommendations from the Middle Georgia-RAFB Sustainability Plan.	MGRC, OLDCC, RAFB, 21st Century Partnership, Local Governments	YRS 1-5 Staff Time	YRS 6-10 Staff Time	
<b>Utility Infrastructure</b>				
<b>Priority Need (U-1): Regular system maintenance, repairs, and upgrades.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Monitor infrastructure conditions to identify when repairs or upgrades are necessary.</i>				
Assist local governments in efforts to upgrade and/or extend water/sewer infrastructure.	MGRC, DCA, USDA, GEFA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist local governments with improvements to stormwater management and drainage infrastructure.	MGRC, DCA, USDA, GEFA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist local governments in efforts to upgrade and/or extend natural gas infrastructure.	MGRC, USDA, DOT, DCA, EDA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist communities with grant funding to support critical utility infrastructure.	MGRC, FEMA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist communities with the process of identifying and securing grant funds to replace lead service lines.	MGRC, Local Governments, GEFA, EPA, Engineers	YRS 1-5 Staff Time		
Implement Security (S) and Infrastructure (I) recommendations from the Middle Georgia-RAFB Sustainability Plan.	MGRC, OLDCC, RAFB, 21st Century Partnership, Local Governments	YRS 1-5 Staff Time	YRS 6-10 Staff Time	
<b>Priority Opportunity (U-5): Increase utility capacity to ensure access for new developments.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Coordinate infrastructure expansion and land use plans to ensure priority development sites have utility service.</i>				
Pursue funding avenues to aid in providing infrastructure to industrial parks and sites.	MGRC, DCA, OneGA, GEFA, USDA, SCRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Pursue funding avenues to aid in providing infrastructure to potential sites for new housing development.	MGRC, DCA, OneGA, GEFA, USDA, SCRC, Local Governments			Staff Time

Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
<b>Housing</b>				
<b>Priority Need (H1): Improvements to substandard housing and the removal or remediation of structures in disrepair.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Create plans and partnerships to support code enforcement activities.</i>				
Perform housing assessments, focusing on both urban and rural areas, and data collection, as requested.	MGRC, DCA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist local governments with the preparation of housing-focused Urban Redevelopment Plans.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist communities with developing and implementing blight reduction strategies.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
<i>Strategy: Participate in programs that support quality and accessible housing.</i>				
Provide technical assistance to local Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) communities.	MGRC, DCA, UGA			Staff Time
Promote, encourage, and participate in housing-related workshops, conferences, and symposia.	MGRC, DCA, Local Governments, Housing Authorities			Staff Time
Assist local governments with identifying resources and funding options (such as the LIHTC, DDRLF, and CDBG programs) to support affordable infill housing development.	MGRC, DCA, GMA, Local Governments, Housing Authorities			Staff Time
Partner with local governments, housing authorities, social service agencies, non-profits, etc. to promote housing options for those most in need.	MGRC			Staff Time
Assist in planning and implementing energy efficiency and weatherization improvements for low-income households.	MGRC, MGCAA, Overview, EPA, DOE			Staff Time
<b>Priority Opportunity (H-5): Increase the number and variety of available units in the regional housing stock.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Leverage vacant properties to create new housing opportunities.</i>				
Assist local governments with the creation and management of Land Banks.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Explore the possibility of a regional land bank authority.	MGRC, Local Governments, Existing Land Banks	YRS 2-3 Staff Time		
Assist housing authorities, community land trusts, and nonprofit housing developers with efforts to construct new affordable housing.	MGRC, Local Governments,			Staff Time
<i>Strategy: Examine barriers to new housing development.</i>				
Provide technical assistance to local governments in reviewing and updating zoning codes to remove barriers to appropriate housing development.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time

Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
<b>Transportation</b>				
<b>Priority Need (T-1): Address regular roadway maintenance</b>				
<i>Strategy: Improve the condition of the region's road network, with attention to the condition of high-priority roads.</i>				
Assist local governments with identifying and prioritizing bridges, culverts, and unimproved roads for future investment.	MGRC, GDOT, DOT, Local Governments			Staff Time
Support local governments in finding innovative solutions for transportation investments.	MGRC			Staff Time
Assist local governments with efforts to beautify transportation corridors, particularly community gateway entrances, including wayfinding and placemaking.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Implement the Transportation (T) recommendations from the Middle Georgia-RAFB Sustainability Plan.	MGRC, OLDCC, RAFB, 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Partnership, Local Governments	YRS 1-5 Staff Time	YRS 6-10 Staff Time	
<i>Strategy: Coordinate with the Georgia Department of Transportation, State Road and Tollway Authority, and other state and federal agencies for roadway funding.</i>				
Serve on the Technical Coordinating and Policy Committees for the Macon Area Transportation Study and Warner Robins Area Transportation Study.	MGRC, MATS, WRATS			Staff Time
Assist local governments, MPOs, and other entities in understanding federal funding opportunities.	MGRC, Local Governments, MATS, WRATS			Staff Time
Identify and accelerate projects to improve connectivity across the region (especially across the Ocmulgee River).	MGRC, GDOT, DOT, Local Governments			Staff Time
<b>Priority Need (T-2): More easily accessible, efficient, and convenient public transit services.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Enhance services and programs for residents with a person centric (mobility management) mindset.</i>				
Complete Transit Development Plan updates for all rural communities.	MGRC, GDOT, Local Governments			\$80,000 Annual
Enhance the Middle Georgia Regional Mobility Manager program.	MGRC, GDOT, Local Governments			\$60,000 Annual
Pursue expanded transit service and options for special population groups, as identified and recommended by the Regional Transit Development Plan.	MGRC, GDOT, Local Governments			Staff Time
Administer the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) Coordinated Transportation Program in the Middle Georgia region.	MGRC, DHS, Third-Party Operator(s)			\$1.35 Million Annual
<b>Priority Opportunity (T-5): Invest in a greater network of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Develop plans with a focus on complete streets.</i>				
Prepare Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans for interested communities.	MGRC, Local Governments, GDOT			Staff Time



Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
Perform Safe Routes to School walk safety audits or travel plans for elementary and middle schools.	GDOT, MGRC, Local Schools			Staff Time
Coordinate with other Regional Commissions and local governments in determining US Bike Routes through Middle Georgia.	MGRC, GDOT			Staff Time
Assist GDOT in implementing the state's Complete Streets Policy throughout the region.	MGRC, GDOT			Staff Time
<b>Strategy: Promote alternative transportation choices.</b>				
Provide technical assistance to bicycle and pedestrian stakeholder groups, including Bike Walk Macon, Macon Pedestrian Safety Review Board, CGRTA, Oconee Greenway Board, Wilkinson Bike Friendly Committee, etc.	GDOT, MGRC, Local Stakeholders			Staff Time
Update the Middle Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian website.	MGRC, GDOT			Staff Time
Facilitate Complete Streets and other training for local communities.	GDOT, MGRC, Local Stakeholders			Staff Time
Incorporate policies and strategies in local comprehensive plans that link land use and transportation improvements.	MGRC, DCA, GDOT, Local Governments			Staff Time
<b>Priority Opportunity (T-6): Connect Middle Georgia to Atlanta, Savannah, and the Southeast U.S. by passenger rail.</b>				
<b>Strategy: Participate in regional planning processes for rail development.</b>				
Promote the viability and economic benefits of passenger rail service between Macon-Bibb and Atlanta.	MGRC, TRRC, ARC, I-75 CCC, MGCAC, Georgians for Passenger Rail			Staff Time
Promote and support the efforts of the I-75 Central Corridor Coalition, including planning for smart growth and transit-oriented development—highlighted by passenger rail service opportunities within the corridor.	MGRC, TRRC, ARC, I-75 CCC, MATS, WRATS, GDOT, DOT Local Governments			Staff Time
<b>Priority Opportunity (T-7): Prepare for the electrification of vehicles with adequate infrastructure.</b>				
<b>Strategy: Pursue state and federal funding streams to address identified gaps in the regional EV charging network.</b>				
Coordinate with GDOT on the implementation of the National Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program in Middle Georgia.	MGRC, MGCAC, GDOT, Clean Cities			Staff Time
Nominate additional corridors in Middle Georgia for consideration as alternative fuel corridors to improve eligibility for NEVI funding.	MGRC, MGCAC, GDOT, Clean Cities			Staff Time
Apply for large-scale grants to systematically address EV charging system gaps at the community charging (level 2) level.	MGRC, MGCAC, GDOT, DOT, EPA			Staff Time

Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
Pursue microgrants and technical assistance to address unique charging demands in rural communities.	MGRC, MGCAC, GDOT, EPA, GEFA, Local Governments			Staff Time
<b>Healthcare and Aging</b>				
<b>Priority Need (HA-1): Access to nutritional services and preventative health care.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Invest in wellness initiatives to reduce the number and severity of medical visits necessary.</i>				
Conduct Wellness Program activities, providing education, health screenings, nutrition information, exercise, disease management and prevention, and safe usage of medication to seniors and persons with disabilities.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
Administer Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME) program.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
Administer the Matter of Balance fall prevention program.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
<i>Strategy: Address social determinants of health outcomes.</i>				
Ensure that vulnerable residents have access to healthcare services, including mental health counseling—especially in traditionally disadvantaged communities.	DHS, DCH, DBHDD, MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Utilizing both economic incentives and zoning regulations, develop policies to limit the preponderance of vice marts and ensure access to fresh and healthy food.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Implement drive-thru farmers markets for seniors and persons with disabilities to connect farmers with customers who need healthy food.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
<b>Priority Need (HA-2): Resources to support aging in place, particularly as the population of seniors grows.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Encourage a person-centered approach to service provision.</i>				
Operate as fully functioning Aging and Disability Resource Connection and No Wrong Door service provision system.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
Complete eligibility assessments for the Elderly and Disabled Waiver Program, which helps elderly and/or individuals with disabilities remain in their homes and communities and prevents seniors from being prematurely institutionalized.	DCH, MGRC			Staff Time
Function as Local Contact Agency for nursing home residents seeking to transition to the community. Offer Options Counseling to assist residents in locating community resources.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
Administer the Nursing Home Transition for the Department of Community Health to allow individuals to return to their communities.	DCH, DHS, MGRC			Staff Time

Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
Maintain an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan to serve as lead as notified by Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services, or by a localized emergency team in the Middle Georgia counties, to assist seniors and/or persons with disabilities.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
<i>Strategy: Remember the quickly growing senior population during planning efforts.</i>				
Encourage local governments to incorporate universal design concepts and account for their aging populations in comprehensive plans.	DCA, MGRC			Staff Time
Provide local governments with information regarding grant funding opportunities for senior housing.	DCA, MGRC			Staff Time
Pursue a regional age-friendly designation.	MGRC, AARP	YR 1 Staff Time		
<b>Priority Need (HA-3): Caregiver support resources, aid, and techniques to improve the capacity of providing care.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Focus on the long-term sustainability of aging services programs and build capacity for greater care.</i>				
Market the Area Agency on Aging in all counties in the Middle Georgia region through community education programs and health fairs.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
Administer in-home case management program for non-Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services clients.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
Administer the Elder Abuse Prevention Program by providing public education and outreach to identify and prevent elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
Administer the National Family Caregiver Support Program.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
Maintain, update, and secure new resources for inclusion in the statewide Empowerline Pro database.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
Provide programmatic and fiscal training, technical assistance, and monitoring to Area Agency on Aging subcontractors.	DHS, MGRC			Staff Time
<b>Natural and Cultural Resources</b>				
<b>Priority Need (NCR-1): Continue improvements in the regional air quality.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Consider air quality impacts of new projects and developments, working toward more sustainable solutions.</i>				
Provide technical assistance and staff support to the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition and take actions to improve air quality.	MGCAC, MGRC, EPA, EPD, Local Governments			\$65,000 Annually
Pursue SolSmart designation for the region.	MGCAC, MGRC	YRS 1-2 Staff Time		
Apply for and administer funding to further clean energy solutions within the region.	MGCAC, MGRC			Staff Time

Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
<b>Priority Opportunity (NCR-4): Host the nation's 64th national park at Ocmulgee Mounds.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Utilize the presence of natural, cultural, and historic resources to tell the region's story.</i>				
Engage in planning processes and funding opportunities that support designation of a new national park with supporting infrastructure in the community.	ONPPI, MGRC, Knight Foundation, Local Governments	YRS 1-3 \$1 Million		
Supporting the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative, providing technical assistance wherever possible.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Represent the interests of the regional community on the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Advisory Council.	MGRC	YRS 2-4 Staff Time		
Assist in the acquisition of lands as necessary and beneficial to support the park and preserve expansion efforts.	MGRC, CGJDA, ONPPI, Conservation Non-Profits, RAFB, GA Sentinel Landscape	YRS 1-5 \$\$ TBD		
Pursue additional federal and state funding to promote the conservation mission in the area and support educational efforts.	MGRC, DNR, ONPPI			Staff Time
Implement Environmental and Cultural Resources (ENV) recommendations from the Middle Georgia-RAFB Sustainability Plan.	MGRC, OLDCC, RAFB, 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Partnership, Local Governments	YRS 1-5 Staff Time	YRS 6-10 Staff Time	
<b>Priority Opportunity (NCR-5): Leverage tourism to support a growing regional economy.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Expand access to natural, cultural, and historic resources</i>				
Provide technical assistance to the Ocmulgee Water Trail Partnership, the Lower Oconee Water Trail group.	MGRC, DCA, GDOT, Local Governments			Staff Time
Provide technical assistance to the Central Georgia Rail to Trail Association for the development of the rail trail between Macon-Bibb and Milledgeville.	MGRC, DCA, GDOT, Local Governments			Staff Time
Provide assistance to local governments and other community organizations in promoting small farms and small communities through the "Georgia Grown" and "Celebrating Rural Georgia" programs.	MGRC, DCA, Georgia Dept of Agriculture, Local Governments, Community Organizations			Staff Time
Assist with planning and development efforts to enhance Balls Ferry State Park in Wilkinson County so it can attract overnight visitors.	MGRC, DNR, Local Governments			Staff Time
Actively support the Middle Georgia tourism industry and provide technical assistance to entities aiming to develop the tourism product.	MGRC, GDEcD, CVBs, Local Governments			Staff Time



Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
<b>Priority Opportunity (NCR-6): Better preserve regional culture through preservation of historic sites and districts.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Invest in capacity building to identify and protect resources.</i>				
Conduct and comment on Section 106 undertakings involving historic resources.	MGRC, HPD			Staff Time
Provide outreach, training, and technical assistance on Historic Preservation to local governments and other interested parties.	MGRC, HPD			Staff Time
Conduct historic resources inventories for local governments.	MGRC, HPD, Local Governments,			Staff Time
Provide technical assistance to local Historic Preservation Commission, Historical Societies, and other organizations.	MGRC, HPD, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist local governments with activities related to the Certified Local Government program; assist in the preparation and adoption of local preservation ordinances.	MGRC, HPD			Staff Time
Assist communities with state and federal historic preservation initiatives and programs including the Main Street Program and the Preserve America Institute.	MGRC, HPD, DCA			Staff Time
<b>Community Facilities and Services</b>				
<b>Priority Need (CF-1): Crime prevention and public safety resources, especially where high rates of violent crime exist.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Provide community support for law enforcement agencies.</i>				
Assist local efforts to upgrade or develop new law enforcement facilities and services.	MGRC, DOJ, USDA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Ensure law enforcement have sufficient equipment and supplies, particularly protective equipment, to safely serve the community	MGRC, DOJ, USDA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Implement Security (S) recommendations from the Middle Georgia-RAFB Sustainability Plan.	MGRC, OLDCC, RAFB, 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Partnership, Local Governments	YRS 1-5 Staff Time	YRS 6-10 Staff Time	
<i>Strategy: Utilize and strengthen community and police partnerships to reduce crime through nontraditional methods.</i>				
Support and help secure funding for community-led efforts to interrupt cycles of violent crime and address causes of crime.	MGRC, DOJ, Macon Violence Prevention, Local Communities			Staff Time
Support and help secure funding for community-oriented policing strategies.	MGRC, DOJ, Local Communities			Staff Time
Support and help secure funding for mental health co-responders who can assist law enforcement in performance of their duties.	MGRC, DOJ, DBHDD, Local Communities			Staff Time

Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
<b>Priority Need (CF-2): Improve fire protection, especially in rural areas.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Support firefighters and communities with strategies that will lower ISO ratings.</i>				
Assist local efforts to upgrade or develop new fire protection and prevention facilities, equipment, and services.	MGRC, FEMA, USDA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Ensure firefighters have sufficient equipment and supplies, particularly protective equipment, to safely serve the community	MGRC, FEMA, USDA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Support communities with the process of reducing dependence on volunteer firefighters, including with hiring new full-time staff.	MGRC, FEMA, Local Governments			Staff Time
<b>Priority Opportunity (CF-4): Expand recreational programs, parks, trails, facilities, and greenspace.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Pursue funding sources for both maintenance and new construction of facilities.</i>				
Assist local governments with preparation of applications and grant administration for the Recreational Trails Program.	MGRC, DNR, FWHA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist local governments with preparing and administering Land and Water Conservation Fund grants.	MGRC, DNR, NPS, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist local efforts to upgrade or develop new recreational facilities and services.	MGRC, DNR, NPS, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist local efforts to upgrade or develop new community facilities, such as Senior Centers, Head Start, Boys and Girls Clubs, Libraries, etc.	MGRC, DCA, USDA, Local Governments			Staff Time
<b>Priority Opportunity (CF-5): Enhance community resilience and disaster response efforts.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Plan for potential disruptions to the community and proactively harden critical facilities.</i>				
Develop risk assessment reports and assist in the local hazard mitigation and pre-disaster mitigation planning.	MGRC, GEMA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist communities with grant funding to support disaster resilience.	MGRC, FEMA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist local governments with development and preparation of Solid Waste Management Plans, as requested.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist local governments with planning or funding efforts to upgrade or develop new government administration facilities.	MGRC, USDA, Local Governments			Staff Time
<b>Land Use</b>				
<b>Priority Opportunity (LU-4): Encourage sustainable development and redevelopment practices to minimize sprawl.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Utilize smart growth principles.</i>				
Assist local governments in the preparation/ modification and adoption of land use ordinances, zoning ordinances, and/or development regulations.	MGRC, DCA, Local Governments			Staff Time

Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
Promote growth and development in areas that can be efficiently served by existing infrastructure.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist with land development ordinances or implementation of impact fees to reduce potential losses from new service provision.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Encourage the placement of new community facilities near existing infrastructure.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Support planning efforts for transit-oriented development and/or redevelopment.	MGRC, I-75CCC, MGCAC			Staff Time
<i>Strategy: Protect sensitive areas where unplanned sprawl negatively affects the economy.</i>				
Acquire and/or otherwise protect lands surrounding Robins Air Force Base within the REPI boundary, so as to protect and sustain the mission set.	MGRC, CGJDA, DNR, Conservation Non-Profits, RAFB, GA Sentinel Landscape	YRS 1-5 \$ 1.5 Million		
Implement Land Use (LU) and Airspace (A) recommendations from the Middle Georgia-RAFB Sustainability Plan.	MGRC, OLDCC, RAFB, 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Partnership, Local Governments	YRS 1-5 Staff Time	YRS 6-10 Staff Time	
<b>Public Administration and Regional Cooperation</b>				
<b>Priority Need (PAR-1): Strong professional, technical, and administrative support staff for local governments</b>				
<i>Strategy: Invest in qualified, professional personnel and continue to ensure they receive training.</i>				
Develop personnel systems with modern policies, benefits, and compensation systems to attract and retain talented personnel.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Aid local governments in hiring key staff personnel positions.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Partner with other regional and statewide associations to ensure that local officials receive quality and timely training.	MGRC, GARC, CVIOG, GMA, ACCG, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist communities with preparation, adoption, and monitoring of budgets.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist communities with updates to codes of ordinances, charters, and organizational documents.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
<b>Priority Need (PAR-2): Ensure local governments remain compliant with all state and federal reporting requirements, particularly as relevant for securing grant funding.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Focus on the attainment of Essential Standards set forth under this Regional Plan.</i>				
Provide regular reminders of all upcoming reporting deadlines for local governments on a recurring basis.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Aid communities in completing necessary reporting and registrations as required.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Assist cities and counties with being prepared for annual audits so as to stay up to date with their financial reporting.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time

Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
<b>Priority Opportunity (PAR-3): Continue to build a shared regional identity through close collaboration.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Create forums for regional thinking and where regional actions can be taken.</i>				
Facilitate the Middle Georgia Regional Leadership Champions program.	MGRC, UGA, Georgia Power			\$50,000 per Biennium
Provide technical assistance and support to the Middle Georgia Economic Alliance.	MGRC, MGEA			Staff Time
Provide technical assistance and staff support to the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority.	MGRC, CGJDA			Staff Time
Promote, encourage, and engage in initiatives of joint development authorities.	MGRC, CGJDA, FLRDA, MGRDA			Staff Time
<i>Strategy: Build collaboration among local governments for more effective and efficient services.</i>				
Promote and provide technical assistance for public-private partnerships between Robins Air Force Base and the surrounding communities.	MGRC, 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Partnership			Staff Time
Conduct Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs (Executive Order 12372) to ensure consistency of proposed projects with regional and local planning documents.	MGRC			Staff Time
Review local service delivery strategies and assist communities with negotiation processes, as necessary.	DCA, MGRC			Staff Time
<i>Strategy: Coordinate land use planning across jurisdictions for more consistency in development patterns.</i>				
Review and comment on long-range transportation plans for consistency with the Regional Plan.	MGRC			Staff Time
Review and comment on developments in close proximity to resources identified in the Regional Resource Plan.	MGRC			Staff Time
Review all Developments of Regional Impact submitted by Regional Commissions that adjoin Middle Georgia.	MGRC			Staff Time
Review statewide plans and programs for local and regional application.	MGRC			Staff Time
Prepare and review local comprehensive plans.	DCA, MGRC			Staff Time
<b>Broadband and Technology</b>				
<b>Priority Need (BT-1): Improved digital connectivity and broadband services to unserved locations.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Utilize public-private partnerships across the region to develop new infrastructure,</i>				
Assist with the planning and (if applicable) grant writing to coordinate installation of new broadband services by private providers.	MGRC, Local Governments, DCA			Staff Time
Assist with planning efforts under the Broadband Equity, Access, and	MGRC, Local Governments, DCA			Staff Time



Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs.)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs.)	Ongoing
Deployment (BEAD) Program to expand service coverage.				
Partner with DCA on any challenges to federal broadband maps and with securing data however possible.	MGRC, Local Governments, DCA			Staff Time
<b>Priority Opportunity (BT-3): Enhance technological literacy in the region, particularly for local government staff.</b>				
<i>Strategy: Evaluate technological options for lowering the costs of service delivery and improving efficiency.</i>				
Assist communities with the adoption of smart city technologies to improve service delivery and attract high-skill workers to the region.	MGRC, OLDCC, MGEA, GTA, Ga. Tech, Local Governments			Staff Time
Create, maintain, promote, and host web pages for local governments, development authorities, and other regional entities.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Develop strategies for enhancing social media and communications capabilities for MGRC and local governments	MGRC			Staff Time
<i>Strategy: Develop Geographic Information Systems (GIS) capabilities.</i>				
Create, maintain, and promote internet-based map services.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Create road and structure point data layers to support E-911 mapping services.	MGRC, GEMA, Local Governments			Staff Time
Explore the feasibility of acquiring highly accurate elevation (LiDAR) data and region-wide ortho-aerial photography.	MGRC, USGS, NOAA, FEMA, GIO, Local Governments			Staff Time
Provide tax parcel maintenance service.	MGRC, Local Governments			Staff Time
Provide Geographic Information Systems (GIS) digital mapping and Global Positioning System (GPS) data collection services to local governments	MGRC, GIO			Staff Time



Photo 19: Stakeholders helping to develop regional priorities and strategies (MGRC Staff Photo)



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: SWOT ANALYSIS

A kick-off meeting for the plan was held at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission office on December 6, 2023. In this meeting, the stakeholders were prompted to take part in brainstorming exercises. The activity utilized was a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. At the meeting location, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats posters were strategically placed around the room. Each of these posters included content from the 2016 Regional Agenda, the 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and Middle Georgia Regional local government Comprehensive Plans. Thematically, by category, this content included statements regarding the following: Economic Development, Community Development, Education and Workforce Development, Transportation, Healthcare and Aging, Government and Regional Cooperation and Broadband and Technology. These topics would later be refined into the ten topics seen elsewhere throughout the plan. However, for this initial meeting, the topics were based upon previous planning documents. Stakeholders provided comments regarding statements listed on each poster, suggesting additions, edits, and corrections, as necessary.

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#### STRENGTHS

While discussing strengths, stakeholders acknowledged and appreciated the region's beneficial geography, educational diversity, presence of Robins Air Force Base, and the proactive inclination toward regionalism among Middle Georgians. Geographically, Middle Georgia is centrally located in the state, allowing the region to be a transportation hub. Interstate 75 passes through the region, connecting South Florida to the Canadian border and passes through employment hubs of Miami, Tampa, Atlanta, Knoxville, Lexington, Cincinnati, and Detroit. By way of I-75, Atlanta is approximately 90 minutes from Macon-Bibb County. The Port of Savannah is approximately two and a half hours away along I-16. These connections strengthen Middle Georgia as a hub of business and industry.

Middle Georgia has numerous educational opportunities including quality public schools, successful charter schools, and prestigious private schools. Post-secondary educational opportunities also include a variety of public and private colleges. These colleges include Central Georgia Technical College, Fort Valley State University, Georgia College and State University, Georgia Military College, Mercer University, Middle Georgia State University, and Wesleyan College. Middle Georgia's postsecondary institutions provide for a robust, knowledgeable workforce of well-trained individuals who contribute to the region's economic vitality.

The stakeholder conversation organically transitioned into a discussion of Middle Georgia's innovative and industrious nature. Robins Air Force Base is the centerpiece of this innovation economy, spurring new investments from the private sector and public sector alike in preparation for a future economy with greater automation and utilization of artificial intelligence. With the leadership of organizations like the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Partnership, Middle Georgia is several steps ahead of other comparable communities. This work was only ever achievable because of the decisions by regional leaders to cooperate across city and county lines with this common vision.



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## WEAKNESSES

Though Middle Georgia's location in the state is advantageous to the success of the region, its location between Atlanta and Savannah also provides challenges. The region's proximity to Atlanta leads to direct competition, especially in the sector of warehousing, creating economic development challenges. Further, Middle Georgia also finds itself in direct competition with the Atlanta and Savannah regions for business and industrial recruitment. Middle Georgia's weaknesses in infrastructure, especially in regional wide industrial scale water and sewer, allow other regions to be more attractive locations.

While Middle Georgia has a strong educational system, the Atlanta region provides an even greater variety of employment opportunities, while providing more variety in entertainment and recreational opportunities. These features allow Atlanta to be a more attractive location for living to some. As a result, some students who gain a college degree in Middle Georgia will move away to Atlanta after graduation. Others may depart after high school, never to return. In response to such challenges, the stakeholders commented that at moments too much attention was given to large industry recruitment, where smaller local businesses could contribute to a more resilient Middle Georgia economy. In addition, while higher education is a strength, K-12 educational resources may differ from one community to another. This is further complicated by a private school versus public school divide in some communities. Given these disparities, some schools suffer from a poor reputation.

Further complicating the issues of educational attainment and workforce training is the regional trend of an aging population. Several of these communities are also experiencing a decreasing total population. As older employees exit the workforce for retirement purposes, positions of employment are being vacated. Those essential skills needed to fill the gaps where positions are being vacated are not being passed on, nor are they being pursued in some circumstances. In 2022, Middle Georgia had a poverty rate above the Georgia state average (12.9 percent) according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. The poverty rate of the Middle Georgia Region for 2022 is reported as 22.9 percent, with the highest poverty rates in the region being in Baldwin County (24.1 percent) and Macon-Bibb County (22.5 percent).

Vulnerable populations within Middle Georgia include those living in poverty, individuals with disabilities, and seniors. Stakeholders discussed concerns regarding the well-being of all three groups, as they often do not have access to the same financial resources to cover medical, transportation, housing, and food. Further complications arise when these populations are struggling with mental health issues, including seniors, who develop dementia and do not have family to assist in care. In the health care and social work industry, there is limited staffing available to address this need. Transportation to medical appointments, as well as employment and shopping, is also challenged by the inconvenience of public transit, being mostly demand-response systems requiring advanced notice and only operated during limited hours. The need has grown continuously for this service as the population of the region continues to age. Aging and impoverished individuals may also lack access to adequate housing, nutritious food, and other daily necessities of life.



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## OPPORTUNITIES

Discussions surrounding the category of opportunities included adapting to and utilizing new technologies, the availability of innovative programs to support workforce housing, and improvements to transportation networks and to public transit. Modern technologies, such as artificial intelligence, may be considered both an opportunity and/or threat. Advanced technologies have the potential, through improved efficiency, to decrease the total number of needed employees. Though advanced technologies have the prospect of being a threat, utilizing the latest technology has an opportunity to both diversify the economy and increase employee efficiency. A strength and a point of pride is the innovative and proactive attitude of Middle Georgians. In the same spirit, the stakeholders spoke of the advantageous opportunities that may exist through modern technology. Concerns arise in terms of preparation for embracing such an opportunity. Stakeholders discussed that an educational pipeline and training is needed so to best understand and embrace technological advances.

Technological advancements and the integration of these resources are bolstered by the activities and mission at Robins Air Force Base. As the Air Force undertakes new missions, the regional economy is impacted by job creation resulting from the demands for resources, outside labor, and technology. As such, the Air Force seeks to be a community partner in workforce training. One way this has been seen is through the launch of Project Synergy, a collaborative initiative involving the Development Authority of Houston County, Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex (WR-ALC), and the Houston County School District. The Project Synergy facility aims to foster a free and innovative environment for technology professionals, many of whom are software engineers at Robins Air Force Base. At the same time, the facility includes a classroom for up to 40 students, offices for the Houston County Board of Education, and space for an expanded intern program as a STEM pipeline for future employees.

Further support is provided through the support of STEM education activities through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Partnership. Further exploration of opportunities at a regional level will prepare the Middle Georgia workforce of tomorrow, creating a more vibrant economy.

With economic advancements often comes increased demands in housing. As throughout Georgia, the region currently suffers from a lack of available housing. Housing scarcity is due to both a lack of new supply and a loss of older housing due to deterioration. Opportunities exist for the region due to the ample availability of infill development sites where previous, run-down homes have been lost. Infill development is often constructed near already existing infrastructure, reducing the cost of construction. Furthermore, as state leaders have recognized the housing challenge that exists, additional programs have become available to solve these challenges and promote future growth.

Long-term transportation planning can also create further opportunities for the region. Being central in the state, Middle Georgia can further its economic growth through improvements to highway and rail capacity. Located north to south along I-75, and east to west along I-16, Middle Georgia is in a prime location. Rail improvements can also play a vital role for Middle Georgia's future. These improvements would improve the region as a hub for warehouse and distribution firms but could also serve to support new passenger rail traffic too.



Certain local transportation considerations also provide opportunities. Corridor improvements and creating a bike and pedestrian friendly environment increases a sense of place in local communities. Growing interest in electrical vehicles also provides opportunities for job creation. The installation of charging stations allows for more retail shopping too, as travelers may stop in Middle Georgia to dine or shop while their vehicles recharge.

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## THREATS

Discussions of local threats include the lack of economic diversification, workforce constraints, poverty, housing availability, and healthcare. As a strength, Robins Air Force Base contributes positively to the economy, but an over-reliance on the base as an economic driver is a threat. Robins Air Force Base is dependent on continually receiving missions. A reduction in these missions would have the potential to not only impact base employees, but also those employed in supporting sectors, as every job at RAFB supports an additional 1.44 jobs in the broader community. A loss of capital and income that once was a comfort to those of Middle Georgia would reduce spending, having a ripple effect through the whole economy.

Other economic threats include the loss of human capital and available workers. Several Middle Georgia counties are losing population. With this loss comes a reduction in the trained workforce. In some cases, this decline is particularly tied to the loss of young adults and prime-age workers. The loss of these innovative and talented individuals is a long-term threat for those communities. Another factor complicating the local economy is an aging and retiring workforce. Enough trained employees do not exist to replace retirees in the local workforce. Concerns are not just limited to the industrial and manufacturing sectors, however. The threat extends to the food and accommodation sector and other service sector employers. With certain counties' population both shrinking and the remaining population aging, dependency on these sectors is growing. A lack of these workers decreases the overall quality of life, particularly for younger families, who need childcare services.

Those living below the poverty level for the Middle Georgia Region is reported as 22.9 percent, which is 10 percent higher than the state. Poverty alone is a cause for concern because of how it reduces quality of life and limits the potential of those individuals. With poverty comes the issues of homelessness and potential homelessness. Limited housing availability adds to this issue. Older, modest housing units would present a sensible opportunity, however, many of these are deteriorated beyond use. As a result, housing costs remain high, availability remains scarce, and the region is threatened by an inability to provide housing for its residents.

Finally, the lack of affordable healthcare is a threat to Middle Georgia too. While most residents have adequate health insurance, many impoverished individuals rely on local emergency rooms to provide all of their healthcare needs. For many individuals, these needs are only exacerbated by poor diets and a lack of preventative medicine. The inability to get quality affordable care leads to greater debts and a further inability to lift themselves out of poverty. Where these cycles continue, the regional economy is also threatened. Finally, in the most rural communities, even where the ability to pay is not a burden, a community may also have a lack of doctors and few (if any) specialists—adding another barrier to healthcare access.



## APPENDIX B: ANALYSIS OF QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has established six goals that indicate the health of a community as it pertains to planning and development. These statewide goals are focused on the topics of 1) economic development, 2) natural and cultural resources, 3) community facilities and services, 4) housing, 5) land-use and transportation, and 6) intergovernmental coordination; and have widespread implications for a community's ability to thrive, grow, maintain culture, and serve its residents. DCA has also developed 10 Quality Community Objectives that further elaborate on the state's goals, which are broad by nature. These community objectives provide general guidance and benchmarks for the development of regional and local communities, to be used in conjunction with local knowledge about the community and its needs. The following is an analysis of how the Middle Georgia region currently relates to each of the state's objective areas. This section considers each community and the full region.

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### ECONOMIC PROSPERITY OBJECTIVE

Economic and business development efforts must be conducted in a strategic and thoughtful way. An important aspect of this is directing recruitment efforts towards the community's current resources and strengths. Additionally, recruitment must aim for business and industry that have maximum benefit to the community. In Middle Georgia, each county has at least one economic development professional to serve as their point of contact and strategic recruiting arm. In order for these efforts to be successful, these professionals must be proactive in understanding what development is viable. One frequently used strategy is to focus upon complementary business for existing industry. In much of the region, Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) acts as a beacon for compatible industry, whether it be in aerospace, service, or other fields. Unfortunately, the region has become largely over-dependent upon RAFB and efforts have been made to diversify the local economy. Outside of Warner Robins, some of the region's smaller communities are overly dependent upon one industry, with Wilkinson County and the kaolin industry being the best example. Several communities are also highly connected with public-sector industries, such as the state offices in Forsyth and the colleges in Milledgeville.

Middle Georgia's transportation access and strategic location have helped the region continue to attract jobs and investment in recent years. The transportation and warehousing sector has continued to see significant growth, due in large part to geography. The financial sector has also grown across Middle Georgia, as have the professional services, administrative services, healthcare, and accommodation sectors.

During the last Regional Plan, Middle Georgia had some economic indicators that were somewhat concerning. Unemployment had been trending above the state and national averages along with exceedingly high rates of poverty. Since that time, poverty has declined somewhat with no county having more than a quarter of its residents living in poverty. Unemployment rates have also attained parity with the state and national levels when accounting for real time labor data (Note: Five-year rolling averages like the American Community Survey still show higher unemployment rates in Middle Georgia, though this is gradually changing). Even more advanced metrics such as the



Innovation Index developed by the Indiana Business Research Center have shown greater economic activity throughout Middle Georgia, not just as an absolute, but also in comparison to other regions. These are indicators that Middle Georgia is in a stronger financial position today.

Labor force participation rates are somewhat lower in Middle Georgia than throughout the remainder of the state and nation. One possible factor is that Middle Georgia has a higher median age than the state average. More Middle Georgia residents also reside in households with at least one disabled person than across the remainder of the state or nation. These factors tend to result in fewer individuals with the ability to work.

The other notable area where Middle Georgia continues to fall behind the rest of the state and nation is in the categories of wages and income. The Middle Georgia region has a per capita personal income of only 71 percent of the national average, even though rates of unemployment are better regionally than nationally. While Labor Force participation is somewhat lower and could explain this difference in part, data specific to wages also supports this discrepancy. In terms of compensation, Middle Georgia ranks in only the 5th percentile nationally when compared to other regions. Average wages in Middle Georgia are around \$12,000 less than the state average and \$16,000 less than the national average. The result is that Middle Georgians work just as hard but stay poorer. Therefore, while jobs exist in abundance throughout the region, a significant opportunity appears to exist to focus on job quality—seeking to specifically attract employers who can offer a better quality of life for residents. Similarly, providing training that can upskill the existing workforce can also help to facilitate movement into higher-paying jobs.

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## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE

With each new expansion or development, the local community must consider the impact on its environment and natural resources. The Middle Georgia community has made natural resources a priority and has taken steps to both remediate problems and to safeguard areas of greatest value.

Air quality is one area of primary concern. Middle Georgia is home to two major interstates, multiple industries and a large coal-fired power plant, Plant Scherer. Due to these and other factors, Macon-Bibb County and portions of Monroe County were previously designated as being in nonattainment by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2004. Local leaders understood that this designation would have widespread negative effects on Middle Georgia, particularly as it pertains to the stability of Robins Air Force Base. In response to this, the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition (MGCAC) was formed to specialize in preventing and mitigating negative environmental impacts. Through partnerships with local public and nonprofit entities, MGCAC's efforts to remove nonattainment status were successful. Work is on-going to ensure this progress continues. As time progresses, EPA continues to reevaluate these air quality standards, meaning that the region must continue to be vigilant in making progress. This is particularly relevant now given a tightening of the standards on fine particulate matter that could affect the region.



Throughout much of Middle Georgia there are extensive tracts of undeveloped land. This is particularly observable in the rural counties, due to their sparse populations and dependence upon agricultural economies. The region is also home to a great deal of protected land, including portions of the Oconee National Forest, numerous wildlife management areas and state parks. These designations help to ensure the preservation of natural character. Locally, there are also other efforts to develop passive recreation facilities. Some of these, like High Falls State Park, revolve around the region's water resources. There are also recreational opportunities on many of the area's lakes and walking trails and greenspace along the Ocmulgee River. Development of a National Park and Preserve along the Ocmulgee River (as is currently proposed in Congress) would be a tremendous step forward for the work of conservationists throughout the state and region.

There is still much work to be completed in regard to safeguarding the environment in Middle Georgia. Before environmental regulations were robust, companies were not thoroughly monitored in the handling of chemicals and other elements, and frequently discharged pollutants into the land and water surrounding their places of business. As these industrial sites, gas stations, and facilities closed, they left behind this contamination. As a result, there are several superfund sites in Middle Georgia and many more brownfield sites. While the communities have worked to mitigate these sites, complete remediation is extremely costly, and nearly impossible in some places. A regional approach to managing the mitigation process could be helpful in some areas.

Finally, general challenges also remain in the continued preservation of natural resources. Enhancing the region's capacity to protect and develop these spaces has the potential to benefit Middle Georgia environmentally and economically. While some local governments are addressing these issues, the task ahead remains regional in scope.

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## EFFICIENT LAND USE OBJECTIVE

Rather than utilizing undeveloped greenfields for new development, communities should maximize their current inventory of vacant commercial and industrial sites as well as undeveloped or underdeveloped parcels of land within traditional downtown areas. In addition to improving the aesthetics of downtown areas, local governments also see an increased efficiency of service delivery when either redevelopment or infill development is pursued over greenfield development. In some cases, the cost of providing new services to development that is located far away from existing growth can be more to the local government than is received in tax revenue. Alternatively, redevelopment can present a significant increase in local tax revenue with minimal cost in increased services.

Though downtowns have historically been the hub of economic life in most Middle Georgia's towns, much new development has occurred along major transportation arteries. This has left a void with empty buildings and vacant lots. Through local Main Street programs and Downtown Development Authorities, many communities have sought to reverse this trend and bring new businesses in to fill the void, although with varying degrees of success. While Macon-Bibb County previously had significant issues with commercial vacancies, recent infill development and redevelopment efforts have transformed the landscape of its downtown.



With that said, the trend toward infill development has not completely negated pressures for new greenfield development, as many communities are regularly allowing new shopping centers to be developed instead of the redevelopment of formerly occupied spaces. As another unfortunate effect, many of those strip malls that replaced downtown districts have now become aged, underutilized, and vacant. Communities are now left with the question of what to do with these areas. The Macon Mall redevelopment is one such example of a community taking ownership of that redevelopment challenge. However, this was also a difficult and expensive undertaking. Going forward, there will be many challenges left from past development policies, but the continued promotion of redevelopment and infill development can help alleviate some of these concerns.

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## LOCAL PREPAREDNESS OBJECTIVE

In order for a community to thrive, it must continuously be advancing, developing, and growing. By and large, communities in Middle Georgia are actively seeking growth in terms of their population and local economy. However, local jurisdictions must have the resources in place to meet this growth. Many of the region's communities do not have the quality infrastructure jurisdiction wide necessary to accommodate development. There remain significant challenges, not only in expanding traditional utilities (water, sewer, and roads), but also in developing technological infrastructure, including providing broadband access to prospective developers.

Examination of the region's housing stock tends to paint a negative picture. Many communities are stricken with housing problems related to affordability and poor unit condition. While some homes may be officially "vacant," they are not available for rent or purchase because of their condition or estate conflicts. Many local leaders have already begun to undertake efforts to combat these issues. This effort must continuously meet the widespread need for residential redevelopment. If not, the only other option is an aggressive approach to court new investors.

Another major hindrance in economic growth preparedness is a workforce gap. In order to attract major employers, particularly those in high-skill industries, the community must have a workforce capable of filling these positions. With high dropout rates and low literacy rates as compared to the state and nation, Middle Georgia has not been able to demonstrate the capacity to attract this type of growth. Further, across many communities, the workforce challenge is not merely a lack of skilled employees, but a lack of any employees. With unemployment remaining historically low following the pandemic-induced labor disruptions of 2020, the total number of employees looking for work may not be sufficient to fill all positions.

When growth comes, local governments must have the proper guidelines in place to ensure that it occurs in a healthy manner. In order to prepare for growth, most of Middle Georgia's communities have enacted zoning ordinances with the goal of directing the types of development within their jurisdiction. In addition to these, each community prepares land-use maps which also provide guidance to the location of future development. The challenge remains for the governments to closely enforce these guidelines and not allow their subversion.



Finally, once development has occurred, communities must be prepared to protect it from potential hazards. In accordance with state requirements, each county in Middle Georgia has a pre-disaster mitigation plan which is regularly updated. Through these documents, vulnerabilities are recognized, and action steps are developed to help ensure the highest amount of safety to the area's people, facilities, and resources.

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## SENSE OF PLACE OBJECTIVE

Much of the character and identity of a community is found in its natural and cultural resources. These resources must be protected and preserved to maximize their value. Throughout Middle Georgia there is a unique character produced through its natural resources and historic character.

Not only were historic downtowns the center for economic activity for many municipalities, but they were also the center of community social and cultural activity. This often imbued the districts with unique qualities and characteristics that distinguished the city from other areas of the surrounding hinterland and even from other developed locales. As time passes, these areas serve as a nexus between the past and the present, connecting the modern to the historic. If done successfully, the preservation of these areas sustains the sense of place. With this in mind, communities should invest in downtowns and encourage them to remain activity centers. Furthermore, developing communities may also want to focus on expanding the characteristics of the traditional downtown area. Instituting design guidelines can unite a community under a local development pattern and can minimize conflicts between an old city and the new surrounding development.

Middle Georgia has a rich heritage that has the potential to create an incredible sense of place. In several communities, the downtown areas have dwindled in residential and commercial activity. Among the region's larger communities, Macon-Bibb, Milledgeville, and Perry have all been successful in drawing activity back to downtown with substantial public and private investment. Many other cities are seeking to follow their lead with Forsyth, Eatonton, and Hawkinsville making strides (among others). A few communities, notably Centerville and Warner Robins, have no historic downtown due to their relatively youthful age and rapid development. However, both communities are currently taking steps to delineate activity centers to serve as their *de facto* downtowns. Current plans for these areas include mixed-use development with offices, retail, restaurants, and living spaces with walkable streets.

The growth of big box stores and national franchises has frequently served to erode the existing sense of place. Many retailers are willing to work with communities for the purpose of maintaining local identity, and some Middle Georgia communities, particularly the historic cities and traditional neighborhoods, have initiated these discussions. However, these conversations are only in preliminary stages throughout much of the region. As a result, the suburban areas of the region tend to be monolithic. Many of these long commercial corridors end up being virtually indistinguishable from any other part of the state or nation. This will present a continuing challenge for many Middle Georgia communities, as they seek to simultaneously preserve their historic sense of place while also encouraging new growth and economic activity in previously distressed areas.



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## REGIONAL COOPERATION OBJECTIVE

To solve common problems, counties and cities must often turn to their neighbors. The first step of this regional collaboration begins with opening lines of communication to understand each other's needs. Required by the state, local Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) agreements not only help to prevent an overlap of services, but also help communities determine the most efficient and effective method of service delivery. Middle Georgia communities have been active in regularly updating these agreements, with some taking innovative steps towards service provision. From here communities can plan a response to these needs and then undertake common action. There are numerous examples of regional cooperation to address Middle Georgia's growing challenges.

While jurisdictions must cooperate to maintain healthy relationships, they must also work together to conquer monumental tasks. Transportation is a clear example of overlap among Middle Georgia's localities. In the metropolitan areas of Macon and Warner Robins, there are Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) designed to plan transportation projects for not only their communities, but also for portions of neighboring counties. Through the work of these organizations, governments can address congestion and gridlock that know no county borders.

Outside of transportation, multi-jurisdictional organizations and authorities have undertaken many additional large projects. Some of the progress made through these has included efforts in environmental protection, and support of Robins Air Force Base and other regional resources. Among the many examples of these groups are, the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority, the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Partnership, Water Planning Councils, I-75 Central Corridor Coalition, and the Middle Georgia Economic Alliance. Each one of these entities focuses upon a particular issue or issues that have border crossing impact.

Middle Georgia's local governments have also found regional solutions through utilizing economies of scale. In the southern portion of the region, several local counties and cities have banded together to jointly bid road project materials. This has created greater efficiencies and cost savings for all those involved, particularly the smaller communities. In the future, there will likely be more opportunities where regional action is not only helpful, but necessary.

Though regionalism has been a valuable tool, there are still barriers to its consistent use. A regular challenge is building trusted relationships among members of community leadership. It is vital that current and future leadership reach out to regional partners to bring the entire region forward. However, many stakeholders have generally felt an improvement in this area over the past several years. As large initiatives continue to succeed, a greater respect has been formed across city and county lines with many partners looking for new collaboration opportunities. Furthermore, through the continued efforts of the Middle Georgia Regional Leadership Champions program, the values of regionalism have been more widely promulgated throughout the community (particularly to civic leaders). While the causality may be difficult to fully prove, there has certainly been strong correlation between efforts to promote regionalism and successful partnerships.



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## HOUSING OPTIONS OBJECTIVE

In order for a community to develop in a healthy manner, it must have the proper volume and mix of housing to meet the demands placed by the local population. Particularly as communities seek business and job growth, they must provide the level of housing that this growth demands. This can start a virtuous cycle for the community by not only providing a workforce for new industry, but also by providing an adequate consumer base for the commercial retailers that will follow. During the last Regional Plan, it was thought that the region may have adequate capacity to absorb new housing demand. That has proven not to be the case, resulting in a housing crisis regionally and nationally.

Primarily, the variety of housing options is lacking because the total quantity of quality and available housing is lacking. Despite data that would indicate elevated levels of housing vacancy, these properties are either not for sale or are unlivable in their current state. With blighting conditions taking housing units off the market, the effective volume of units has taken a drastic hit. As much of the housing stock continues to age, particularly in older communities, many local governments have had difficulty encouraging and enforcing the maintenance of these properties. The result has been pockets, and in some areas, entire blocks of substandard units and blight. This substandard and dilapidated housing is often unsuitable for human habitation and will not serve as an acceptable source of shelter for individuals moving into the community.

Housing costs also represent a large local housing concern. While median home values and gross rent prices are well below the state and national statistics, so too are median household incomes. As a result, many Middle Georgia residents are still heavily cost burdened, with more than 30 percent of their incomes designated to housing expenses. Finally, the types of housing are also limited, with most affordable units being manufactured housing, particularly in rural communities. With these challenges, communities must maximize available resources, develop innovative programs, and strategically respond to the issue.

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## TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS OBJECTIVE

The transportation system in Middle Georgia is primarily based around a robust network of roads but is also complemented by modes of transportation that do not involve utilizing a personal vehicle, including mass transit, pedestrian-friendly streets, and bike routes. However, there is a need to improve access to these methods of transportation for residents. Transportation alternatives can have positive impacts, including less congestion, cost savings for residents, fewer parking concerns, improved health, and higher air quality.

Most Middle Georgia counties (excluding Monroe County and Houston County) have some form of public transit. Macon-Bibb County is the only community with an established and consistent fixed route urban transit program, run through the Macon Transit Authority. Unfortunately, the rural and sparsely populated nature of many of the counties make it difficult to operate an efficient, cost-effective system. As a result, personal automobile travel remains the only viable way to meet most of an individual's daily transportation needs. The Georgia Department of Transportation is currently conducting a Regional Transit Development Plan to further examine these challenges and identify areas of potential collaboration in rural transit service provision.



Finally, the road network found throughout the region has been developed primarily through the construction of primary highways and interstates, with local roads serving as off-shoots into each community. Greenfield development over the past few decades has largely occurred alongside or at the nexus of one or more of these state highways. Communities have been hesitant to prohibit such development for fear of inhibiting growth and economic development. A major, on-going challenge for communities in the region is the development of a better understanding of the connection of transportation, land-use, and economic development.

Looking to the future, the region has the potential to leverage transportation infrastructure to drive appropriate types of transit-oriented development. These smart growth solutions can help to create a more sustainable economy while also ensuring improved connectivity. The proposed intercity passenger rail line between Atlanta, Macon, and Savannah would be a boon to these efforts.

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## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OBJECTIVE

As was previously mentioned, education is a tool that enables quality job growth and a host of other community benefits. For a long time, Middle Georgia had fallen behind in efforts to educate the region's workforce. Still today, measures of educational attainment among adults tend to highlight that those in Middle Georgia have received less formal education than their counterparts elsewhere in the state. However, graduation rates have shown marked improvement in recent years. Most of the public K-12 schools in Middle Georgia now overperform the state average in terms of graduation rates. This sets the region up for future success provided that these students can continue to get the training they need for a specific job. A high school diploma alone is no longer satisfactory for most jobs, instead requiring some kind of specialized certificate or training.

Middle Georgia has a myriad of resources available to help transform people into quality candidates for jobs. With three main campuses and seven satellite centers, Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC) is the region's leader in skills training. CGTC works with the Middle Georgia Consortium, the Georgia Department of Labor, and local nonprofits to provide educational opportunities. Beyond these resources, there are also five colleges and universities located within the region that grant bachelor's and master's degrees: Mercer University, Georgia College and State University, Fort Valley State University, Middle Georgia State University, and Wesleyan College. In addition, Georgia Military College also grants two-year diplomas. With these institutions, there is significant potential to further develop the local workforce.

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## COMMUNITY HEALTH OBJECTIVE

One measure of a community's health can be determined by the level of service and opportunity provided to all of its members regardless of age, ability, income, or societal status. Middle Georgia is home to a diverse population that includes a sizable portion which may be considered vulnerable, including many elderly, low-income, or disabled persons, those impacted by drug addiction, and victims of domestic violence, etc. These groups often need higher levels of both traditional and special services in order to participate fully in the community.



A great challenge for many Middle Georgia governments is providing an acceptable level of traditional services to its residents. Because of resource limitations, it is commonplace that quality community infrastructure is found lacking, particularly in older neighborhoods in need of redevelopment. These areas are oftentimes accompanied by high poverty rates, high crime rates, and low educational attainment. It is incumbent upon local governments to take advantage of available resources and find creative solutions which will spur redevelopment of these communities.

In response to these populations with special needs, Middle Georgia is home to numerous non-profit and public organizations with specific focuses towards assisting vulnerable populations. These organizations provide a variety of services that include housing, nutrition, skills training, counseling, and many others. While these groups are abundant, they often struggle to acquire the resources to fully achieve their missions. Across the region, there must be greater coordination of these efforts to impact the community's residents in a strategic and meaningful way.



## APPENDIX C: DATA AND MAPPING SUPPLEMENT

Section 110-12-6-.05 of the DCA Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning outlines several elements of data that are beneficial to support the Analysis of Data and Information required in this planning document. The following sections highlight some core elements of data.

### POPULATION DATA

The demographic data of population totals, age distribution, race and ethnicity, and income were consulted and analyzed to provide context early in the process. These data values help inform while engaging in stakeholder and local listening sessions. Along with stakeholder comments, public survey results, SWOT analysis, analysis of consistency with quality community objectives, and population data helped in the drafting of needs and opportunities for the next five years for the region.

#### TOTAL POPULATION

In 2000, the population of Middle Georgia was 440,121 and it grew by 10.97% to 488,399 in 2010 and by 4.42% to 509,994 in 2020. Within the region, Houston County experienced the most significant growth (47.73%), and Twiggs County experienced the largest decline at 24.25% over the twenty-year period. For the same period, Georgia grew by 30.52 % and the US by 17.65%. The region can be split into three categories: counties that are fast growing (Houston, Monroe, Jones, Peach, and Putnam), those that are slow growing (Pulaski and Macon-Bibb), and those that are declining (Baldwin, Crawford, Twiggs, and Wilkinson). Population growth slowed between 2010 and 2020 with no county growing more than it did in the decade prior. The most notable outlier is Pulaski County which grew by 25.26% from 2000 to 2010, but then realized a 17.94% decline between 2010 and 2020.

	2000 Census	2010 Census	% Change 2000-2010	2020 Census	% Change 2010-2020	% Change 2000-2020
<b>Baldwin</b>	44,700	45,720	2.28%	43,799	-4.20%	-2.02%
<b>Crawford</b>	12,495	12,630	1.08%	12,130	-3.96%	-2.92%
<b>Houston</b>	110,765	139,900	26.30%	163,633	16.96%	47.73%
<b>Jones</b>	23,639	28,669	21.28%	28,347	-1.12%	19.92%
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	153,887	155,547	1.08%	157,346	1.16%	2.25%
<b>Monroe</b>	21,757	26,424	21.45%	27,957	5.80%	28.50%
<b>Peach</b>	23,668	27,695	17.01%	27,981	1.03%	18.22%
<b>Pulaski</b>	9,588	12,010	25.26%	9,855	-17.94%	2.78%
<b>Putnam</b>	18,812	21,218	12.79%	22,047	3.91%	17.20%
<b>Twiggs</b>	10,590	9,023	-14.80%	8,022	-11.09%	-24.25%
<b>Wilkinson</b>	10,220	9,563	-6.43%	8,877	-7.17%	-13.14%
<b>Region Total</b>	<b>440,121</b>	<b>488,399</b>	<b>10.97%</b>	<b>509,994</b>	<b>4.42%</b>	<b>15.88%</b>
<b>Georgia</b>	8,206,975	9,687,653	18.04%	10,711,908	10.57%	30.52%
<b>United States</b>	281,424,177	308,745,538	9.71%	331,108,434	7.24%	17.65%

Table 1 Source: US Census Bureau



The Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget projects continued growth for the region for the next twenty years (2020-2040) at 12%, growing at a rate slightly lower than the past twenty years (2000-2020). Interestingly, Houston, Monroe, Peach, and Putnam remain fast-growing while Jones County’s growth continues, but at a slower pace.

Table 2: Population Projections					
County	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020 - 2040 Projected Change
Baldwin	43,799	43,199	42,901	41,753	-2%
Crawford	12,130	11,752	11,253	10,990	-7%
Houston	163,633	185,225	204,631	221,418	25%
Jones	28,347	28,784	28,894	29,694	2%
Macon-Bibb	157,346	161,390	165,622	167,097	5%
Monroe	27,957	32,105	35,533	37,961	27%
Peach	27,981	29,447	31,676	33,866	13%
Pulaski	9,855	9,545	8,698	8,288	-12%
Putnam	22,047	24,732	27,937	29,528	27%
Twiggs	8,022	7,416	7,163	7,118	-11%
Wilkinson	8,877	8,332	8,044	7,803	-9%
Middle Georgia	509,994	541,927	572,352	595,516	12%

Table 2 Source: Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget

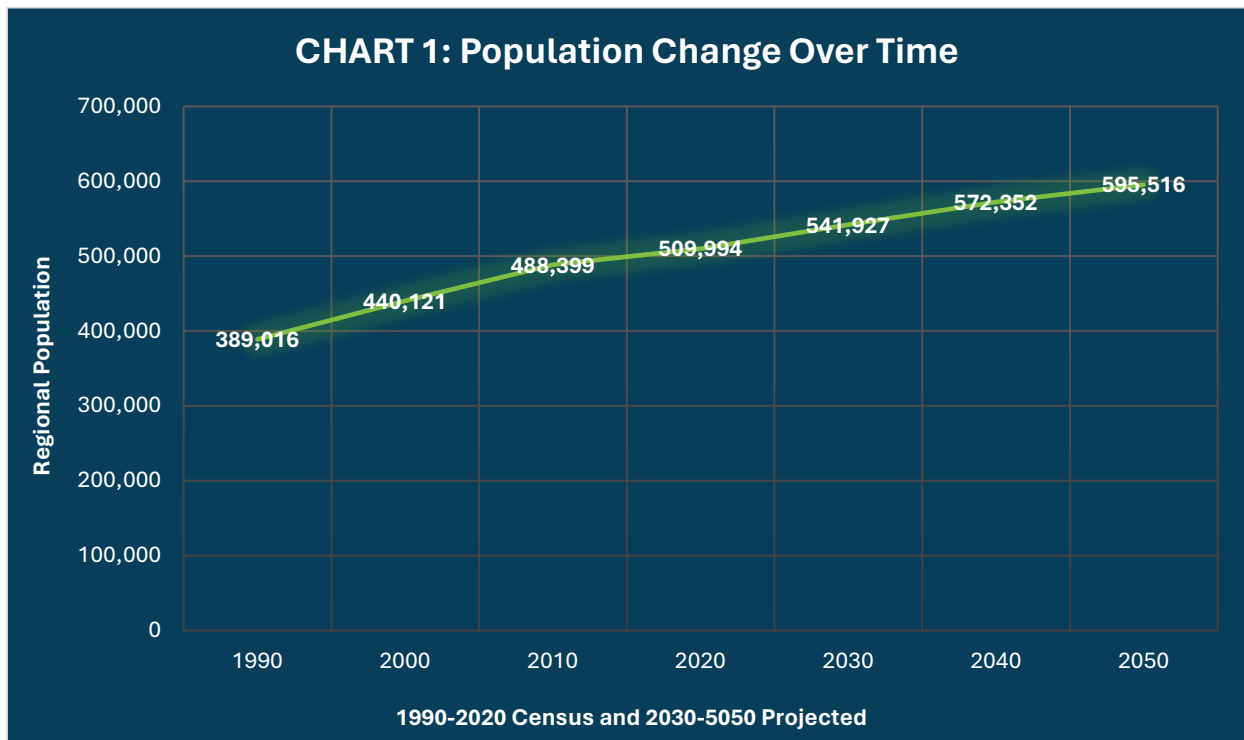


Chart 1 Source: US Census Bureau and Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget



## AGE DISTRIBUTION

The 2020 Decennial Census had the largest segment of the Middle Georgia population in the age group of 55-64 at 14.0 percent and the lowest age group by percentage of 85 and over at 1.7 percent. When combined with other age categories, nearly one-third of Middle Georgia’s population (29.1%) is 55 and older. The 2020 Decennial Census identifies the age group age 65-74, which had the largest percentage increase of 49.3% between 2010 and 2020. The age group with the lowest percentage increase between 2010 and 2020 was 35 to 44-year-olds.

In Middle Georgia, the working-age population (ages 15-64) comprised 65.6% of the population in 2020, a decrease over the 2010 percentage of 67.1%. The working age population is projected to remain at 65 to 66 percent of the population according to the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget. This is a positive trend for the region in terms of the ability to meet the workforce needs of the future.

The population of 75 to 84-year-olds is projected to nearly double from 2020 to 2030, followed by projected growth in the 85 and older population from 2030 to 2040. This projection highlights the importance of policies, programs, and initiatives to support aging in place, to guard against population loss.

Between 2020 and 2040, the percentage of the population under working age (0 to 14) is projected to decline from 19.2% to 17.2%. Long term, this may present an opportunity to expand efforts to attract and retain younger people in the region.

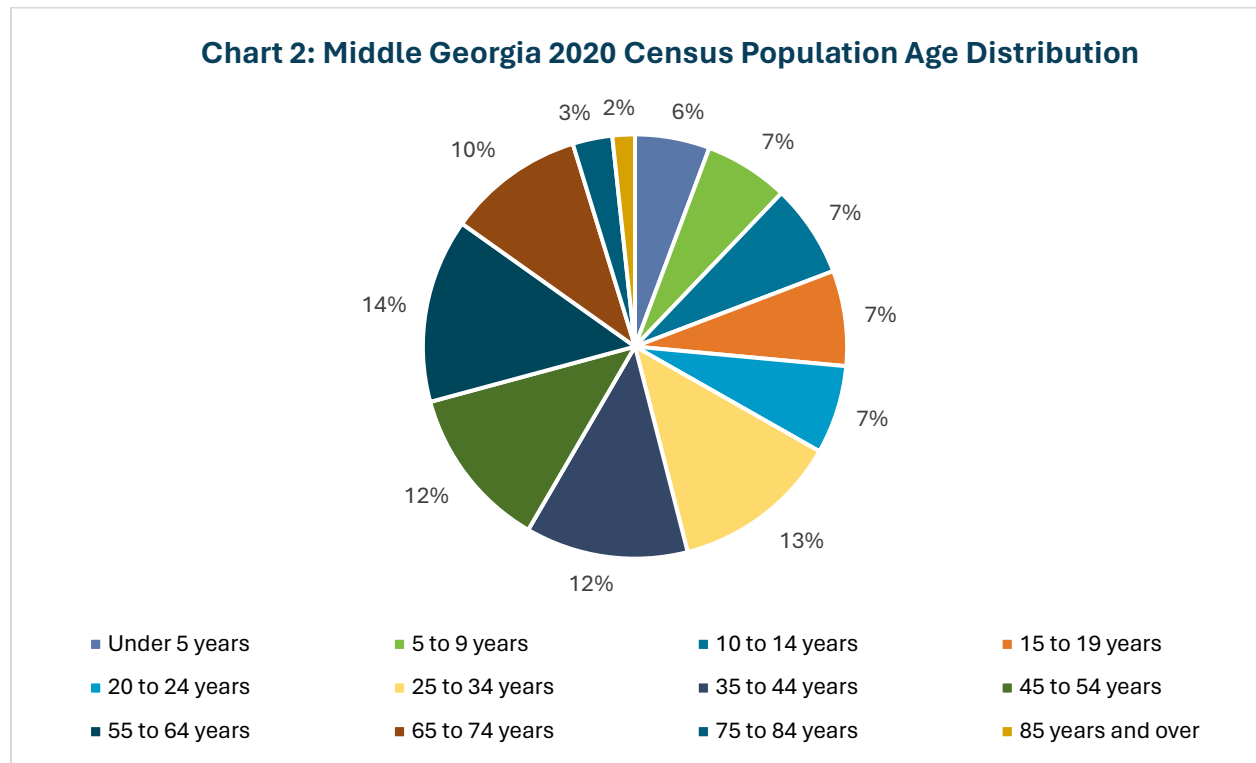


Chart 2 Source: US Census Bureau



Age	2020 Census	2030 Projection	2040 Projection	% change 2020-2030	% change 2030-2040	% change 2020-2024
Under 5 years	28,530	30,047	31,655	5.32%	5.35%	10.95%
5 to 9 years	32,168	30,741	32,860	-4.44%	6.89%	2.15%
10 to 14 years	35,386	34,322	34,086	-3.01%	-0.69%	-3.67%
15 to 19 years	36,369	40,947	38,893	12.59%	-5.02%	6.94%
20 to 24 years	33,745	43,008	41,956	27.45%	-2.45%	24.33%
25 to 34 years	63,941	70,276	82,808	9.91%	17.83%	29.51%
35 to 44 years	61,995	71,889	75,814	15.96%	5.46%	22.29%
45 to 54 years	62,057	66,847	75,943	7.72%	13.61%	22.38%
55 to 64 years	70,201	60,230	65,516	-14.20%	8.78%	-6.67%
65 to 74 years	52,177	55,723	50,736	6.80%	-8.95%	-2.76%
75 to 84 years	15,123	30,059	32,339	98.76%	7.59%	113.84%
85 years and over	8,578	7,838	9,746	-8.63%	24.34%	13.62%

Table 3 Source: Woods and Poole Economics

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

Across the region, from 2010 to 2020, “White Alone”, “Hispanic or Latino”, and “Pacific Islander” races or ethnicities have decreased as a proportion of the total population from 56.7% to 51.2% of the total population. Those reported values for “Black” race/ethnicity have shown a trend of increase as proportion of the total population across the region.

County-by-county comparison shows that the population of “White Alone” has declined for each county, as the Hispanic population has increased proportionally to the county’s total population. The only exception to this trend is Pulaski County, which had a decrease of 0.6% Hispanic population. The decline in population for “White Alone,” “Hispanic or Latino,” and “Pacific Islander” could potentially be an increase in those individuals reporting as two or more races/ethnicity.

Population by Race	2010 Decennial Census		2020 Decennial Census		2010 - 2020 Population Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	276,928	56.7%	261,243	51.2%	-15,685	-5.66%
Black	185,630	38.0%	199,154	39.1%	13,524	7.29%
American Indian	1,297	0.3%	1,438	0.3%	141	10.87%
Asian	7,430	1.5%	9,708	1.9%	2,278	30.66%
Pacific Islander	372	0.1%	267	0.1%	-105	-28.23%
Some Other Race	8,343	1.7%	12,464	2.4%	4,121	49.39%
Total Hispanic Population	19,014	3.9%	26,082	5.10%	7,068	37.17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>488,408</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>509,994</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>21,586</b>	<b>4.42%</b>

Table 4 Source: U.S Census Bureau



ESRI Business Analysis Online (BAO) statistical modeling reports a Diversity Index value of 62.2 for the region. The Diversity Index is calculated to accommodate up to seven race groups: White, Black, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, Some Other Race and one multiple-race group (two or more races). The value is reported from 0 to 100, with the higher value indicating more diversity with each ethnicity/race represented.

As shown in Table 5, according to the Woods and Poole 2023 data, the white non-Hispanic population will decline by 2.24 percent between 2020 and 2050. This is a reverse of the trend from the thirty-year period of 1990 to 2020 when Middle Georgia’s white non-Hispanic population grew by 8.33 percent. Within the region, Monroe County is projected to have the largest growth in white non-Hispanic followed by Jones County. Macon-Bibb County will continue to realize a steady decline in the white non-Hispanic population.

<b>Table 5: White Non-Hispanic Population Projections (2050)</b>									
<b>County</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2040</b>	<b>2050</b>	<b>Change 1990-2020</b>	<b>Change 2020-2050</b>
<b>Baldwin</b>	22,247	23,989	24,968	23,108	22,884	22,755	22,821	3.87%	-1.24%
<b>Crawford</b>	6,162	9,023	9,329	8,872	8,889	8,932	8,884	43.98%	0.14%
<b>Houston</b>	67,486	77,585	86,507	91,494	95,858	98,061	99,220	35.57%	8.44%
<b>Jones</b>	15,352	17,806	20,974	20,212	21,438	22,757	23,778	31.66%	17.64%
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	85,834	76,493	66,208	58,384	52,298	46,358	40,905	-1.98%	-29.94%
<b>Monroe</b>	11,651	15,297	19,08	20,615	22,976	24,515	25,804	76.94%	25.17%
<b>Peach</b>	10,683	11,821	12,899	12,786	13,019	12,572	11,775	19.69%	-7.91%
<b>Pulaski</b>	5,437	6,03	7,506	6,127	6,07	6,022	6,019	12.69%	-1.76%
<b>Putnam</b>	9,359	12,567	14,116	14,749	14,74	13,756	12,394	57.59%	-15.97%
<b>Twiggs</b>	5,303	5,82	5,083	4,447	4,154	4,026	3,908	-6.14%	-12.12%
<b>Wilkinson</b>	5,918	5,892	5,544	5,072	4,76	4,565	4,403	-4.30%	-13.19%
<b>Region</b>	245,432	250,473	253,134	265,866	241,516	264,319	260,691	8.33%	-2.24%

Table 5 Source: Woods and Poole Economics, 2023

Table 6 indicates the Black non-Hispanic population will increase by 28.41 percent between 2020 and 2050. This is a slower increase than the thirty-year period of 1990 to 2020 when Middle Georgia’s Black Non-Hispanic population grew by 39.94 percent. Within the region, Putnam County is projected to have the largest growth in black non-Hispanic followed closely by Houston County. Twiggs County experienced a deep decline in Black non-Hispanic population between 1990 and 2020, however it is projected to realize a modest increase by 2050.



Table 6: Black Non-Hispanic Population Projections (2050)									
County	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050	Change 1990-2020	Change 2020-2050
Baldwin	16,721	19,486	19,002	18,711	18,936	18,936	18,458	11.90%	-1.35%
Crawford	2,749	3,014	2,854	2,616	2,695	2,749	2,869	-10.58%	9.67%
Houston	19,485	27,900	40,958	55,495	68,402	80,891	93,992	145.17%	69.37%
Jones	5,313	5,615	7,085	7,353	7,821	8,278	8,812	39.29%	19.84%
Macon-Bibb	62,566	73,251	82,084	88,874	93,325	96,252	97,421	27.40%	9.62%
Monroe	5,407	6,082	6,257	6,372	7,454	8,190	9,023	22.56%	41.60%
Peach	10,046	10,893	12,982	12,574	13,421	14,240	15,099	23.21%	20.08%
Pulaski	2,623	3,288	3,872	3,200	3,574	3,893	4,167	8.70%	30.22%
Putnam	4,762	5,684	5,562	5,824	7,156	8,518	9,896	25.90%	69.92%
Twiggs	4,495	4,576	3,724	3,242	3,181	3,233	3,293	-30.49%	1.57%
Wilkinson	4,299	4,172	3,703	3,405	3,479	3,562	3,625	-16.61%	6.46%
Region	138,466	163,961	188,083	207,666	229,444	248,742	266,655	39.94%	28.41%

Table 6 Source: Woods and Poole Economics, 2023

Between 1990 and 2020, middle Georgia experienced a 576 percent increase in Hispanic population as seen in Table 7. Every county's Hispanic population grew with the largest percent increase being found in Putnam County. The region is projected to continue growing the Hispanic population from 2020 to 2050 but at a slower rate.

Table 7: Hispanic or Latino Population of Any Race Projections (2050)									
County	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050	Change 1990-2020	Change 2020-2050
Baldwin	358	613	932	1,104	1,189	1,24	1,259	208.38%	14.04%
Crawford	135	308	299	448	524	611	732	231.85%	63.39%
Houston	1,457	3,398	8,578	11,105	13,17	15,472	18,229	662.18%	64.15%
Jones	65	166	3	555	633	729	855	753.85%	54.05%
Macon-Bibb	911	2,025	4,413	5,805	6,66	7,889	9,294	537.21%	60.10%
Monroe	84	281	545	707	753	895	1,060	741.67%	49.93%
Peach	367	995	1,894	2,287	2,872	3,561	4,330	523.16%	89.33%
Pulaski	73	27	471	374	457	529	607	412.33%	62.30%
Putnam	88	403	1,359	1,411	1,995	3,016	4,480	1503.41%	217.51%
Twiggs	36	12	129	243	258	311	356	575.00%	46.50%
Wilkinson	18	101	225	271	312	342	372	1405.56%	37.27%
Region	3,592	8,329	18,848	24,310	28,993	33,355	41,574	576.78%	71.02%

Table 7 Source: Woods and Poole Economics, 2023



## INCOME

According to the 2022 Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates, median household income for the region is an average of \$57,653. By county, median household income of Wilkinson County is the lowest reported value, with a total median household income of \$40,757. Houston County is reported as having the highest median household income with a value of \$76,968. Monroe and Houston Counties are the only two middle Georgia counties with median household incomes higher than the state and nation.

According to the 2022 American Community Survey Five Year Estimates (Table 8), 30.29 percent of the households have income of \$34,999 or below and 70.73 percent have incomes less than \$100,000. Wilkinson County has the highest percentage of the population (11.3%) with less than \$10,000 in household income. Houston County has the highest percentage of households between \$5,000 and \$199,999; while Monroe County has the highest percentage of households over \$200,000.

County	2022 Inflation Adjusted Dollars	Regional Rank (11=lowest)	Compared to State (higher/lower)	Compared to US (higher/lower)
Baldwin	\$54,699	7	lower	lower
Crawford	\$56,948	6	lower	lower
Houston	\$76,968	1	higher	higher
Jones	\$66,288	3	lower	lower
Macon-Bibb	\$48,897	9	lower	lower
Monroe	\$74,867	2	higher	higher
Peach	\$60,940	4	lower	lower
Pulaski	\$42,545	10	lower	lower
Putnam	\$60,825	5	lower	lower
Twiggs	\$50,446	8	lower	lower
Wilkinson	\$40,757	11	lower	lower
Georgia	\$72,837			lower
US	\$74,755			

Table 8 Source: 2022 American Community Survey, Five Year Estimates

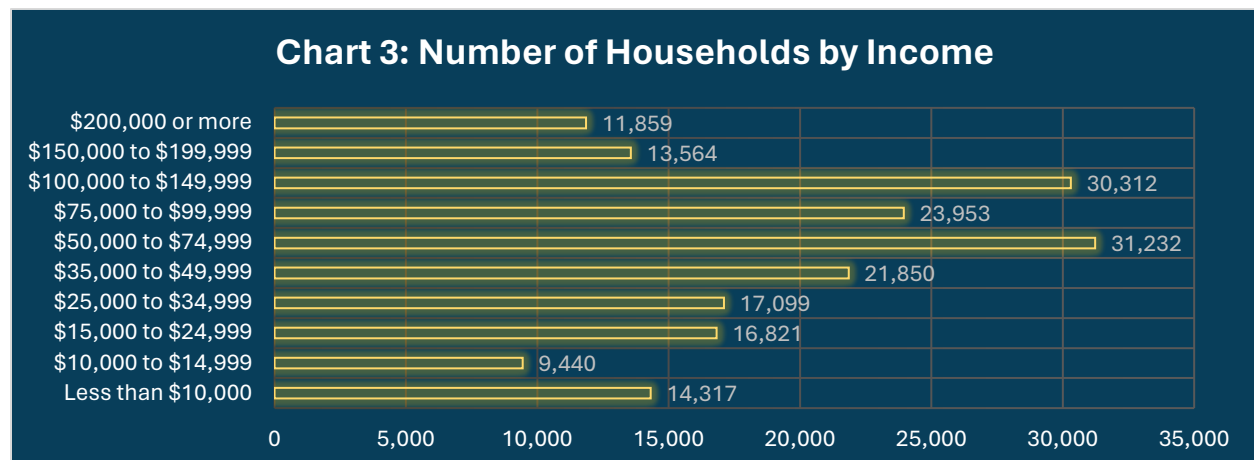


Chart 3 Source: 2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates



Although the region’s per capita personal income is consistently below Georgia and the United States, it has followed the same trends between 2012 and 2021. The 2022 ACS reports the state per capita personal income is \$38,378 and the US at \$41,804. Every county in Middle Georgia falls below both the national income levels.

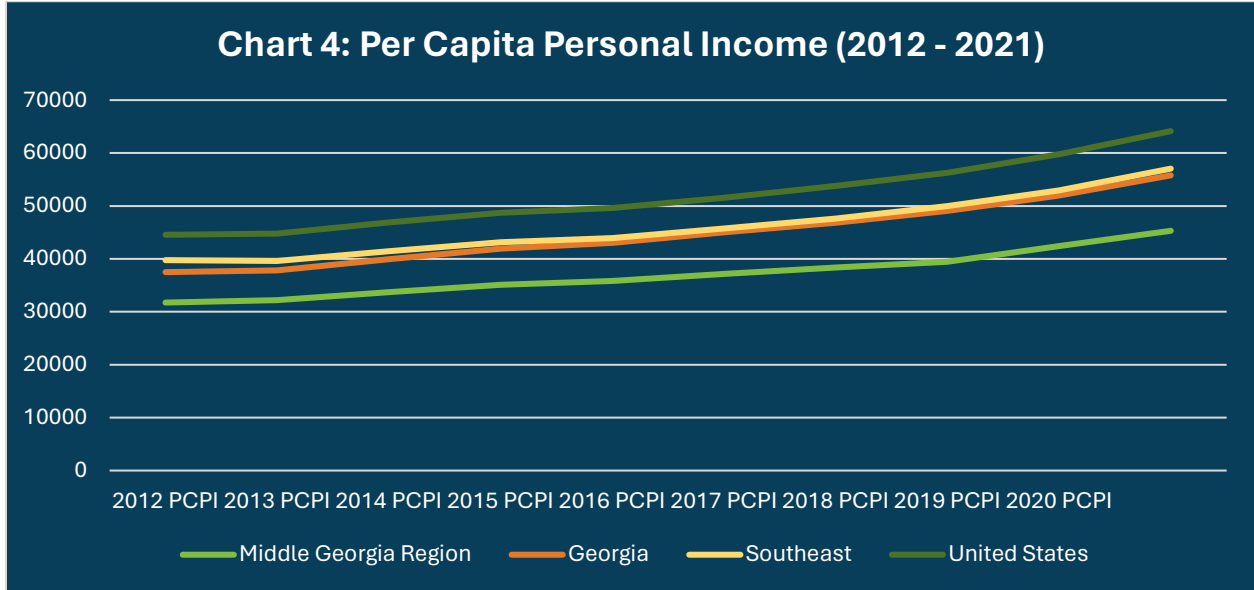


Chart 4 Source: 2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

County	Per capita income (dollars)
Baldwin	\$31,681
Crawford	\$31,240
Houston	\$35,223
Jones	\$31,934
Macon-Bibb	\$30,115
Monroe	\$40,063
Peach	\$31,349
Pulaski	\$23,007
Putnam	\$42,468
Twiggs	\$32,105
Wilkinson	\$24,070
Georgia	\$38,378
US	\$41,804

Table 9 Source: 2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Poverty levels within the region remain high, as each county has a poverty rate of 10% or greater. Houston County has the lowest poverty rate, with 10.3% of people in poverty. Seven of the eleven counties (Baldwin, Macon-Bibb, Pulaski, Putnam, Peach, Twiggs, and Wilkinson) have a 15% poverty or greater. Wilkinson County has the highest percentage of people living in poverty at 26%.



In contrast, the State of Georgia reports a poverty level of 12.9% and all other regional counties are above the state-reported poverty except for Houston County. The Counties of Wilkinson, Macon-Bibb, and Baldwin are above 20% poverty. Since 2010, poverty in the region has declined overall. Initially, the amount of poverty increased between 2010 to 2014, from 20.3% to 22.4%. From 2014 to 2019, poverty decreased in the region from 22.4% to 16.9%. After reaching a low, poverty increased 1.5% between 2019 to 2020, probably because of Covid 19 Pandemic. Despite the disruption, poverty rates have continued to decline, reaching their lowest level since the Great Recession. However, many counties of the region still have significant concentrations of poverty.

Table 10 includes data from the 2022 American Community Survey Five Year Estimates the percentage of persons with income levels below the poverty level. In total 21.8 percent of all Middle Georgians have income lower than the poverty level, with Macon Bibb having the highest and Houston having the lowest. In the age group of 65 years and older, 19% of all Crawford County residents are below the poverty level, compared to Houston and Putnam Counties.

By Age	Baldwin	Crawford	Houston	Jones	Macon-Bibb	Monroe	Peach	Pulaski	Putnam	Twiggs	Wilkinson
<b>Total</b>	22.7%	16.6%	9.7%	14.3%	25.1%	13.7%	20.7%	18.9%	16.0%	15.7%	21.8%
<b>Under 18 years</b>	23.5%	19.3%	12.3%	19.9%	39.1%	18.4%	30.1%	35.9%	26.8%	17.7%	34.1%
<b>18 to 64 years</b>	24.7%	14.9%	9.0%	12.6%	22.1%	13.6%	19.2%	13.8%	15.8%	16.0%	18.8%
<b>Age 65 &amp; over</b>	14.3%	19.3%	8.1%	12.9%	14.4%	8.6%	14.4%	15.2%	8.1%	13.0%	17.1%

Table 10 Source: 2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

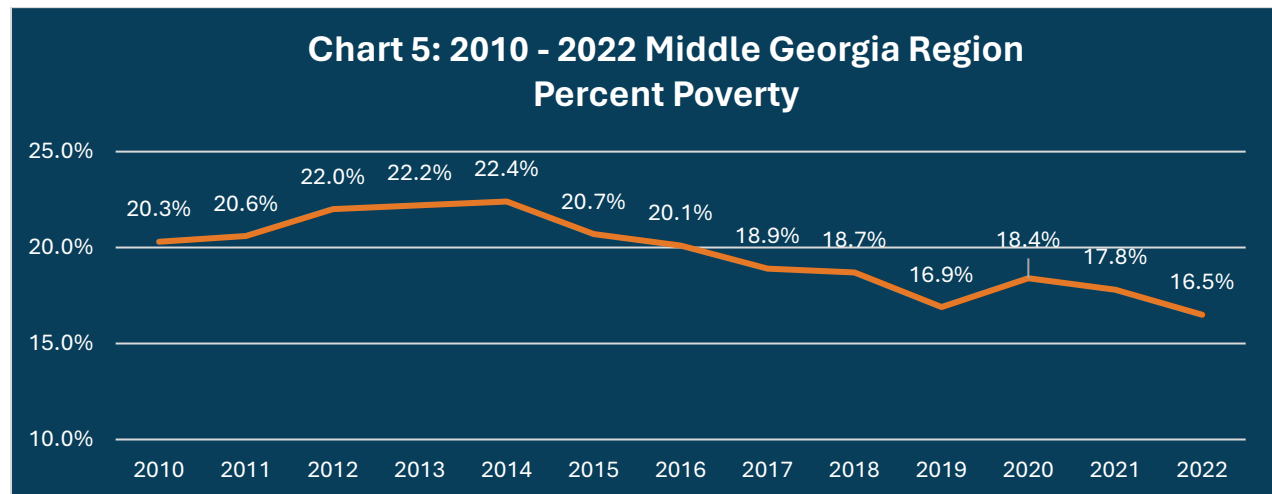


Chart 5 Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates



It is also important to note that 21.7 percent of households in Macon-Bibb County received food stamps or SNAP benefits, compared to 7.5 percent in Monroe County. Just over half of the households in Twiggs County (56.1%) have earnings compared to the highest percentage of 80.1 percent in Houston County.

	Baldwin	Crawford	Houston	Jones	Macon-Bibb	Monroe	Peach	Pulaski	Putnam	Twiggs	Wilkinson
<b>With Earnings</b>	69.3%	63.9%	80.1%	71.4%	71.6%	72.9%	72.5%	65.7%	64.9%	56.1%	60.2%
<b>With Social Security</b>	34.7%	45.8%	26.0%	38.9%	34.1%	38.9%	35.1%	48.1%	43.0%	52.8%	45.3%
<b>With Retirement Income</b>	27.7%	22.3%	27.3%	27.7%	22.4%	32.2%	28.2%	27.7%	33.8%	36.2%	27.0%
<b>With Supplemental Security Income</b>	6.2%	12.0%	5.3%	6.0%	8.9%	4.8%	7.9%	8.0%	10.6%	9.1%	4.9%
<b>With Cash Public Assistance Income</b>	2.6%	2.2%	0.9%	4.4%	2.8%	1.3%	2.1%	3.1%	1.8%	3.3%	1.7%
<b>With Food Stamps / SNAP Benefits in Past 12 Months</b>	16.0%	16.0%	9.9%	13.7%	21.7%	7.5%	18.3%	16.8%	13.8%	20.7%	17.8%

Table 11 Source: 2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Collectively, this data paints a picture of a region that is gradually growing yet aging, while also becoming more ethnically diverse. This is characteristic of trends being seen nationally. The greatest difference and challenge for Middle Georgia will be discrepancy between the region and elsewhere in the nation regarding poverty and income. These factors inform this document and will have an impact in the future trajectory of the region.



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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic data, labor force characteristics, economic resources, and economic trends were significant information while drafting both the goals and objectives and work program items. Economic data values assisted in the public engagement process, focusing the conversation topics for both stakeholder and local listening session. Information received from the data sources; along with stakeholder comments; SWOT analysis; and analysis of consistency of quality community objectives, were applied to draft needs and opportunities for the region over the next 5 years.

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### ECONOMIC BASE AND TRENDS

Over the past five years total employment in the region has grown. The global Coronavirus pandemic (COVID) did impact employment in 2020; however, by 2021 total employment rebounded past the 2019 levels and continued to grow in 2022. The region has experienced several changes related to employment. This has occurred both within the various employment types, as well as within the major industries of the region. While overall employment has continued to increase, certain sectors were hit harder during COVID than others. This means that each sector of the economy will require a different response to their workforce challenges. Data obtained from the Bureau of Economic Analysis tracks these changes and can be found in Table 12 on the following page.

One of the first notable and significant trends visible from this data is the change in types of employment seen within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. While the economy as a whole has added jobs since 2018, by 2022, traditional wage and salary employment has not surpassed pre-COVID levels. Nearly all new growth in employment has come from an increase in the number of proprietors- especially since 2020. This represents a tremendous opportunity for small businesses to play an increasingly significant role in the marketplace. To effectively harness these opportunities, local and regional infrastructure to support investments in entrepreneurship will be required. This includes educational opportunities that focus on business development (within both the universities and technical colleges), as well as small business incubators and makerspaces where individuals can experiment with innovative technologies and ideas.

Turning the focus back to employment by industry, another sharp distinction can be seen between private-sector and public-sector employment. Among those who are employed within Middle Georgia, private-sector employment makes up approximately 82 percent of jobs in the region, while public-sector employment comprises the other 18 percent. As a whole, this makes the government one of the more significant employers within the region. Federal government employment makes up over 30 percent of public sector employment, due in large part to Robins Air Force Base (RAFB)—the region’s largest employer and the largest single-site industrial complex in the state. Since 2018, public-sector employment has been declining throughout the region including state government employment. Within the past five years, federal civilian and local employment have also begun to decline. This trend will require continued monitoring in the years ahead and may require additional investment in growing the private sector to offset job losses in the public sector. The public sector employment challenges are significant and often require a different approach to recruitment and retention than the private sector.



<b>Table 12: Regional Employment by Type and Industry Sector (2018-2022)</b>					
<b>Description</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Total employment</b>	278,412	283,773	272,031	292,216	300,539
<b>By Type</b>					
<b>Wage and salary employment</b>	215,237	219,006	210,798	214,589	218,476
<b>Proprietors' employment</b>	63,175	64,767	61,233	77,627	82,063
<b>Farm proprietors' employment</b>	1,451	1,446	1,444	1,426	1,428
<b>Nonfarm proprietors' employment</b>	61,724	63,321	59,789	76,201	80,635
<b>By Industry</b>					
<b>Farm employment</b>	2,663	2,827	2,998	3,031	3,084
<b>Nonfarm employment</b>	275,749	280,946	269,033	289,185	297,455
<b>Private nonfarm employment</b>	221,335	225,661	214,944	236,048	244,577
<b>Forestry, fishing, and related activities</b>	459	641	631	768	886
<b>Mining</b>	962	1,178	1,160	326	1,245
<b>Utilities</b>	11	21	92	100	155
<b>Construction</b>	10,499	10,853	10,820	12,179	12,955
<b>Manufacturing</b>	14,885	14,830	14,226	17,010	17,918
<b>Wholesale trade</b>	3,564	1,122	1,177	1,424	1,415
<b>Retail trade</b>	29,042	28,585	28,001	30,674	31,402
<b>Transportation and warehousing</b>	4,443	8,250	7,642	11,204	12,824
<b>Information</b>	1,996	1,577	1,307	1,536	2,012
<b>Finance and insurance</b>	16,191	15,763	15,984	18,043	18,773
<b>Real estate and rental and leasing</b>	7,800	7,576	7,377	9,795	10,742
<b>Professional, scientific, &amp; technical services</b>	11,508	12,654	12,733	13,435	13,732
<b>Management of companies and enterprises</b>	2,330	2,106	1,658	1,732	2,220
<b>Administrative &amp; waste management services</b>	17,675	19,413	18,807	20,995	20,722
<b>Educational services</b>	4,830	4,976	4,772	5,118	5,516
<b>Health care and social assistance</b>	29,846	31,260	30,255	31,104	31,326
<b>Arts, entertainment, and recreation</b>	3,525	3,579	2,931	3,939	4,069
<b>Accommodation and food services</b>	21,826	22,404	19,719	22,667	23,527
<b>Other services, except public administration</b>	18,597	19,023	17,580	20,201	20,437
<b>Government and government enterprises</b>	54,414	55,285	54,089	53,137	52,878
<b>Federal, civilian</b>	16,753	17,355	17,266	17,056	16,688
<b>Military</b>	4,670	4,733	4,859	4,918	4,722
<b>State and local</b>	32,991	33,197	31,964	31,163	31,468
<b>State government</b>	10,925	11,181	10,665	10,053	9,921
<b>Local government</b>	22,066	22,016	21,299	21,110	21,547

Table 12 Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2022



Among private-sector employment, all industry sectors have passed their pre-COVID levels of employment with transportation and warehousing having the highest growth, nearly tripling their 2018 employment levels. While sectors such as Utilities, Mining, and Forestry experienced minimal growth, the only private sector industry that saw a decline in employment was wholesale trade.

Since 2003, Middle Georgia has been engaged in work to diversify the economic base of the region. Much of this work that relates to assisting areas dependent on a single industry, or only on a few businesses, can be discussed under the concept of economic adjustment. Economic adjustment can be undertaken in any variety of areas, or for any type of industry. The goals of this process are long-term diversification of the local or regional economy and short-term response to stabilize local and regional economies that have been heavily impacted by job losses within a major economic sector.

In Middle Georgia, one of these significant areas of employment is the aerospace and defense sector. Nowhere is this more significant than Houston County, where one in four employed persons works directly at RAFB. When considering indirect jobs, over half the jobs in Houston County are tied to Robins Air Force Base. Regionally, this trend continues, with approximately 20 percent of all employed persons in Middle Georgia owing their employment to Robins Air Force Base, either directly or indirectly. The result is that as defense-sector employment in Middle Georgia goes, so goes the remainder of the region. Middle Georgia has responded to this challenge by working with the Department of Defense, Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation to identify and develop new opportunities for workers who have been displaced from defense-related industries due to federal spending reductions. This type of economic adjustment work remains vital within the region, especially in some of the rural communities that continue to struggle economically.

Middle Georgia is expected to continue seeing growth trends that shift employment away from the production sectors of the economy and further into the service sectors of the economy. This is not to say that opportunities are non-existent within manufacturing. In fact, certain industries like the food processing or the automotive industry may continue to see growth in future years in light of successful relocations to the region. Additionally, the transportation and logistics sector is poised for growth, given the region's strategic geographic position within the state's transportation network. Finally, with additional investment in STEM education activities, these industries have significant growth potential, provided Middle Georgia can recruit, train, and retain a well-educated workforce.

It is worth noting that this new job growth may not take the expected form of years past. Wage and salary employment has been stagnant for a significant length of time—even declining in some parts of the region. There is a continued need for job training activities that respond to new occupational opportunities in the context of small business and the entrepreneurial spirit.

Finally, given continued trends in population toward an aging America that is ever more concentrated in the urban and suburban areas of the country, continued investment in job training opportunities for the health and medical services sector may also be necessary.

## LABOR FORCE AND TRENDS

Table 13 shows Georgia Department of Labor projections for occupations comparing 2020 to 2030. Major occupational categories expected to see growth include the healthcare practitioners and technical; healthcare support; food preparation and serving related; production; sales and related; and transportation and material moving occupations. These occupations refocus on Macon-Bibb County as a hub within the state for healthcare, education, and other similar services that can often not be found elsewhere. In addition, the county's strategic location for transportation affords the potential for additional job growth in those related occupations as well.

Several service-sector positions, such as personal care and service; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; business and financial operations and installation, maintenance, and repair occupations are also expected to continue seeing job growth in the next few years; however, at a slower rate than others. Three occupational groups are projected to realize a decline by 2030-architecture and engineering; farming, fishing, and forestry; and office and administrative support.

<b>Table 13: Middle Georgia Occupation Projections</b>			
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2020 Estimated Employment</b>	<b>2030 Projected Employment</b>	<b>Total 2020-2030 Employment Change</b>
<b>Total, All</b>	127,795	137,101	9,306
<b>Architecture and Engineering</b>	3,591	3,574	-17
<b>Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media</b>	802	837	35
<b>Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance</b>	4,210	4,393	183
<b>Business and Financial Operations</b>	9,432	9,605	173
<b>Community and Social Service</b>	1,327	1,526	199
<b>Computer and Mathematical</b>	2,650	2,891	241
<b>Construction and Extraction</b>	5,825	6,047	222
<b>Educational Instruction and Library Workers, All Other</b>	682	693	11
<b>Farming, Fishing, and Forestry</b>	5,469	4,623	-846
<b>Food Preparation and Serving Related</b>	10,988	13,342	2,354
<b>Healthcare Practitioners and Technical</b>	5,300	6,271	971
<b>Healthcare Support</b>	4,269	5,141	872
<b>Installation, Maintenance, and Repair</b>	7,299	7,578	279
<b>Legal</b>	323	350	27
<b>Life, Physical, and Social Science</b>	756	760	4
<b>Management</b>	9,553	9,615	62
<b>Office and Administrative Support</b>	12,689	12,678	-11
<b>Personal Care and Service</b>	2,294	2,728	434
<b>Production</b>	9,277	10,312	1,035
<b>Protective Service</b>	3,289	3,388	99
<b>Sales and Related</b>	9,796	10,705	909
<b>Transportation and Material Moving</b>	9,741	11,298	1,557

Table 13 Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projection Unit



The Long-term Occupational Outlook is compiled every other year and is a ten-year occupational forecast. The current long-term outlook for Georgia is projected from the year 2020 to 2030 and the Local Workforce Development Areas are projected from 2020 to 2030. WorkSource Georgia and the Georgia Department of Labor received a Workforce Information Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration to capture the occupational outlook by workforce development area. Tables 14-16 provide a deep dive into the fastest growing, highest growth and highest declining occupations in Middle Georgia between 2020 and 2030.

Table 3 highlights the fastest-growing occupations for Middle Georgia. Of note, more than half of the top fifteen occupations require either a high school diploma/ equivalent or no formal education credentials. This will highlight the importance of short-term certificate programs as a workforce development strategy. It is also noteworthy that eight of the top fifteen are health care related.

<b>Table 14: Fastest Growing Occupations 2020-2030</b>					
<b>Occupations</b>	<b>Typical Education</b>	<b>2020 Base Employment</b>	<b>2030 Projected Employment</b>	<b>% Change Employment</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>Nurse Practitioners</b>	Master's	130	230	69.2%	5.4%
<b>Cooks, Restaurant</b>	No formal education	1,030	1,570	52.7%	4.3%
<b>Physical Therapist Aides</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	80	130	50.6%	4.2%
<b>Physical Therapists</b>	Doctoral or Professional	160	230	45.2%	3.8%
<b>Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	130	190	44.6%	3.8%
<b>Medical and Health Services Managers</b>	Bachelor's	210	300	39.3%	3.4%
<b>Speech-Language Pathologists</b>	Master's	90	130	40.2%	3.4%
<b>Amusement and Recreation Attendants</b>	No formal education	130	180	35.6%	3.1%
<b>Bartenders</b>	No formal education	270	360	33.5%	2.9%
<b>Animal Caretakers</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	220	290	31.2%	2.8%
<b>Respiratory Therapists</b>	Associates	110	140	29.5%	2.6%
<b>Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists</b>	Bachelor's	150	190	28.0%	2.5%
<b>Hosts and Hostesses, Restaurant, Lounge</b>	No formal education	400	510	27.8%	2.5%
<b>Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	250	320	28.3%	2.5%
<b>Diagnostic Medical Sonographers</b>	Associates	80	100	26.8%	2.4%

Table 14 Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projection Unit

Table 15 includes the occupations projected to experience the highest growth between 2020 and 2030. Again, of the top fifteen, twelve require no formal education credential, high school or equivalency, or post-secondary non-degree award. This is noteworthy as it highlights the need for short-term, credential-based training opportunities as a workforce development strategy.

<b>Table 15: Highest Projected Growth Occupations 2020-2030</b>					
<b>Occupations</b>	<b>Typical Education</b>	<b>2020 Base Employment</b>	<b>20230 Projected Employment</b>	<b>% Change Employment</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>Fast Food and Counter Workers</b>	No formal education	4,300	5,020	16.7%	1.6%
<b>Cooks, Restaurant</b>	No formal education	1,030	1,570	52.7%	4.3%
<b>Retail Salespersons</b>	No formal education	3,530	4,030	14.2%	1.3%
<b>Waiters and Waitresses</b>	No formal education	2,130	2,580	21.2%	1.9%
<b>Stockers and Order Fillers</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	1,800	2,240	24.2%	2.2%
<b>Home Health and Personal Care Aides</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	1,600	2,000	25.2%	2.3%
<b>Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand</b>	No formal education	1,950	2,270	16.7%	1.6%
<b>Registered Nurses</b>	Bachelor's	1,570	1,820	15.9%	1.5%
<b>Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators</b>	No formal education	970	1,210	25.0%	2.3%
<b>Production Workers, All Other</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	790	1,000	25.9%	2.3%
<b>Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers</b>	Post-secondary non-degree	1,730	1,910	10.0%	1.0%
<b>General and Operations Managers</b>	Bachelor's	1,520	1,680	10.8%	1.0%
<b>Medical Assistants</b>	Post-secondary non-degree	580	740	27.2%	2.4%
<b>Nursing Assistants</b>	Post-secondary non-degree	1,220	1,360	11.2%	1.1%
<b>Cashiers</b>	No formal education	2,780	2,900	4.2%	0.4%

Table 15 Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projection Unit

Table 16 shows the occupations with the highest projected decline between 2020 and 2030, according to the Georgia Department of Labor. Buyers and Purchasing Agents, Executive Administrative Assistants, Data Entry Keyers and First Line Supervisors of Farming, Fishing and Forestry Workers are all occupations projected to decline more than 10 percent during the period.



**Table 16: Highest Projected Decline Occupations 2020-2030**

Occupations	Typical Education	2020 Base Employment	20230 Projected Employment	% Change Employment	Annual Growth Rate
<b>Project Management Specialists and Business Operations Specialists, All Other</b>	Bachelor's	3,680	3,530	-4.1%	-0.4%
<b>Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	1,710	1,580	-7.5%	-0.8%
<b>Buyers and Purchasing Agents</b>	Bachelor's	600	520	-12.8%	-1.4%
<b>Electronics Engineers, Except Computer</b>	Bachelor's	1,080	1,020	-5.8%	-0.6%
<b>Sheet Metal Workers</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	1,190	1,130	-5.4%	-0.6%
<b>Office Clerks, General</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	1,750	1,700	-2.6%	-0.3%
<b>Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians</b>	Post-secondary non-degree	1,100	1,050	-4.7%	-0.5%
<b>Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	630	590	-6.6%	-0.7%
<b>Chief Executives</b>	Bachelor's	500	470	-6.4%	-0.7%
<b>Tellers</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	360	330	-8.1%	-0.8%
<b>Postal Service Mail Carriers</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	310	280	-9.3%	-1.0%
<b>Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	130	100	-18.4%	-2.0%
<b>Data Entry Keyers</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	110	80	-22.2%	-2.5%
<b>First-Line Supervisors of Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Workers</b>	HS diploma or equivalent	290	260	-11.5%	-1.2%
<b>Engineers, All Other</b>	Bachelor's	450	430	-3.8%	-0.4%

Table 16 Source: Georgia Dept. of Labor, Workforce Statistics & Economic Research, Projection Unit

As of the December 2023 preliminary numbers from the Georgia Department of Labor there were a total of 215,362 individuals in the workforce who live in the eleven-county region. For 2023, Georgia experienced an unemployment rate of 3.2 percent compared to the region at 3.5 percent. As seen in Table 12, within the region, Houston, Jones, and Monroe Counties had a 2023 unemployment rate

lower than the state. The remaining counties, except Crawford, realized an unemployment rate higher than the state with Twiggs County experiencing the highest in the region at 4.9. Table 17 shows the labor force participation rate by County. Houston County has the highest percentage of its population in the workforce and Twiggs County has the lowest.

Table 17: Labor Force and Unemployment Rate – 2023 Annual Average					
County	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate	Compared to State
Baldwin	17,399	16,674	725	4.2%	Higher
Crawford	5,296	5,125	171	3.2%	Equal
Houston	71,134	69,062	2,072	2.9%	Lower
Jones	13,166	12,760	406	3.1%	Lower
Macon-Bibb	64,817	62,251	2,566	4.0%	Higher
Monroe	12,646	12,274	372	2.9%	Lower
Peach	11,898	11,441	457	3.8%	Higher
Pulaski	4,020	3,879	141	3.5%	Higher
Putnam	8,899	8,561	338	3.8%	Higher
Twiggs	2,696	2,564	132	4.9%	Higher
Wilkinson	3,391	3,262	129	3.8%	Higher
Middle Georgia	215,362	207,853	7,509	3.5%	
State of Georgia	5,305,623	5,135,833	169,790	3.2%	

Table 17 Source: Georgia Department of Labor

The labor force participation and unemployment rate both signal that the local economy of the Middle Georgia region is somewhat less favorable for potential employees locally than nationally, where a greater share of workers participate at a lower rate of unemployment. While some measures of labor force participation do not take retirements into account, the increasing pace of retirements is a national challenge and would be reflected in the same national rates for workforce participation.

Table 18: Labor Force Participation Rate		
County	Percent in Labor Force	Compared to State/Nation
Baldwin	49.5%	Lower
Crawford	54.9%	Lower
Houston	65.3%	Higher
Jones	58.4%	Lower
Macon-Bibb	57.5%	Lower
Monroe	59.0%	Lower
Peach	56.3%	Lower
Pulaski	47.9%	Lower
Putnam	51.7%	Lower
Twiggs	43.3%	Lower
Wilkinson	48.9%	Lower
State of Georgia	63.5%	
United States	63.6%	

Table 18 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates



As such, this data would seem to indicate that within the region either a lack of jobs and/or a lack of skills among the workforce to fill these jobs exists. While these factors represent both challenges in economic development and workforce development, the two are very linked. In many cases, the jobs may go unfilled because of a lack of skills. Certainly, the current availability of people and job growth in the service sectors indicate that a skills challenge does exist that inhibits employment.

The counties of Middle Georgia are part of a relatively well-defined economic region within the central part of the state. Macon-Bibb County serves as a major employment hub for the region, as more than 50,000 individuals regularly commute into Macon-Bibb County to reach their primary jobs. Houston County and Baldwin County, home to the second and third largest cities of the region (Warner Robins and Milledgeville, respectively), also see a slight increase in their daytime population, although they both see a greater daily outflow of employees as opposed to inflow. In Crawford County, one of the region’s most rural counties, six times as many people travel out of the county compared to those who travel into the county. Jones County, considered a bedroom community to Macon-Bibb County, also has four times as many people traveling out versus traveling in. These two counties highlighted the interconnected nature of the region.

<b>Table 19: Commuting Patterns</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Commute within County</b>	<b>Commute out of County</b>	<b>Commute into County</b>
<b>Baldwin</b>	6,140	9,907	8,819
<b>Crawford</b>	543	4,577	737
<b>Houston</b>	23,657	31,711	23,161
<b>Jones</b>	1,825	9,634	2,641
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	33,818	26,399	50,323
<b>Monroe</b>	1,885	9,218	6,647
<b>Peach</b>	2,186	8,165	8,071
<b>Pulaski</b>	883	2,258	1,897
<b>Putnam</b>	2,315	5,709	3,449
<b>Twiggs</b>	350	2,731	1,855
<b>Wilkinson</b>	776	2,877	1,913

Table 19 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, 2021

These challenges work together in ways that build significant barriers to employment and increase the probability of young children and adults remaining trapped in poverty like their parents before them. A major barrier to employment for these residents is obtaining education and job skills. Increasingly, the high school diploma is required for almost any job, and the bachelor’s degree has become the standard for high-paying jobs. In many impoverished communities of the region, educational attainment is low, leaving the individuals living there with few employment options. As a result, the region will continue to rely heavily on its educational systems and workforce development programs to help grow the region’s economic prosperity.

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## ECONOMIC RESOURCES

One significant asset for Middle Georgia is the presence of local and regional economic development entities that are focused on promoting the region and steering economic development toward the region's strengths. One of these organizations is the Middle Georgia Economic Alliance (MGEA), which brings the economic development professional representing each county together for the purpose of marketing the region. Most counties have a full-time professional managing their economic development needs with others employing a dedicated part-time employee. Only Wilkinson County currently lacks someone in this role entirely. Several cities have also hired their own economic development professionals, and most chambers of commerce also have full-time professional management.

In addition to MGEA, there are several formally organized development authorities that span jurisdictional boundaries. The Central Georgia Joint Development Authority consists of all eleven counties within the region and the Fall Line Regional Development Authority is a product of Baldwin and Wilkinson counties.

The Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC) is also a partner in regional economic development, not only supporting the work of county-based development authorities, but also assisting in the strategic planning process for regional economic development. As the Economic Development District designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, MGRC is responsible for the preparation of and updates to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region. The next update will occur in 2027 and will reflect the changes in economic activity described earlier throughout this section, as well as those changes anticipated into the future.



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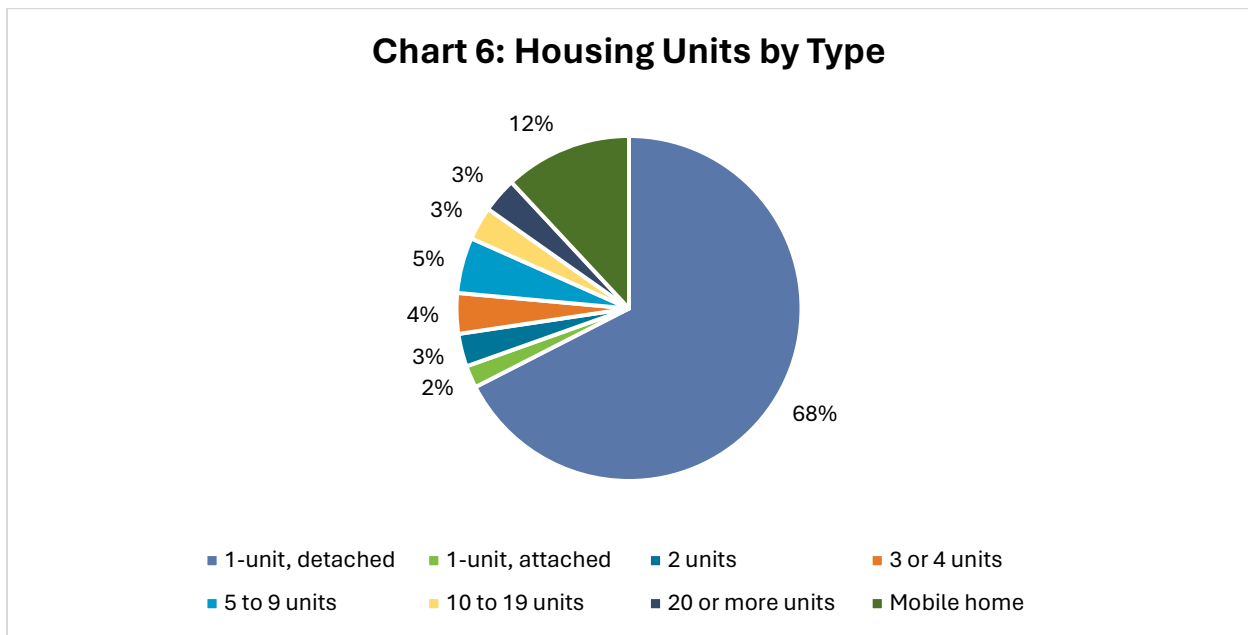
## HOUSING

Regional housing condition, occupancy, characteristics of housing type, and monthly housing cost burden were consulted and analyzed. Data results provided an understanding of housing composition, age, and condition housing cost. Data values were utilized in the public engagement process, focusing the conversation topics for both stakeholder and local listening session. Information received from the data sources; along with stakeholder comments; SWOT analysis; and analysis of consistency of quality community objectives, were applied to draft needs and opportunities for the region over the next 5 years.

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### HOUSING TYPES AND MIX

Housing in Middle Georgia is predominately single-family, with 68 percent of the units as detached single-family and 2 percent attached. Mobile homes account for the second largest housing type at 11.9 percent. In the multi-family housing type, the most common are small developments with five to nine units.



**Chart 6 Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five Year Estimates**

Houston and Macon-Bibb Counties account for 61.8 percent of all housing units in the region while Pulaski, Twiggs and Wilkinson comprise less than 10 percent of all housing in the region. Crawford County has the lowest number of single-family houses at 53.87 percent and Monroe County has the highest at 77.6 percent. The percentage of single-family houses in the region (69.5 percent) is lower than the State but higher than the US. Lastly, when compared to the State and Nation, Middle Georgia has a higher percentage of mobile homes (11.9%) than Georgia (8%) and the US (5.6%). Within Middle Georgia, Crawford County has the highest percentage of mobile homes (40.04 %) and Macon-Bibb County has the lowest (2.78 %).

**Table 20: 2022 Housing Units by Selected Types**

	Total Units	% of Regional Total	# of Single Family	% of Single Family	# of Mobile Homes	% of Mobile Homes
<b>Baldwin</b>	20,092	8.95%	11,879	59.12%	4,269	21.25%
<b>Crawford</b>	5,187	2.31%	2,794	53.87%	2,077	40.04%
<b>Houston</b>	66,889	29.80%	51,216	76.57%	4,229	6.32%
<b>Jones</b>	11,662	5.20%	7,993	68.54%	3,116	26.72%
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	71,828	32.00%	49,037	68.27%	1,994	2.78%
<b>Monroe</b>	11,179	4.98%	8,675	77.60%	1,903	17.02%
<b>Peach</b>	12,023	5.36%	8,289	68.94%	1,376	11.44%
<b>Pulaski</b>	4,078	1.82%	2,565	62.90%	1,065	26.12%
<b>Putnam</b>	13,171	5.87%	8,183	62.13%	3,964	30.10%
<b>Twiggs</b>	4,047	1.80%	2,582	63.80%	1,398	34.54%
<b>Wilkinson</b>	4,307	1.92%	2,781	64.57%	1,370	31.81%
<b>Region</b>	224,463		155,994	69.50%	26,761	11.92%
<b>Georgia</b>	4,539,156		3,221,543	70.97%	363,036	8.00%
<b>United States</b>	143,772,895		97,041,520	67.50%	8,055,034	5.60%

Table 20 Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five Year Estimates

## CONDITION AND OCCUPANCY

Of the occupied housing units, less than 1 percent have incomplete plumbing or kitchen facilities. However, within the region, Twiggs County has the highest percentage of units without complete plumbing and Putnam County has the highest percentage of units without complete kitchen facilities.

**Table 21: Housing Condition by County**

	Baldwin	Crawford	Houston	Jones	Macon-Bibb	Monroe	Peach	Pulaski	Putnam	Twiggs	Wilkinson
<b>Occupied Housing Units</b>	15,853	4,332	60,607	10,581	59,480	10,248	10,164	3,117	9,852	2,900	3,313
<b>% Lacking Complete Plumbing</b>	0.55%	0.00%	0.55%	0.18%	0.53%	0.51%	0.00%	0.83%	1.02%	1.07%	0.30%
<b>% Lacking Complete Kitchen</b>	1.01%	0.69%	0.63%	0.00%	1.00%	0.51%	0.51%	0.71%	1.34%	0.00%	0.66%

Table 21 Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five Year Estimates

When evaluating housing percentage by decade, most of the region’s housing is less than 50 years in age, with 72.42% of the total housing constructed between 1970 to 2020. Macon-Bibb County has the smallest percentage (58.4 percent) of homes built between 1970 and 2020 and Crawford has the highest (83.8 percent). The largest proportion of construction by decade is 2000 to 2009, with a total of 17.51%.



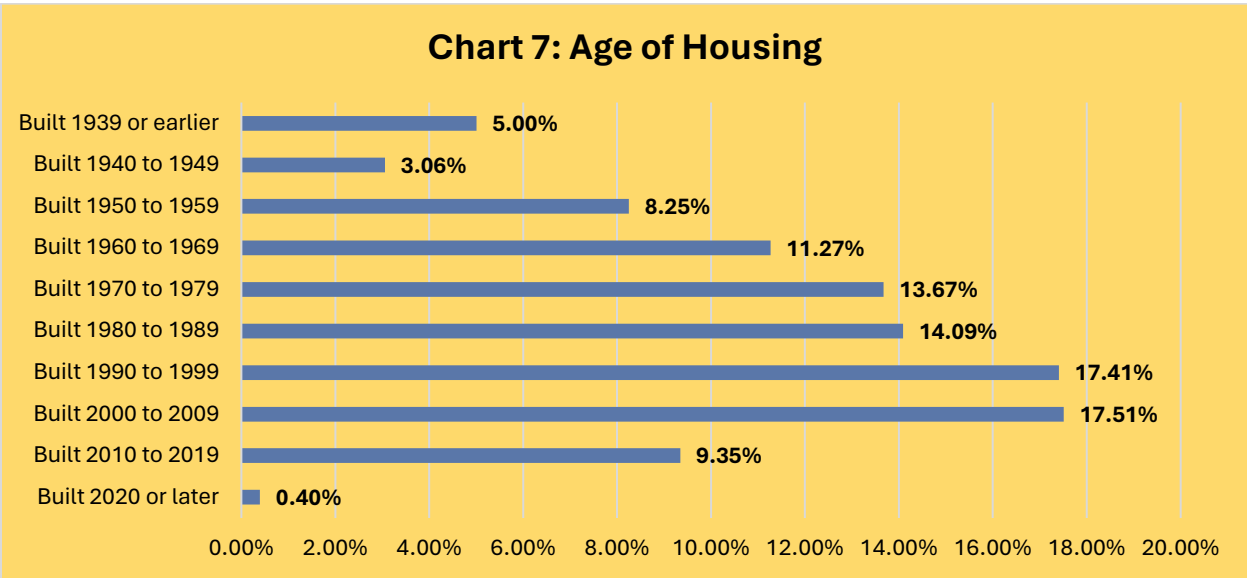


Chart 7 Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five Year Estimates

### Table 22: Housing Construction by Decade

Year	1939 or earlier	1940 to 1949	1950 to 1959	1960 to 1969	1970 to 1979	1980 to 1989	1990 to 1999	2000 to 2009	2010 to 2019	2020 or later	% 50 Years or Older (Historic)
Baldwin	4.8%	3.6%	6.6%	12.6%	15.4%	17.6%	17.4%	17.4%	4.6%	0.0%	72.4%
Crawford	5.2%	1.5%	4.9%	4.6%	11.5%	18.2%	32.9%	15.1%	6.1%	0.0%	83.8%
Houston	1.5%	1.8%	5.8%	11.3%	12.1%	13.6%	17.9%	22.7%	13.1%	0.0%	79.4%
Jones	3.3%	1.4%	3.7%	8.1%	12.6%	20.7%	19.7%	24.0%	6.4%	0.0%	83.4%
Macon-Bibb	8.9%	5.5%	13.2%	14.0%	15.5%	12.3%	13.5%	11.5%	5.5%	0.1%	58.4%
Monroe	4.5%	1.6%	7.1%	4.5%	13.0%	14.9%	21.3%	26.2%	6.9%	0.0%	82.3%
Peach	5.6%	1.7%	9.7%	9.0%	18.5%	15.2%	15.9%	14.6%	9.8%	0.0%	74.0%
Pulaski	6.3%	4.0%	6.1%	19.6%	13.9%	15.7%	15.8%	14.3%	4.4%	0.0%	64.1%
Putnam	4.5%	1.6%	3.2%	7.7%	9.3%	21.0%	23.5%	23.0%	6.3%	0.0%	83.1%
Twiggs	6.4%	4.0%	7.4%	8.7%	21.2%	21.6%	18.6%	10.7%	1.3%	0.0%	73.4%
Wilkinson	6.7%	5.4%	6.4%	11.9%	20.4%	17.6%	20.5%	8.7%	2.4%	0.0%	69.6%

Table 22 Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five Year Estimates

Of the 224,463 total housing units in Middle Georgia, 84.85 percent are occupied. This is lower than the State and Nation. Twiggs County has the lowest occupancy percentage at 71.66 percent and Monroe County has the highest at 91.67 percent.

Of the 190,447 total occupied units, 65.5 percent are owner occupied in the region which is on par with the state and national rates. Interestingly, Twiggs County has the highest percentage of housing units (89.03 percent) that are owner-occupied in a single county and Macon-Bibb County has the lowest percentage at 52.5 percent.

	<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>Occupied Housing Units</b>	<b>Vacant Housing Units</b>	<b>Occupancy Percent</b>
<b>Baldwin</b>	20,092	15,853	4,239	78.90%
<b>Crawford</b>	5,187	4,332	855	83.52%
<b>Houston</b>	66,889	60,607	6,282	90.61%
<b>Jones</b>	11,662	10,581	1,081	90.73%
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	71,828	59,480	12,348	82.81%
<b>Monroe</b>	11,179	10,248	931	91.67%
<b>Peach</b>	12,023	10,164	1,859	84.54%
<b>Pulaski</b>	4,078	3,117	961	76.43%
<b>Putnam</b>	13,171	9,852	3,319	74.80%
<b>Twiggs</b>	4,047	2,900	1,147	71.66%
<b>Wilkinson</b>	4,307	3,313	994	76.92%
<b>Region</b>	224,463	190,447	34,016	84.85%
<b>Georgia</b>	4,539,156	4,092,467	44,689	90.16%
<b>US</b>	143,772,895	129,870,928	13,901,967	90.33%

Table 23 Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five Year Estimates

	<b>Occupied Housing Units</b>	<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	<b>Owner-Occupied Percent</b>
<b>Baldwin</b>	15,853	9,974	62.92%
<b>Crawford</b>	4,332	3,501	80.82%
<b>Houston</b>	60,607	40,563	66.93%
<b>Jones</b>	10,581	8,756	82.75%
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	59,480	31,315	52.65%
<b>Monroe</b>	10,248	8,526	83.20%
<b>Peach</b>	10,164	7,012	68.99%
<b>Pulaski</b>	3,117	2,011	64.52%
<b>Putnam</b>	9,852	7,847	79.65%
<b>Twiggs</b>	2,900	2,582	89.03%
<b>Wilkinson</b>	3,313	2,661	80.32%
<b>Middle Georgia</b>	190,447	124,748	65.50%
<b>State of Georgia</b>	4,092,467	2,695,885	65.87%
<b>United States</b>	129,870,928	84,649,084	65.18%

Table 24 Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five Year Estimates

## COST OF HOUSING

2022 housing values in Middle Georgia have increased an average of 40.2 percent, lower than the State and Nation, in comparison to the 2013 estimates. The highest increase is found in Crawford County and the lowest in Jones County. Gross rents have increased at a slower average rate of 26.1 percent, with gross rents in Crawford County decreasing by a small percentage. Rent increased the most in Pulaski County.



**Table 25: Housing Costs (2013 vs 2022)**

	2013 Median Home Value	2013 Median Monthly Gross Rent	2022 Median Home Value	2022 Median Monthly Gross Rent	Median Home Value Variance	Median Gross Rent Variance
<b>Baldwin</b>	\$103,900	\$686	\$154,400	\$832	48.60%	21.28%
<b>Crawford</b>	\$90,800	\$690	\$149,400	\$677	64.54%	-1.88%
<b>Houston</b>	\$132,900	\$818	\$189,500	\$1,094	42.59%	33.74%
<b>Jones</b>	\$138,900	\$812	\$159,500	\$850	14.83%	4.68%
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	\$123,000	\$736	\$155,200	\$967	26.18%	31.39%
<b>Monroe</b>	\$148,300	\$703	\$204,100	\$872	37.63%	24.04%
<b>Peach</b>	\$120,000	\$647	\$170,500	\$817	42.08%	26.28%
<b>Pulaski</b>	\$87,300	\$523	\$120,500	\$863	38.03%	65.01%
<b>Putnam</b>	\$140,600	\$695	\$203,300	\$934	44.59%	34.39%
<b>Twiggs</b>	\$54,700	\$587	\$89,300	\$727	63.25%	23.85%
<b>Wilkinson</b>	\$71,600	\$572	\$87,600	\$715	22.35%	25.00%
<b>Georgia</b>	\$151,300	\$860	\$297,400	\$1,269	96.56%	47.56%
<b>US</b>	\$176,700	\$904	\$320,900	\$1,300	81.61%	43.81%

Table 25 Source: American Community Survey, Five Year Estimates

**Table 26: Mortgage Status**

<b>Owner-occupied units</b>	124,748	Regional Total
<b>Housing units with a mortgage</b>	72,437	58.1%
<b>Housing units without a mortgage</b>	52,311	41.93%

Table 26 Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five Year Estimates

Fifty-eight (58.1) percent of the owner-occupied houses in Middle Georgia have a mortgage with Twiggs County having the lowest percentage at 31.3 percent and Houston County having the highest at 69.3 percent. Housing price as a proportion of total percent household income, independent of income level, is similar for those incomes between \$20,000 and \$74,999. Percents range from 10.2% to 13.6%. The significant difference is for those with an income of \$75,000 or greater, as 31.9% of the household income is contributing to the cost. One half of all renters in Middle Georgia pay more than 30 percent of their household income for gross rent, indicating many cost-burdened households.

**Table 27: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income**

<b>Occupied Rental Units</b>	59,567	Regional Total
<b>Less than 15.0 percent</b>	8,575	14.40%
<b>15.0 to 19.9 percent</b>	8,114	13.62%
<b>20.0 to 24.9 percent</b>	6,279	10.54%
<b>25.0 to 29.9 percent</b>	6,051	10.16%
<b>30.0 to 34.9 percent</b>	5,257	8.83%
<b>35.0 percent or more</b>	25,291	42.46%
<b>Not computed</b>	6,132	10.29%

Table 27 Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five Year Estimates

## COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS

Across Middle Georgia, 81.23 percent of owners are not considered cost-burdened – spending less than 30 percent of household income on housing costs. Pulaski County has the highest percentage of non-cost-burdened households at 85.25 percent compared to 76.08 percent in Twiggs County. Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties all have more than 11 percent of owner-occupied households who are severely cost-burdened. Renters are more likely to be cost-burdened in Middle Georgia with only 51.07 percent of renters not considered cost-burdened. The highest percentage of renters who are not cost-burdened can be found in Twiggs County at 68.24 percent. Nearly one quarter of all renters are severely cost-burdened with Baldwin County having the highest percentage.

County	% Total Unit Cost Burden less than or equal to 30%	% Total Unit Cost Burden 30-50%	% Total Unit Cost Burden greater than 50%	% Not Computed
Baldwin	83.87%	5.75%	8.17%	2.12%
Crawford	80.93%	8.76%	7.34%	3.11%
Houston	84.04%	8.64%	6.24%	1.10%
Jones	83.11%	9.01%	5.70%	2.28%
Macon-Bibb	78.43%	11.30%	8.34%	1.96%
Monroe	77.86%	10.08%	8.82%	3.12%
Peach	81.33%	8.75%	8.52%	1.32%
Pulaski	85.25%	5.70%	8.57%	0.82%
Putnam	77.28%	9.17%	11.93%	1.48%
Twiggs	76.08%	12.58%	11.11%	0.38%
Wilkinson	78.63%	8.43%	11.53%	0.98%
Region	81.23%	9.26%	7.82%	1.69%

Table 28 Source: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) 2016-2020 Estimates

County	% Rental Cost Burden less than or equal to 30%	% Rental Cost Burden 30-50%	% Rental Cost Burden greater than 50%	% Not Computed
Baldwin	48.38%	16.81%	31.05%	3.69%
Crawford	67.05%	14.01%	10.14%	8.21%
Houston	58.99%	19.18%	19.75%	2.13%
Jones	50.00%	22.09%	23.49%	4.42%
Macon-Bibb	44.86%	21.72%	27.49%	5.93%
Monroe	55.83%	15.99%	23.04%	5.15%
Peach	47.34%	30.98%	13.56%	7.98%
Pulaski	44.49%	26.84%	28.31%	0.00%
Putnam	61.47%	15.79%	22.74%	0.00%
Twiggs	68.24%	21.18%	3.29%	8.24%
Wilkinson	59.60%	14.44%	21.85%	3.31%
Region	51.07%	20.57%	23.99%	4.36%

Table 29 Source: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) 2016-2020 Estimates



## SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS

Beyond traditional housing concerns, there are people with special housing needs that have resulted from their specific challenges. These needs result from the person or household’s status as homeless, elderly, victims of domestic violence, affected by substance abuse, those with mental or physical disabilities, those with HIV/AIDS or facing other unique challenges. Vulnerable populations throughout Middle Georgia are served primarily through local non-profit organizations and governmental service agencies. The nature of these vulnerabilities makes obtaining defined numbers difficult to estimate. The Department of Community Affairs acts as the Continuum of Care for a sizable portion of the state, including Middle Georgia. It is responsible for estimating the homeless population and does so using a point-in-time survey. The 2022 estimate indicates that there are 560 homeless persons in Middle Georgia with only four counties having shelters (Baldwin, Houston, Macon-Bibb, and Putnam counties). Macon-Bibb County has the only transitional housing facility and has the largest emergency shelter. This highlights that the homeless population is generally underserved. Reports from local agencies that service other special needs populations indicate that these populations are greater than available resources.

	<b>Unsheltered Count</b>	<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	<b>Transitional Housing</b>	<b>Total Homeless Count</b>
<b>Baldwin</b>	36	0	0	36
<b>Crawford</b>	2	0	0	2
<b>Houston</b>	13	15	0	28
<b>Jones</b>	22	0	0	22
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	142	128	121	391
<b>Monroe</b>	17	0	0	17
<b>Peach</b>	28	0	0	28
<b>Pulaski</b>	23	0	0	23
<b>Putnam</b>	6	0	0	6
<b>Twiggs</b>	6	0	0	6
<b>Wilkinson</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Middle Georgia</b>	296	143	121	560
<b>State of Georgia</b>	3,919	1,289	648	5,856

Table 30 Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs Statewide Point in Time Homeless Report for 2022

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## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

As much as there is great diversity among the population in Middle Georgia, there is also a great deal of diversity in the services that are provided and received across the region. These differences help to meet the varied needs of each community. A local government's service provision depends on many factors, including the expectations of the electorate, capacity of staff, and financial viability of the service to name a few. To provide services, local governments utilize a variety of methods, including in-house provision, inter-governmental agreements with neighboring jurisdictions, and contracting with private entities.

Public water distribution is a common service provided through much of Middle Georgia's more densely populated areas, including each one of the region's municipalities. In many cases, municipal service extends into a portion of the unincorporated county. In addition, most county governments have some level of water service, with some having extensive networks. While many local governments own and operate their own systems, Macon-Bibb County, Putnam County, Eatonton, Milledgeville, and Baldwin County rely upon independent authorities to treat and supply water. The Macon Water Authority (MWA) is the most extensive provider of public water in the region. In addition to serving customers in Macon-Bibb County, the MWA also serves parts of Monroe, Jones, and Peach counties. Eatonton-Putnam Water and Sewer Authority and Sinclair Water Authority serve the lake counties of Middle Georgia. The Fort Valley Utility Commission is a provider of multiple utilities to the City of Fort Valley and much of the unincorporated Peach County. In areas of the region lacking water service, private wells are utilized. Despite much of the region having some level of water service, many communities face challenges with their systems. Some of these problems include aging water lines, failing wells and pump stations, high water rates and high debt associated with water infrastructure. Most of these problems can be tied back to the lack of financial resources to maintain the current system and prepare for needed growth.

In many cases, sewer service overlaps with water service. While water service throughout Middle Georgia follows higher population density, sewer service does even more so. Some Middle Georgia counties do not possess any public sewerage in their unincorporated areas. Additionally, some small municipalities in rural counties do not provide sewer service. In these cases, residents rely upon private septic tank systems. Unfortunately, as time passes, the tanks are prone to leak, causing contamination of nearby ground water. The City of McIntyre is currently constructing a vast citywide sewer system that will not only better serve the residents but also have widespread positive impacts on the environment. This is not without cost though, as the total investment in this system is set to exceed \$20 million, meaning that any city or county that wants to start offering sewer services would bear an extraordinary cost to create such a system. Accordingly, it is not unreasonable to think that the McIntyre system may be the last "brand new" sewer system to be built in the region. Furthermore, for those jurisdictions that currently provide public sewer services, many of the same financial challenges exist as with water. Because residents are economically distressed, it is difficult to charge sufficiently high sewer rates so as to ensure that the system pays for itself. Accordingly, many communities must either borrow other sources of funding or rely on grant funding to perform basic maintenance responsibilities.



As highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, robust connectivity is essential for continuing economic growth and resilience. Not only is high-speed internet vital for businesses, but it has also become an essential staple for quality of life. As part of building a resilient future, broadband networks will need to cover the entire region with service that at least meets the State of Georgia’s threshold of a fixed, terrestrial broadband definition of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up. While satellite service is available in many areas, it is often prohibitively expensive and/or experiences high latency. Using this definition, the State of Georgia has completed several robust surveys of broadband availability. Table 31 summarizes the current service levels.

<b>Table 31: Unserved Locations by County</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b>Served Locations</b>	<b>Unserved Locations</b>	<b>Percent Unserved</b>
<b>Baldwin</b>	21,372	1,002	4%
<b>Crawford</b>	5,834	1	0%
<b>Houston</b>	73,298	131	0%
<b>Jones</b>	12,361	549	4%
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	81,910	476	1%
<b>Monroe</b>	12,526	144	1%
<b>Peach</b>	13,521	11	0%
<b>Pulaski</b>	4,381	633	13%
<b>Putnam</b>	13,061	2,625	17%
<b>Twiggs</b>	3,118	1,460	32%
<b>Wilkinson</b>	4,072	858	17%

Table 31 Source: Georgia Broadband Program, 2023 Availability Map

Today, only 3.1 percent of locations regionally remain unserved by this base level of broadband access due to the significant investments that have been made in recent years. In 2022, approximately 12.7 percent of locations were unserved. With that number dropping, regional communities can start looking to reach the most isolated users while also exploring faster standards of internet access (such as the 100/20 threshold), which would better prepare many rural areas.

Beyond traditional utility services, Middle Georgia local governments touch many other service areas, including recreation, transportation, public safety, road maintenance, solid waste collection, community development, and others. Across the region there is a mix of methods for accomplishing these services. Solid waste, for example, is largely contracted to private companies among most of the communities. Fire protection is provided by most of the local governments through full-time staff or volunteer units. Many cities also have their own police forces to complement the work of the county sheriffs. As with water and sewer service, financial concerns impact these service areas.

In many of the region’s more urban areas, there exist higher rates of crime and a growing perception that crime is prevalent. This suggests that a greater emphasis must be placed upon both crime prevention and law enforcement in these communities. For rural communities, there is a frequent difficulty in providing adequate fire resources to more sparsely populated areas. This leads, not only, to higher ISO ratings, and therefore higher insurance premiums, but also to longer response times, which lead to greater loss of property and life. Ultimately these are all challenges that must be met as local governments continue to look for new ways to meet their needs more efficiently.

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## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

To elicit comments of transportation system needs, the same process of receiving qualitative information as that of the community facility and service discussion was applied. The SWOT analysis of the first stakeholder session and focused discussion of the local listening sessions informed local perceptions and needs. Adding to public comments, were information received from elected officials, local government staff, and economic development experts of local chambers of commerce. With the stakeholder comments received, public survey results, SWOT analysis, analysis of consistency with quality community objectives, population helped in the drafting of needs and opportunities of the next 5 years for the region.

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### ROAD NETWORK

The transportation system found within the Middle Georgia region consists of the state highway and interstate system, an extensive network of local roads, numerous local and regional airports, a regional railroad hub, and options for alternative transportation modes. All these elements come together to form a robust network built and maintained to support the free flow of goods and people, economic development opportunities, and an ever-increasing quality of life for residents of the Middle Georgia region. The Middle Georgia transportation network provides a connection between our region and the rest of the state and nation. With direct access to the rapidly growing Port of Savannah via Interstate 16 and numerous rail lines, Middle Georgia is connected to the world.

Local roadways, state and federal highways, and the interstate system form the road network in Middle Georgia. Interstate 75 bisects the region, running through Houston, Peach, Crawford, Macon-Bibb, and Monroe counties. Thirty-one exits along I-75 allow the residents of Middle Georgia to access a road which connects the region to Florida, Atlanta, and the northern half of the eastern United States. Interstate 16, beginning in the middle of Macon-Bibb County, connects the region to Savannah. Additionally, Interstate 475 provides a bypass to downtown Macon.

Since the 2016 Regional Plan, the Georgia Department of Transportation has initiated the construction of new interchanges at the intersection of I-75 and I-16. In total, the project involves seven phases (Phase 1, Phase 1B, Phase 2, Phase 3, Phase 4, Phase 5, and Phase 6; Phase 1B (GDOT Project #0012699) involves mitigations and improvements to the Pleasant Hill neighborhood, which suffered the greatest adverse local impacts during the original construction of the I-75). As of May 2024, four of seven phases are over 90% complete, two are in construction (63% complete; anticipated completion early 2025) and one is in design with an anticipated start date sometime between 2026 and 2028. This project, once completed, will provide state-of-the-art connectivity in all directions from Macon.

The network of major U.S. and state highways provide connections between population and employment centers within the region. These roadways also connect important destinations outside of the region and provide an alternative to interstate travel. The Fall Line Freeway, designed to cross the state between Columbus and Augusta, runs through the heart of the Middle Georgia region.



Finally, each individual county maintains a network of local roadways which facilitates movement within the county. These roads play a vital role in connecting homes with businesses. One statistic worth noting is the amount of unpaved roads present in the Middle Georgia region. Many of the region's counties are rural, and, while unpaved roads may be appropriate in some cases, further examination of the road network needs to occur at the local level in order to develop a schedule for the improvement of these roads where necessary.

Although middle Georgia does not have a Regional Transportation Sales Tax (TSPLOST) authorized under the Transportation Investment Act of 2010, six of the eleven counties in the region have single county TSPLOST. Voters in two other counties are considering the matter on the ballot in fall 2024. The funds generated from the sales tax will be used for road infrastructure improvements including but not limited to paving, resurfacing, safety improvements, sidewalks, storm drainage and transit. This dedicated funding stream will address some of the deferred maintenance and improve conditions across the region.

The road network is planned and maintained at the different governmental levels within the Middle Georgia region. There are two Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) which provide planning services for the two urbanized areas within the region. The Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) includes Macon-Bibb County, the western portion of Jones County, and the southern portion of Monroe County. Additionally, the Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS) covers the entirety of Houston County, as well as the eastern portion of Peach County and the City of Byron. As in other rural areas of the state, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) provides transportation planning services for the remaining areas. Rural counties are able to identify areas for improvement in their local Comprehensive Plans, however, funding decisions for improvements on the state and federal highway system are made by the GDOT. A Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) may benefit the rural counties by providing a more local focus in transportation planning.

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## ALTERNATIVE MODES

While the road network is the most visible portion of the Middle Georgia transportation network, alternative modes of transportation are also growing within the region. The largest provider of public transportation in the region is the Macon Transit Authority (MTA), which operates fixed-route and paratransit service within Macon-Bibb County and a portion of Jones County. Eight of the ten remaining counties in the Middle Georgia region operate a Section 5311 Rural Public Transportation Program either on their own or under contract. The Middle Georgia Regional Commission serves as the primary contractor with sub-contractual agreements for the Georgia Department of Human Services' (DHS) Coordinated Transportation Program. Additionally, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission has worked in each county to create a Transit Development Plan (TDP) tailored to each county's needs. These plans outline transit service existing conditions, needs, and workable goals and objectives for these jurisdictions. Middle Georgia Regional Commission is also working with GDOT on a new Regional Transit Development Plan (RTDP) which will be complete by January 2025. The RTDP is focused on a 20-year planning horizon to understand the needs for public transit today and into the future.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Middle Georgia region was updated in 2015. As with previous versions, the plan continues to propose a system of interregional bike and shared-use trails connecting major regional points of interest and expansion of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in the region's school districts. Two shared-use trails identified in the plan (Ocmulgee Heritage Trail in Macon and the Oconee River Greenway in Milledgeville) have been constructed in stages over the past decade, and future stages are planned for both trails. The Central Georgia Rail Trail Association (CGRTA) is working to establish a rails-to-trail project which will connect Macon and Milledgeville along abandoned CSX railway. Finally, Bicycle and Pedestrian advocacy groups have been established in Baldwin County, Macon-Bibb County and Wilkinson County, although the level of activity varies significantly.

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## RAILROADS, TRUCKING, PORT FACILITIES, AND AIRPORTS

Freight rail continues to be an important transportation mode for industry and commerce in the Middle Georgia region. Two Class I railroad operations serve the Middle Georgia region, Norfolk Southern (NS) and CSX Railways (CSX). Macon-Bibb County is the primary railroad hub in the region, with the presence of Brosnan Yard (NS). From Macon, major shipping routes run north to Atlanta, east to Savannah, and south to Albany and Valdosta. Active rail lines serve many of the other cities in the region as well. Within the region, NS manages the majority of Class I railway, passing through 10 of the 11 counties. CSX services approximately eight miles of active track in Baldwin County, with a 38-mile stretch of inactive line connecting Milledgeville to Macon.

In addition to the Class I rail, two short lines are present in Middle Georgia. The Georgia Central Railway begins at Brosnan Yard in Macon, running southeast through Twiggs County on the way to the Port of Savannah. The Georgia Southern Railway runs for 30 miles between the City of Roberta in Crawford County, intersecting with the NS line in Fort Valley, and terminating in the City of Perry in Houston County. These railways combined transport approximately 20,000 carloads per year along their lines.

Passenger rail service is not available in the Middle Georgia region. The City of Forsyth and Macon-Bibb County are on a proposed commuter rail line to Atlanta. Portions of Middle Georgia are included in a federally designated high-speed rail corridor; Macon-Atlanta-Charlotte. The 2021 Georgia State Rail Plan produced by the GDOT, proposes preliminary service between Macon and Atlanta as either a rail or Thruway bus shuttle that would connect Middle Georgia to the Amtrak station located in Atlanta.

In 2018, the I-75 Central Corridor Coalition was established to serve as a forum for planning and discussion on future growth and development within the corridor. The mission of the I-75 Central Corridor Coalition is to advance smart growth within the corridor as a center of economic prosperity for Georgia in the 21st Century. One avenue of smart growth is the pursuit of passenger rail between Macon and Atlanta. Membership in the Coalition consists of 19 local elected officials and community economic development partners from seven counties – including City of Forsyth, Macon-Bibb County and Monroe County. The Coalition has had success in securing federal congressionally directed funding for an environmental assessment of passenger rail service between Atlanta, Macon, and Savannah. In addition, the Coalition has worked with GDOT and the Federal Railroad



Administration for Georgia to be selected for the Corridor ID program – a planning program that will result in the creation of a service development plan for the expansion of passenger rail throughout the corridor.

The nearest large hub airport (defined as having more than 10,000 passenger boardings each year) to the Middle Georgia region is the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, which provides access to domestic and international commercial passenger service. Five public airports currently provide general aviation service to the Middle Georgia region: Middle Georgia Regional Airport and Herbert Smart Downtown Airport in Macon-Bibb County, Baldwin County Airport, Perry/Houston County Airport, and Hawkinsville/Pulaski County Airport.

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## TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE CONNECTION

A successful transportation network can be identified by how closely it serves the existing and future travel demands of the area. One way to achieve this is to consider existing and future land-use early and often in the transportation planning process. Transportation and land-use have not always been connected during the planning process in Middle Georgia communities. Land-use and development patterns have a direct impact on the type of transportation systems needed to support adequate and equitable mobility options for all citizens. By considering the pressure that local land-use patterns places on the existing transportation networks, communities within the region can make development decisions that result in the transportation systems which insure proper mobility.

As it pertains to the road network, regional congestion issues are mostly relegated to the I-75/I-16 interchange in Macon-Bibb County, the stretch of I-75 traversing Peach County, and extending from the entrances to Robins Air Force Base in Houston County on Georgia Highway 247. MATS, WRATS, and GDOT have programmed projects which will address these concerns over the next five to ten years. Additionally, more localized congestion can be found within areas where suburban sprawl has spread more rapidly than the transportation networks could keep up. On-going challenges for the communities affected by this sprawl will be identifying projects that address the problems and coordinating funding to support these projects.

Outside of the urban and suburban centers, small communities and the rural countryside are not affected as much by congestion caused by sprawl. The primary concern for a number of these communities is heavy truck traffic passing through. The disruption caused by large trucks impacts ongoing efforts to revitalize small downtown areas, and the speed and frequency of this traffic poses a safety concern for all users of the transportation network. In some communities, the construction of highway bypasses can alleviate the downtown truck traffic concern. The most recent example of this is the North Gray Bypass in Jones County. While this bypass offers relief from the truck traffic which has plagued the City of Gray over the past half-century, land-use and development patterns may be altered by the construction of a new, limited-access, and high-capacity roadway. As this additional infrastructure is opened to public use, there is concern that existing businesses, which have chosen to locate in historic, downtown Gray, may choose to relocate to capture traffic on the new bypass.

## APPENDIX D: STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT REPORT

To best represent Middle Georgians, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission solicit input both regionally and locally through a public engagement of two public hearings, three regional level meetings and a local listening session in each Middle Georgia county. Input and advisement to the needs of the region was solicited in the form of the Steering Committee, Stakeholder Committee, and the public at large. These meetings were advertised through local papers of circulation and announcements held at the monthly Regional Commission’s meetings. Details about the public process was also posted on the Middle Georgia Regional Commission’s website and social media

### STEERING COMMITTEE

For the process of guiding and reviewing the planning process a Steering Committee was established which consisted of the Middle Georgia Regional Council. The council’s knowledge and technical advisement provided insight to local conditions and governmental operation challenges. The Steering Committee also participated in stakeholder meetings and local listening sessions. These members are listed below:

<b>Baldwin County</b>	Johnny Westmoreland	Denese Shinholster	Jonathan Jackson	Lee Slade	Shonya Mapp
<b>Crawford County</b>	Dale Jump	Jay Andrews	Kerry Dunaway	Jackie McCowen	Dennis Kelly
<b>Houston County</b>	Dan Perdue	John Harley	George Slappey	LaRhonda Patrick	Clifford Holmes
<b>Jones County</b>	Chris Weidner	Ed Barbee	LaShunda Whipple	Francis Adams	Joy Carr
<b>Macon-Bibb County</b>	Lester Miller	Seth Clark	Carlos McCloud	Wallace Herring	Michelle Parks
<b>Monroe County</b>	Gregory Tapley	Eric Wilson	Trey Gavin	Mike Dodd	Lamarcus Davis
<b>Peach County</b>	Martin Moseley	Michael Chidester	James Khoury	James Richardson	Juanita Bryant
<b>Pulaski County</b>	Jenna Mashburn	Shelly Berryhill	Sara Myers	Staci Vickers	Sylandi Brown
<b>Putnam County</b>	Bill Sharp	John Reid	Maurice Hill, Jr.	Gary Sanders	Charles Gray
<b>Twiggs County</b>	Ken Fowler	Charles Williams	Virginia Lee	Kathryn Epps	Judy Sherling
<b>Wilkinson County</b>	Flint Shepherd	Joyce Denson	Marty Dominy	Lloyd Hatfield	Aprill-Adside Smith
<b>State of Georgia</b>	James Vaughn	Nancy Nash	Tommy Stalnaker	James A. Epps, Jr.	George Greer

### ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Beyond the Steering Committee more than 500 additional stakeholders were directly invited to attend either a regional planning meeting or a local listening session. MGRC is grateful to all participants who aided in the process of providing public input.



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## PUBLIC HEARINGS AND COMMUNITY MEETING SUMMARIES

To facilitate completion of a robust public engagement process, MGRC hosted a total of 16 public meetings across the region at which residents or stakeholders could provide their inputs on the direction of the region and what priorities should be pursued. Additional information about each meeting is provided below.

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### INITIAL PUBLIC HEARING

The initial public hearing for the plan update was held on November 16, 2023, at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission office, during a regular MGRC Council meeting. The hearing was advertised in the Macon Telegraph. At this meeting MGRC staff described the planning process and opportunities where stakeholders and members of the public would be able to share their thoughts.

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### REGIONAL MEETING #1 - SWOT

The initial Kick-off, regional meeting was held at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Office on December 6, 2023. In this meeting, after a brief introduction to the planning process, the stakeholders were prompted to take part in brainstorming exercises. This exercise is referred to as Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Topics of analysis were presented thematically, by ten preselected topics of Broadband and Technology, Community Facilities and Services, Economic Development, Healthcare and Aging, Housing, Land Use, Natural and Cultural Resources, Public Administration and Regional Cooperation, Transportation, and Utility Infrastructure. Topic discussion facilitated through four stations corresponding with either Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, or Threats. To encourage stakeholder conversation, a poster of preselected Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that corresponded with comments received through other planning efforts of Comprehensive Plans, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs), and the previous Middle Georgia Regional Plan Agenda were displayed. A flip chart was at each station, and through a facilitated discussion at each station Stakeholders contributed comments that directed Regional Commission Staff.

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### LOCAL LISTENING SESSIONS

Local engagement at each of the eleven Middle Georgia counties began following the initial regional meeting. These local meetings were held from January through the end of February. The first of these meetings were held in Wilkinson County on January 16, 2024. The last meeting was for Macon-Bibb on February 21, 2024. These meetings were informational, and local feedback was prompted through a discussion of data trends and by sharing results of the SWOT analysis.

The eleven counties of Middle Georgia face different challenges and circumstances. As some counties' population is increasing, others are declining. Demographic data and SWOT analysis discussion was tailored to highlight differences in these conditions. Demographics included data trends of educational attainment, housing conditions, income and employment, housing, and population dynamics. Stakeholders were also asked to evaluate regional SWOT trends to determine if the trends were applicable in their specific community.

The final item of discussion from these meetings was in reference to land use development and areas of special interest. Those in attendance reviewed maps of their respective jurisdiction. These maps displayed local development trends and resources that are impactful to the region. Attendees were encouraged to make recommendations for changes based upon their experiences as citizens.

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### REGIONAL MEETING #2 – GOALS AND POLICIES

The second regional meeting was held April 6, 2024, at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Office. In the second regional meeting, results of both the SWOT analysis from the first regional meeting and the comments from the local listening session were presented for discussion. These topics were presented for comment in the form of goals, corresponding policies, and standards of community of excellence. Stakeholder discussion was facilitated in a roundtable discussion style, with each table being assigned two of the ten topics for discussion. Stakeholders were given 30 minutes to discuss and make suggestive changes. After 30 minutes, the topic at table was changed, and stakeholders were given the option to stay or switch tables to discuss a different topic.

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### REGIONAL MEETING #3 – OPEN HOUSE

The Final Regional Stakeholder meeting was held March 26, 2024, at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission as an open house. Stakeholders from every prior session were invited to attend. Staff produced posters that highlighted the priority needs and opportunities, with corresponding strategies. Stakeholders here encouraged to make changes. The Regional Development Map, Regional Conservation Map, and the Areas of Special Interest Maps were also presented for discussion and recommendations.

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### FINAL PUBLIC HEARING

The final public hearing was held on April 11, 2024, at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission office, during a regular MGRC Council meeting. The hearing was advertised in the Macon Telegraph, and additional feedback was solicited.

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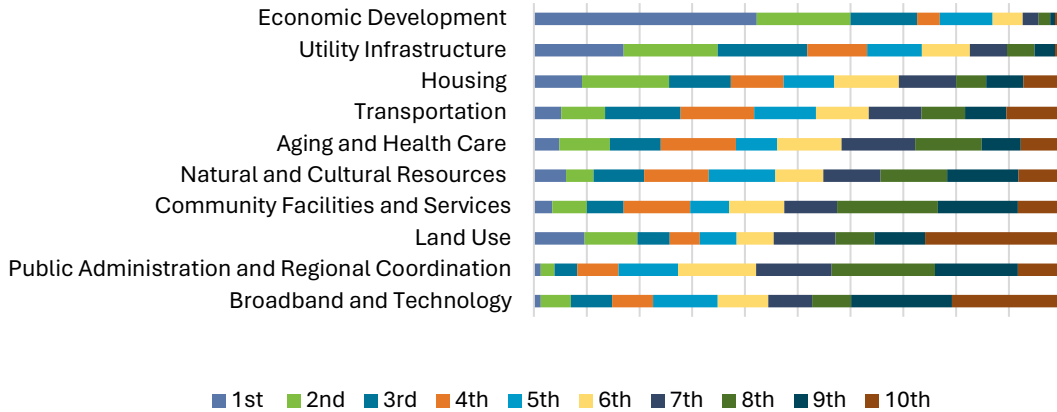
### SURVEY TOOL

Additional information was received from the public-at-large through a public survey. The public survey was launched on March 12, 2024. Upon closure of the public survey on April 12, 2024, there were 230 responses.

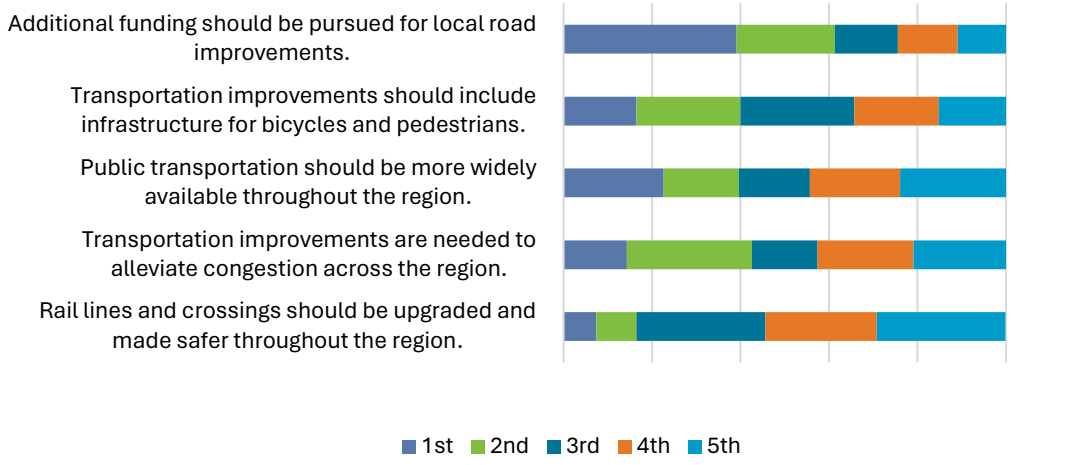


**APPENDIX E: REGIONAL SURVEY RESULTS**

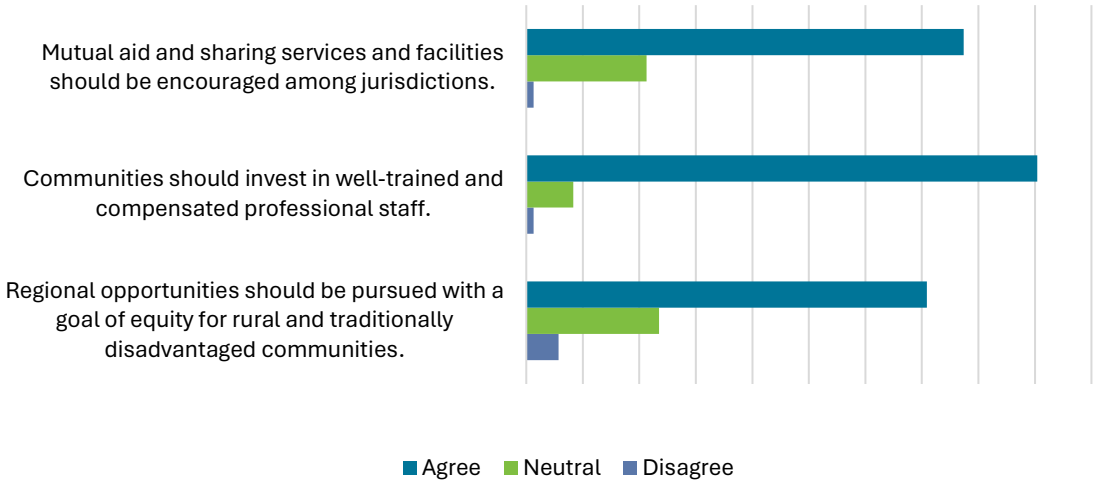
When planning for prosperity in Middle Georgia, which of the following ten topics are your highest priorities? (Please rank 1 through 10, with 1 being of greatest priority and 10 being the least)



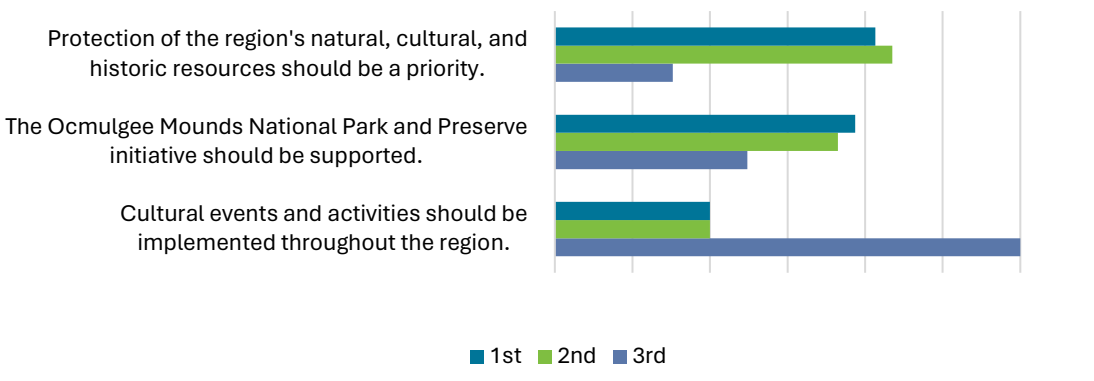
Which of the following statements would you consider your highest priorities? (Please rank 1 through 5, with 1 being of greatest priority and 5 being the least)



Of the following statements, do you agree, are neutral, or disagree?

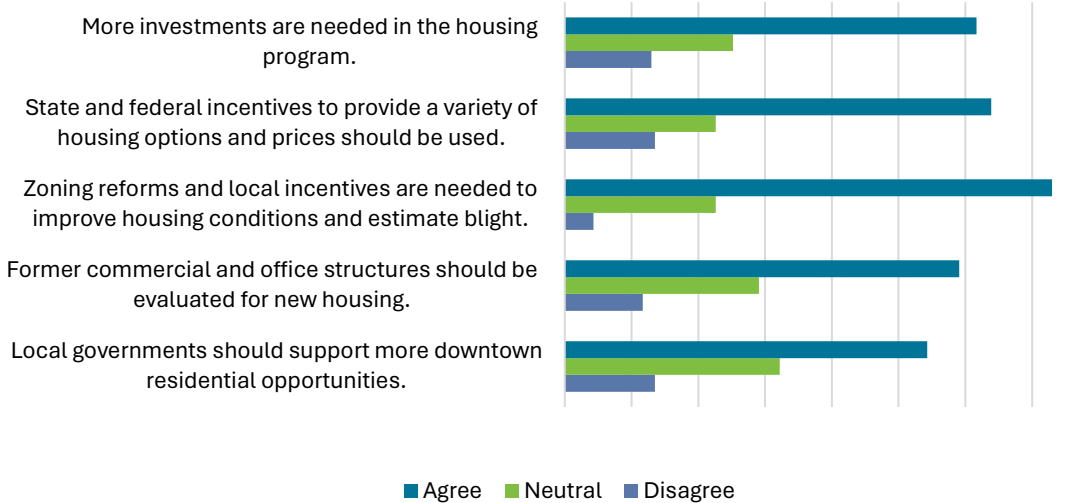


Which of the following statements would you consider your highest priorities?  
(Please rank 1 through 3, with 1 being of greatest priority and 3 being the least)

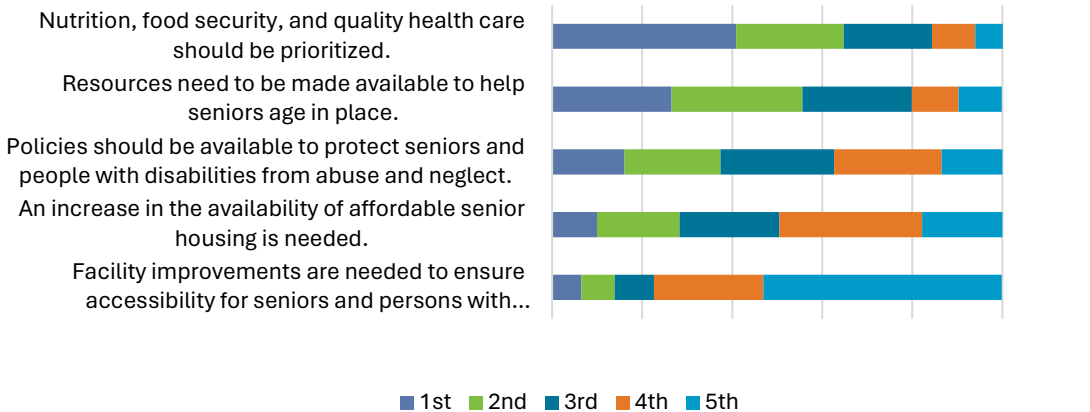




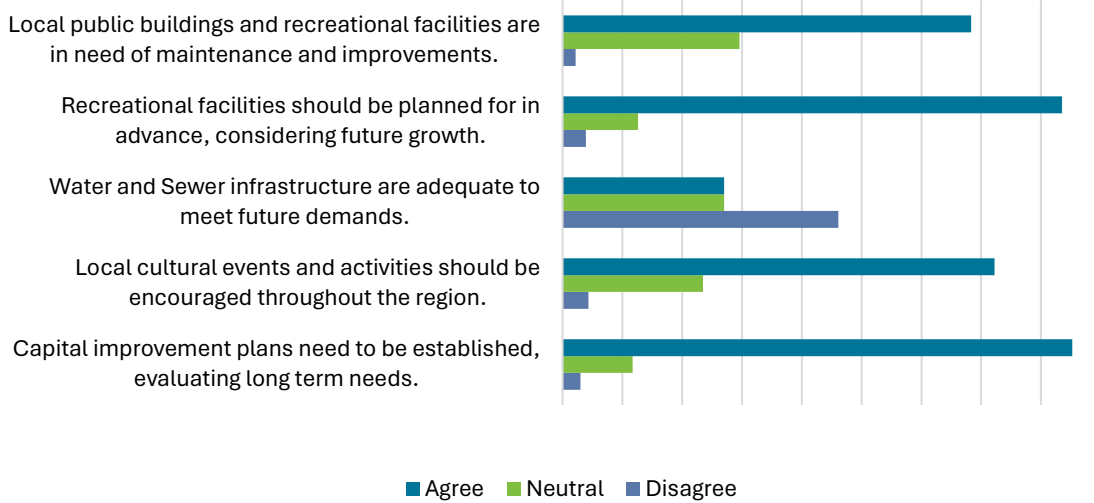
Of the following statements, do you agree, are neutral, or disagree?



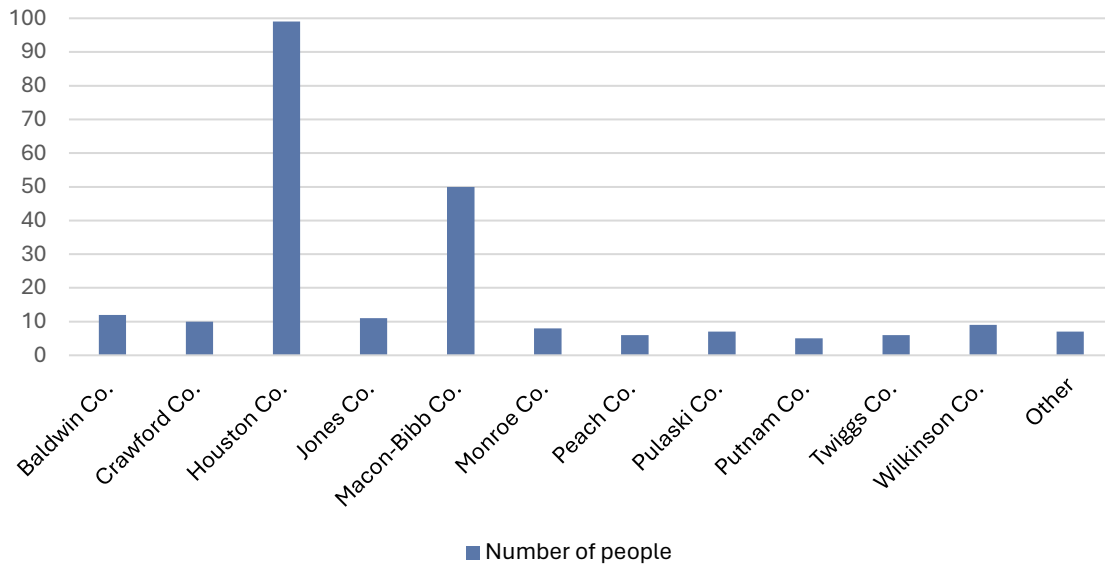
When planning the prosperity of Middle Georgia, which of the following statements would you consider top priority? (Please rank 1 through 5, with 1 being of greatest priority and 5 being the least)



### Of the following statements, do you agree, are neutral, or disagree with the following statements?

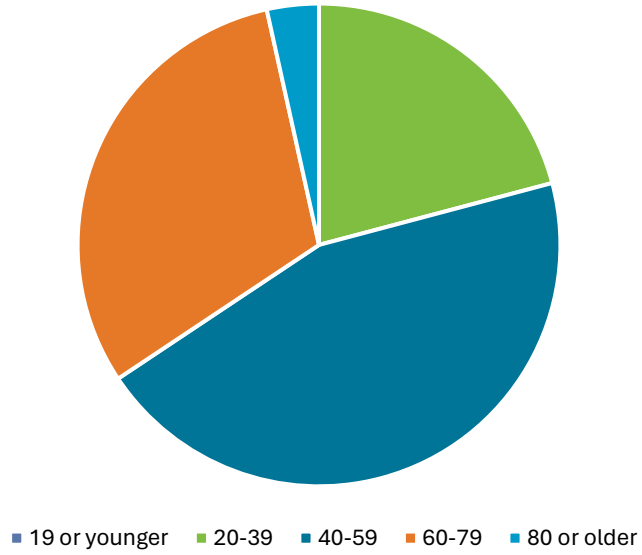


### In which county do you reside?

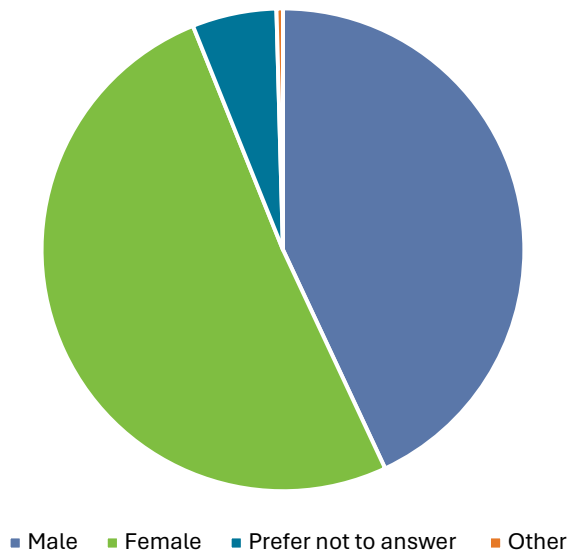




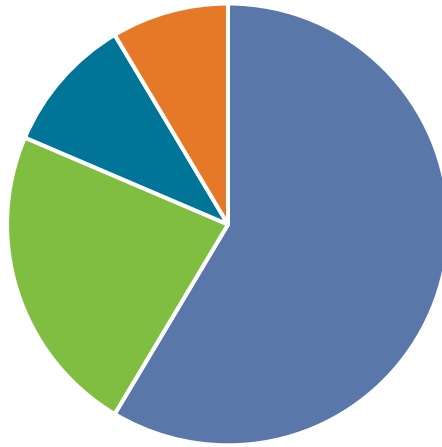
### What age group do you represent?



### What is your gender?

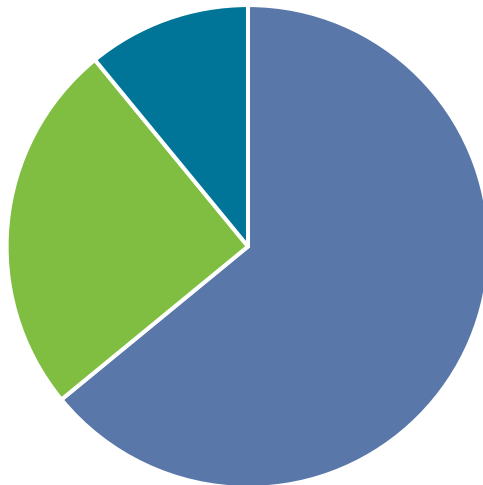


### What is your race?



■ African-American (Black) ■ Asian or Pacific Islander ■ Caucasian (White)  
■ Prefer not to answer ■ Other

### What is your ethnicity?



■ Hispanic or Latino ■ Non Hispanic or Latino ■ Prefer not to answer



**APPENDIX F: MIDDLE GEORGIA RWP IMPLEMENTATION STATUS REPORT**

Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
<b>Leverage state and federal assets for economic development projects, specifically in areas that are eligible for additional need-based assistance.</b>	Appropriate funding opportunities should be pursued where possible to support economic development initiatives, locally and regionally.	Provide technical assistance to local governments, authorities, and chambers for economic and industrial recruitment.	MGRC, EDA, GDEcD	Ongoing
		Pursue funding avenues to aid in providing infrastructure to industrial parks/sites.	MGRC, DCA, USDA, CGJDA	Ongoing – Two OneGeorgia Equity projects remain underway for sewer improvements to industrial sites in Twiggs County and Jones County.
		Research, prepare and administer grants/loans to support economic development.	MGRC	Ongoing – MGRC is continuing to administer EDA and OneGeorgia EDGE grants for the City of Byron, Macon-Bibb County, Monroe County, and MidState Energy.
	Local communities should work with state and federal economic development partners to better meet their needs.	Develop and aid in the implementation of projects/activities identified in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region.	MGRC, EDA	Ongoing
		Administer an EDA CARES Act revolving loan fund to provide much-needed capital to businesses in Middle Georgia affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.	MGRC, EDA	Ongoing – MGRC continues to promote these lending opportunities. Focus is gradually shifting from COVID-19 recovery as a preminent objective.
<b>Implement local incentives to assist new and existing businesses.</b>	Long-term plans should be developed to ensure availability of economic development resources.	Conduct economic impact analysis to determine cost-benefit for economic development projects.	MGRC	Ongoing
	Local communities should work with state and federal economic development partners to better meet their needs.	Provide technical assistance for the creation of state Opportunity Zones, Rural Zones, local Enterprise Zones, and Redevelopment Plans.	MGRC, DCA	Ongoing – Redevelopment Plans updated for Byron and Fort Valley in late 2023/early 2024.
<b>Work with Middle Georgia Economic Alliance and other local partners to support and market region to potential economic investors.</b>	Local governments should coordinate marketing strategies for tourism and industry recruitment.	<i>Assist in a joint economic development initiative to market the region.</i>	<i>MGRC, MGEA, Local Governments</i>	<i>Canceled – While collaboration continues, no single marketing effort has been identified.</i>
		Promote, encourage, and engage in economic development initiatives of joint development authorities.	MGRC, CGJDA, FLRDA, MGRDA	Ongoing
<b>Redevelop blighted or vacant buildings and brownfield sites to help strengthen local economies.</b>	Promote and encourage downtown revitalization plans as a means for promoting job creation and entrepreneurship.	<i>Prepare grant applications for remediation of brownfield sites.</i>	<i>MGRC, EPA, Local Governments</i>	<i>Complete – MGRC submitted an assessment grant which will allow future remediation applications. Item to be updated in the next Regional Work Program.</i>
		Assist with the development of downtown development or redevelopment plans and special tax districts.	MGRC, Local Governments	Ongoing – Gordon Downtown Strategic Plan completed in 2023, but Rural Zone application was unsuccessful.

Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update	
<b>Invest in the region's technological infrastructure to attract makers, entrepreneurs, and young professionals.</b>	Local communities should work with state and federal economic development partners to better meet their needs.	<i>Implement the Digital Economy Plan for the Middle Georgia region.</i>	<i>MGRC, GTA, Local Governments</i>	<i>Complete – Broadband accessibility has greatly increased and new planning efforts can now be pursued.</i>	
		Assist communities with the implementation of Smart City technologies to improve service delivery and attract high-skill workers to the region.	MGRC, OLDCC, MGEA, GTA, GaTech, Local Governments	Ongoing – The GA-AIM project includes opportunities to continue supporting the implementation of Smart City technologies as part of building a workforce ready for AI. Project will be listed under Broadband and Technology in the next plan.	
		<i>Facilitate the ongoing operation of Makerspaces in Middle Georgia.</i>	<i>MGRC, GTA, Local Governments</i>	<i>Complete – Makerspaces are in operation, have been bolstered by federal funding (secured by MGRC) and continue to thrive within the region.</i>	
<b>Address the needs of RAFB and aerospace assets to attract new development and expansion of current industries.</b>	Appropriate businesses should be identified and targeted for industry recruitment and/or expansion efforts, based on the strategic assets of the community.	Assist the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Partnership and its efforts to support Robins Air Force Base activities, expansion efforts, and new missions.	21st Century Partnership, MGRC	Ongoing	
<b>Use natural and cultural resources, especially Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Park, to help grow tourism and economic prosperity in the region.</b>	Local communities should work with state and federal economic development partners to better meet their needs.	<i>Engage in planning processes and funding opportunities that support the expansion of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Park along the corridor from Macon-Bibb County to Hawkinsville.</i>	<i>MGRC, GDEcD, ONPPI, Local Governments</i>	<i>Complete – The National Park Service has completed a Special Resource Study evaluating future expansion potential for the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park. The study was transmitted to Congress where legislation has been introduced to establish the new park and preserve. This project will be updated to reflect future planning needs in the corridor and will be moved to the Natural and Cultural Resources section of the next plan.</i>	
		Appropriate businesses should be identified and targeted for industry recruitment and/or expansion efforts, based on the strategic assets of the community.	Promote Middle Georgia tourism industry.	MGRC, GDEcD, Local Governments	Ongoing – Listed under Natural and Cultural Resources in the next plan.
		Assist with the promotion of the film industry in Middle Georgia.	MGRC, GDEcD	Ongoing	
<b>Use EB-5 designation to encourage foreign investment.</b>	Appropriate funding opportunities should be pursued where possible to support economic development initiatives, locally and regionally.	<i>Promote and provide technical assistance with the Foreign Trade Zone and EB-5 Foreign Investor Program in eligible areas of Middle Georgia.</i>	<i>MGRC</i>	<i>Canceled – while designations remain, MGRC has not had the capacity or need to actively assist.</i>	



Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
<b>Assist local government participation in the programs designed to promote affordable and accessible housing options.</b>	Promote and encourage development that provides a variety of residential options, including affordable housing opportunities.	Provide technical assistance to local Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) communities.	MGRC, DCA, UGA	Ongoing – MGRC is currently supporting Baldwin County as they continue the GICH Program. MGRC also assists communities in maintaining Certified Alumni status. Crawford County is planning a 2024 GICH application.
		<i>Promote affordable housing options.</i>	<i>MGRC, Housing Authorities, DCA, Local Governments</i>	<i>Canceled – Language to “promote” is too vague to be actionable in this context. It remains a priority (though not an action item) in future planning documents.</i>
		<i>Promote and provide safe, clean, and affordable housing choices.</i>	<i>Housing Authorities, Local Governments</i>	<i>Canceled – Language to “promote” is too vague to be actionable in this context. It remains a priority (though not an action item) in future planning documents.</i>
	Address substandard and dilapidated housing in Middle Georgia communities.	Assist local governments with preparing Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) and CDBG grant applications.	MGRC, Housing Authorities, DCA, Local Governments	<i>Canceled – MGRC lacks the staff capacity to adequately write and administer additional CHIP/CDBG housing grants at this time.</i>
<b>Create urban redevelopment plans and strengthen local code enforcement activities to alleviate substandard housing conditions and blight.</b>	Address substandard and dilapidated housing in Middle Georgia communities.	Perform Housing Assessments, focusing on both urban and rural areas, and data collection, as requested.	MGRC, DCA, Local Governments	Ongoing – Assessment of Haddock completed in 2023.
		Assist local governments with preparation of housing-focused Urban Redevelopment Plans.	MGRC, Local Governments	Ongoing – Redevelopment Plans for Byron and Fort Valley had a strong housing focus.
		Assist local governments with the creation and management of Land Bank Authorities.	MGRC, Local Governments	Ongoing
		Provide technical assistance to local governments in reviewing and updating zoning codes to remove barriers to appropriate housing development.	MGRC, Local Governments	Ongoing – currently assisting several local governments with updates to zoning codes.
<b>Support local public and non-profit agencies to meet housing needs and provide homebuyer education services.</b>	Promote and encourage development that provides a variety of residential options, including affordable housing opportunities.	Promote, encourage, and participate in housing-related workshops, conferences, and symposia.	MGRC, Local Governments, Housing Authorities	Ongoing
		Prioritize lending opportunities for housing developments focused on low- or mixed-income, elderly, or residents with disabilities.	MGRC	<i>Canceled – MGRC lending programs do not typically focus on lending for housing developments.</i>
		Partner with local governments, housing authorities, social service agencies, non-profits, etc. to promote housing options for those most in need.	MGRC	Ongoing
<b>Leverage availability of vacant storefronts in downtown areas for new housing developments.</b>	Promote and encourage development that provides a variety of residential options, including affordable housing opportunities.	Consider town centers as housing destinations for potential "pioneer" populations, such as baby boomers and college students.	MGRC, Housing Authorities, DCA, Local Governments	<i>Canceled – As a matter of federal policy, the region does not want to promote certain housing users over others.</i>
		Assist local governments with identifying resources and funding options (such as the LIHTC, DDRLF, and CDBG programs) to support affordable infill housing development.	MGRC, Housing Authorities, DCA, Local Governments	Ongoing

Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
<p><b>Assist local governments that lack technological or Geographic Information Systems (GIS) capabilities to improve the efficiency of their services.</b></p>	<p>Local governments should evaluate options for lowering the costs of service delivery and improving efficiency</p>	<p>Create, maintain, promote, and host web pages for local governments, development authorities, and other regional entities.</p>	<p>MGRC, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing – Listed under Broadband and Technology in the next plan. MGRC continues to host about 35 websites for local governments, authorities, and nonprofits.</p>
		<p>Create, maintain, and promote internet-based map services.</p>	<p>MGRC, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing – Listed under Broadband and Technology in the next plan.</p>
		<p>Create road and structure point data layers to support E-911 mapping services.</p>	<p>MGRC, GEMA, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing – Listed under Broadband and Technology in the next plan.</p>
		<p>Explore the feasibility of acquiring highly accurate elevation (LiDAR) data and region-wide ortho-aerial photography.</p>	<p>MGRC, USGS, NOAA, FEMA, GIO, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing – Listed under Broadband and Technology in the next plan.</p>
		<p>Provide tax parcel maintenance service.</p>	<p>MGRC, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing – MGRC continues to provide for four counties.</p>
		<p>Develop strategies for enhancing social media and communications capabilities for MGRC and local governments</p>	<p>MGRC</p>	<p>Ongoing – Listed under Broadband and Technology in the next plan.</p>
<p><b>Develop plans for local infrastructure maintenance and improvements, including planning for capital to support continued growth.</b></p>	<p>Local governments should evaluate options for lowering the costs of service delivery and improving efficiency.</p>	<p>Assist with land development ordinances or implementation of impact fees to reduce potential losses from new service provision.</p>	<p>MGRC, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing– Listed under Transportation in the next plan.</p>
		<p>Assist local governments with the development and preparation of Solid Waste Management Plans, as requested.</p>	<p>MGRC, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
		<p>Develop risk assessment reports and assist in the local hazard mitigation and pre-disaster mitigation planning processes.</p>	<p>MGRC, GEMA, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing – MGRC is completing updates for Baldwin County and will shortly thereafter start for Peach County.</p>
<p><b>Apply for state and federal grants and loan funding for improvements to community facilities throughout the region, specifically in areas of high need.</b></p>	<p>Local governments should monitor infrastructure to make repairs or upgrades as necessary and follow best management practices.</p>	<p>Assist local governments in efforts to upgrade and/or extend water/sewer infrastructure.</p>	<p>MGRC, DCA, USDA, GEFA, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing – The City of Ivey received a 2023 CDBG for water improvements. Also administering water/sewer grants for Forsyth.</p>
	<p>Pursue funding sources for maintenance and new construction of community facilities.</p>	<p>Assist local governments with improvements to stormwater management and drainage infrastructure.</p>	<p>MGRC, DCA, USDA, EPD, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing – Administering drainage grants for Hawkinsville and Irwinton.</p>
		<p>Assist local efforts to upgrade or develop new community facilities, such as Senior Centers, Head Start, Workforce Development, Boys and Girls Clubs, Libraries, etc.</p>	<p>MGRC, DCA, USDA, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing – Administering a CDBG Health Department grant in Twiggs County, and a USDA health clinic grant application for Twiggs County, in partnership with the Development Authority of the City of Jeffersonville and Twiggs County. Finally, MGRC is assisting Pulaski County CDBG administration for a new Senior Center.</p>
		<p>Assist local governments in efforts to upgrade or develop new government administration facilities.</p>	<p>MGRC, USDA, Local Governments</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
	Develop and preserve recreational programs.	Assist local efforts to upgrade or develop new recreational facilities and services.	MGRC, DNR, NPS, Local Governments	Ongoing – Crawford County requested congressionally directed spending for a youth center.
	Local communities should focus on lowering ISO ratings and supporting law enforcement agencies.	Assist local efforts to upgrade or develop new public safety facilities and services.	MGRC, FEMA, DOJ, USDA, DCA, Local Governments	Ongoing – MGRC regularly assists with various FEMA and DOJ grants to aid firefighting and police activities.
		Assist communities with grant funding to support critical infrastructure and disaster resilience.	MGRC, FEMA, Local Governments	Ongoing – MGRC is administering funds for the City of Ivey force main that was damaged in the Lake Tchukolako dam failure.
	Natural gas service should be considered an important asset for economic development.	Assist local governments in efforts to upgrade and/or extend natural gas infrastructure.	MGRC, USDA, EDA, Local Governments	Ongoing – MGRC currently administering an EDA grant for MidState Energy to expand capacity.
<b>Collaborate with historical societies, historic preservation commissions, and similar groups to protect areas where culturally important resources are at risk</b>	Promote development practices that do not negatively impact natural, cultural, and historic resources.	Conduct and comment on Section 106 undertakings involving historic resources.	MGRC, HPD	Ongoing
		Provide outreach, training, and technical assistance on Historic Preservation to local governments and other interested parties.	MGRC, HPD	Ongoing
	Capitalize on the natural, cultural, and historic resources that are present within the region, utilizing their presence to tell the region's story.	Conduct historic resources inventories.	MGRC, HPD	Ongoing
		Provide technical assistance to local Historic Preservation Commission, Historical Societies, and other organizations.	MGRC, HPD, Local Governments	Ongoing
		Assist local governments with activities related to the Certified Local Government program; assist in the preparation and adoption of local preservation ordinances.	MGRC, HPD	Ongoing
	Promote and support existing Main Street communities and encourage new cities.	Assist communities with state and federal historic preservation initiatives and programs including the Main Street Program and the Preserve America Institute.	MGRC, HPD, DCA	Ongoing
<b>Extend and enhance regional trails (Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, Lower Oconee Water Trail, Ocmulgee Water Trail, and Central Georgia Rail Trail) for economic growth, recreation, and connectivity.</b>	Promote additional avenues of access to natural, cultural, and historic resources for recreation, education, and tourism, as a driver of economic activity	Provide technical assistance to the Ocmulgee Water Trail Partnership, the Lower Oconee Water Trail group, and other blueway-focused organizations.	MGRC, HPD, DCA, Local Governments	Ongoing
		Provide technical assistance to the Central Georgia Rail to Trail Association for the development of the rail trail between Macon-Bibb and Milledgeville.	MGRC, GDOT, CGRTA	Ongoing
		Assist local governments with the preparation of applications and grant administration for the Recreational Trails Program.	MGRC, DNR, Local Governments	Ongoing – Two applications to the Recreational Trails Program are currently progressing to the second level in Eatonton and Jones County. Will be listed under Community Facilities in the next plan update.

Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
<b>Agritourism can promote the economy and the preservation of agricultural lands.</b>	Enhance existing natural, cultural, and historic resources with appropriate development.	Assist local governments and other community organizations in promoting small farms and small communities through the "Georgia Grown" and "Celebrating Rural Georgia" programs.	MGRC, DCA, Dept. of Ag., Local Governments, Community Organizations	Ongoing
<b>Ensure safe and secure campgrounds, parks, river access, and boat ramps, particularly where they are economic drivers.</b>	Enhance existing natural, cultural, and historic resources with appropriate development.	Assist local governments with preparing and administering Land and Water Conservation Fund grants.	MGRC, DNR, NPS, Local Governments	Ongoing – MGRC is assisting with the administration of LWCF grants for the City of Forsyth and Jones County. LWCF awards are in progress for Peach County and the City of Byron. Jones County has also received a Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grant for the property known as “Jake’s Woods.” Peach County also received a state ARPA grant for South Peach Park. Will be listed under Community Facilities in the next plan update.
<b>Update and promulgate the Regional Resources Plan to encourage tourism and help preserve resources.</b>	Promote the protection and utilization of the region’s natural, cultural, and historic resources.	<i>Prepare update to the Regionally Important Resources Plan.</i>	<i>MGRC, DCA</i>	<i>Complete – RIR Plan will be adopted concurrently with this document.</i>
<b>Enhance mobility management programs for residents who are elderly, disabled, or in need of reliable transit services.</b>	Encourage street connectivity and improved access and mobility for all persons, regardless of mode of transportation	Assist local governments with Transit Development Plans.	MGRC, GDOT, Local Governments	Ongoing – MGRC will complete the Putnam County and Wilkinson County TDPs in FY 2024.
		Facilitate the Middle Georgia Regional Mobility Manager program	MGRC, GDOT, Local Governments	<i>Complete – MGRC has administered this program for many years and will continue to do so. Additional recommendations to enhance the program are expected to be provided in the Regional Transit Development Plan.</i>
		Pursue expanded transit service and options for special population groups, including senior citizens (through 5311 programs), veterans, adult students, and workforce program participants.	MGRC, GDOT, Local Governments	Ongoing – GDOT’s Regional Transit Development Plan continues to be under development with the goals of analyzing coordination opportunities between transit systems and will examining opportunities for more effective service provision.
		Administer the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) Coordinated Transportation Program in the Middle Georgia region.	MGRC, DHS, Third-Party Operators	Ongoing
	Promote the logical connectivity of the regional transportation network	<i>Continue phased construction of Oconee River Greenway and the Fishing Creek Community Trail in Milledgeville and Baldwin County.</i>	<i>FHWA, DNR, Oconee River Greenway Authority, Local Governments,</i>	<i>Complete – Final phase has been funded and self-administered, so all MGRC work is complete while the community completes construction in the final corridor.</i>
		Provide technical assistance to bicycle and pedestrian stakeholder groups, including CGRTA, OWTP, LOWT, Wilkinson County Bike Friendly Committee, etc.	GDOT, MGRC, Local Stakeholders	Ongoing



Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
<b>Develop and implement local bicycle and pedestrian plans, with an emphasis on complete streets, particularly in downtown areas and near educational facilities</b>	Promote alternative transportation choices, such as walking, biking, carpooling, and taking public transportation.	Maintain and update the Middle Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian website.	MGRC, GDOT	Ongoing – needs a thorough update.
		<i>Update WRATS Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.</i>	<i>MGRC, GDOT, WRATS</i>	<i>Canceled – no longer a community priority.</i>
		Prepare Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans for interested communities.	MGRC, GDOT, Local Governments,	Ongoing
		Perform Safe Routes to School walk safety audits or travel plans for elementary and middle schools.	GDOT, MGRC, Local Schools	Ongoing – MGRC staff supported walk audits and Safe Routes to School programs at L.H. Williams Elementary School and Burdell-Hunt Elementary in late 2023/early 2024. King-Danforth Elementary School is expected to launch a program later in 2024.
		Facilitate Complete Streets and other training for local communities.	GDOT, MGRC, Local Stakeholders	Ongoing
<b>Investment in maintenance and improvement of regional transportation infrastructure.</b>	Coordinate with the Ga. Dept. of Transportation, Georgia Ports Auth., State Road and Tollway Auth., and other state agencies, for funding improvements for the transportation network.	Serve on Macon Area Transportation Study Technical Coordinating and Policy Committees.	MGRC, MATS	Ongoing
		Serve on Warner Robins Area Transportation Study Technical Coordinating and Policy Committees.	MGRC, WRATS	Ongoing
		Assist local governments, MPOs, and other entities in understanding transportation funding opportunities.	MGRC, Local Governments, MATS, WRATS	Ongoing
	Improve the condition of the region's road network, with attention to the condition of high-priority bridges, roads, and culverts.	Support local governments in finding innovative solutions for transportation investments.	MGRC	Ongoing
		Assist local governments with identifying and prioritizing bridges, culverts, and unimproved roads for future investment.	GDOT, MGRC, Local Stakeholders	Ongoing
<b>Address areas where rapid development strains the transportation grid.</b>	Coordinate land use planning activities with transportation network improvements.	Incorporate policies and strategies in local comprehensive plans that link land use and transportation improvements.	MGRC, DCA, GDOT, Local Governments,	Ongoing
<b>Pursue the development of an inland port, container yard, or intermodal hub to facilitate freight movement.</b>	Promote the planning for, construction of, and movement on regional and inter-regional freight routes.	<i>Identify opportunities for improving the east-west connectivity across the Ocmulgee River for a more efficient flow of goods, services, and people.</i>	<i>MGRC, Local Governments</i>	<i>Canceled – Middle Georgia has not been a primary location of interest for the Georgia Ports Authority in recent years. Project will likely remain canceled until interest in a Middle Georgia site is generated by the Georgia Ports Authority.</i>

Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
<b>Development of a multi-modal transportation hub with passenger rail and bus service.</b>	Communicate the importance and feasibility of passenger rail service.	Promote passenger rail and bus service between Macon-Bibb and Atlanta.	MGRC, Local Governments, Georgians for Passenger Rail	Ongoing
		Promote and support the efforts of the I-75 Central Corridor Coalition, including planning for smart growth and transit-oriented development—highlighted by passenger rail service opportunities within the corridor.	MGRC, TRRC, ARC, I-75 CCC, MGCAC, MATS, WRATS, Local Governments	Ongoing – I-75 Central Corridor Coalition and Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition are continuing to promote this investment and are actively pursuing opportunities to prioritize this project at the state and federal levels.
<b>Beautification and enhancement of key transportation corridors.</b>	Improve the condition of the region's road network, with attention to the condition of high-priority bridges, roads, and culverts.	Assist local governments with efforts to beautify transportation corridors, particularly community gateway entrances, including wayfinding and placemaking.	MGRC, Local Governments	Ongoing
<b>Explore joint use of the runway at Robins Air Force Base and other opportunities for partnerships related to aerospace industries.</b>	Coordinate with the Ga. Dept. of Transportation, Georgia Ports Auth., State Road and Tollway Auth., and other state agencies, for funding improvements for the transportation network.	<i>Explore opportunities to take advantage of the region's existing airfields, such as public-private partnerships and expansion needs.</i>	<i>MGRC, OLDCC, Airport Authorities, RAFB, Local Governments</i>	<i>Canceled – With planned expansion at Middle Georgia Regional Airport, joint use is no longer a priority.</i>
<b>Pursue a reduction in sprawl through infill development, adaptive reuse of existing structures, and open space protection measures in places of rapid growth.</b>	Smart growth principles should be promoted throughout the region, especially in urban and suburban communities. This includes the promotion of infill development and grayfield or brownfield redevelopment.	Assist local governments in the preparation/modification and adoption of local land use ordinances, zoning ordinances, and/or development regulations.	MGRC, DCA	Ongoing – currently working with several communities to finish zoning ordinance updates.
		Promote growth and development in areas that can be efficiently served by existing infrastructure.	MGRC, I-75CCC, MGCAC	Ongoing
		Encourage the placement of new schools near existing infrastructure.	MGRC	Ongoing – Broadened to include other types of community infrastructure.
<b>Undertake inter-jurisdictional land use planning to promote cohesive development and efficient movement of people, goods, and services.</b>	Local governments should coordinate their land use planning across jurisdictional boundaries.	Administer and manage the Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) program in the Middle Georgia region.	MGRC, DCA	Ongoing – Duplicate item to be kept under Public Administration and Regional Cooperation in next plan.
		Provide Geographic Information Systems (GIS) digital mapping and Global Positioning System (GPS) data collection services to local governments	MGRC, GIO	Ongoing – Listed under Broadband and Technology in the next plan.



Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
<b>Promote dialogue between businesses and educational institutions to ensure that students receive necessary skills for success.</b>	Promote collaboration between school systems, private schools, technical colleges, colleges, universities, and local industry.	Provide employer-specialized recruiting services to regional industries.	MGRC, MGC, GDEcD, TCSG, colleges/univ.	Canceled – MGRC workforce programs transferred to Middle Georgia Consortium as of 7/1/2023
		Coordinate applicant certification services for job seekers.	MGRC, MGC, GDEcD, TCSG, colleges/univ.	Canceled – MGRC workforce programs transferred to Middle Georgia Consortium as of 7/1/2023
		Encourage the development of targeted, innovative workforce development programs in public K-12 schools.	MGRC, MGC, GDEcD, TCSG, school districts,	Canceled – MGRC workforce programs transferred to Middle Georgia Consortium as of 7/1/2023
<b>Grow collaboration between workforce development agencies.</b>	Provide tools to develop the workforce for the region's existing industries.	Provide technical assistance to job seekers.	MGRC, MGC, GDEcD, TCSG, colleges/univ.	Canceled – MGRC workforce programs transferred to Middle Georgia Consortium as of 7/1/2023
		Promote collaboration between workforce development agencies throughout the region.	MGRC, MGC, GDEcD, TCSG, colleges/univ.	Canceled – MGRC workforce programs transferred to Middle Georgia Consortium as of 7/1/2023
<b>Expand registered apprenticeship programs, work-based learning, and on-the-job training opportunities.</b>	Promote collaboration between school systems, private schools, technical colleges, colleges, universities, and local industry.	Undertake and support workforce development and implementation initiatives.	MGRC, MGC, GDEcD, TCSG, colleges/univ.	Canceled – MGRC workforce programs transferred to Middle Georgia Consortium as of 7/1/2023
		Coordinate and promote on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities.	MGRC, MGC, GDEcD, TCSG, colleges/univ.	Canceled – MGRC workforce programs transferred to Middle Georgia Consortium as of 7/1/2023
<b>Expand job training and transitional support for those leaving the military.</b>	Provide tools to develop the workforce for the region's existing industries.	Promote awareness of transitional support, on-the-job training, and veterans' preference opportunities for veterans seeking employment.	MGRC, MGC, VECTR Center, GDEcD, TCSG, colleges/univ.	Canceled – MGRC workforce programs transferred to Middle Georgia Consortium as of 7/1/2023
<b>Provide job training for the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated.</b>	Provide tools to develop the workforce for the region's existing industries.	Promote awareness of state-level criminal justice reform among job seekers.	MGRC, MGC, GDEcD, TCSG, colleges/univ.	Canceled – MGRC workforce programs transferred to Middle Georgia Consortium as of 7/1/2023
<b>Publicize and promote counseling and advocacy services available to seniors.</b>	Encourage a person-centered approach to service provision.	Conduct wellness-related activities through the Wellness Program, providing education, health screenings, nutrition information, exercise, disease management and prevention, and safe usage of medication to seniors and persons with disabilities.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing – includes CDSM, Tai Chi, A Matter of Balance, Bingocize, PSMP, and Senior Farmers Market programs.
	Promote and encourage more effective ways to communicate with the senior population.	Market the Area Agency on Aging across all of Middle Georgia through community education programs and health fairs.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
		Plan, sponsor, and conduct a region-wide annual event in support and recognition of the U.S. Administration on Aging's Older American Month activities.	MGRC, Vendors	Canceled – the Senior Expo event has not been held since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. MGRC is recognizing Older Americans Month in different ways.

Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
<b>Provide assistance tailored to older residents to help them age in place while contributing to the local economy.</b>	Provide resources to help seniors age in place.	Operate as fully functioning Aging and Disability Resource Connection and No Wrong Door System.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
		Complete eligibility assessments for the Elderly and Disabled Waiver Program, which helps elderly and/or individuals with disabilities remain in their homes and communities and prevents seniors from being prematurely institutionalized.	DCH, MGRC	Ongoing
		Administer in-home case management program for non-Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services clients.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
		Function as Local Contact Agency for nursing home residents seeking to transition to the community. Offer Options Counseling to assist residents in locating community resources.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
		Administer the Nursing Home Transition for the Department of Community Health. These funds enable funding to follow a person from a nursing home back to their community.	DCH, DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
	Encourage a person-centered approach to service provision.	Administer Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSME) program.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
		Administer the Matter of Balance fall prevention program.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
		Administer the Elder Abuse Prevention Program by providing public education and outreach to identify and prevent elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
	Focus on the long-term sustainability of aging services programs.	Administer the National Family Caregiver Support Program.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
	<b>Expand the regional network of community-based services with coordination between public, private, and non-profit organizations.</b>	Focus on the long-term sustainability of aging services programs.	Maintain, update, and secure new resources for inclusion in the statewide Empowerline Pro database.	DHS, MGRC
Provide programmatic and fiscal training, technical assistance, and monitoring to Area Agency on Aging subcontractors.			DHS, MGRC	Ongoing
Encourage a person-centered approach to service provision.		Create and maintain Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan to serve as lead as notified by Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services, or by a localized emergency team in the Middle Georgia counties, to assist seniors and/or persons with disabilities.	DHS, MGRC	Ongoing



Priority	Strategy	Action	Partners	Implementation Status Update
<b>Assist local governments with innovation to meet the changing needs of seniors.</b>	Remain cognizant of the quickly growing senior population during planning efforts.	Encourage local governments to incorporate universal design concepts and account for the aging population in local comprehensive plans.	DCA, MGRC	Ongoing
		Provide local governments with information regarding grant funding opportunities for senior housing.	DCA, MGRC	Ongoing
<b>Increase cooperation and support of economic growth and prosperity, regardless of the exact location where growth and development occur.</b>	Promote and encourage cooperation and collaboration between jurisdictions in developing solutions for shared regional issues.	Facilitate the Middle Georgia Regional Leadership Champions program.	MGRC, UGA, Georgia Power	Ongoing – 7 <sup>th</sup> cohort will launch in 2025
		Provide assistance and training opportunities for the Middle Georgia Economic Alliance.	MGRC	Ongoing
		Provide staff support to the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority.	MGRC	Ongoing
		Promote and provide technical assistance for P4 partnerships between Robins Air Force Base and the surrounding communities.	MGRC, 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Partnership	Ongoing
		Provide technical assistance and staff support to the I-75 Central Corridor Coalition.	MGRC, TRRC, ARC	Ongoing– Listed under Transportation in the next plan.
<b>Coordinate planning related to the region’s shared natural and cultural resources in support of tourism and economic development.</b>	Promote and encourage cooperation and collaboration between jurisdictions in developing solutions for shared regional issues.	Help local governments support the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative.	MGRC Local Governments	Ongoing – Listed under Natural and Cultural Resources in the next plan.
		Coordinate with other regional commissions and local governments to plan US Bike Routes.	MGRC, GDOT	Ongoing– Listed under Transportation in the next plan.
		Assist GDOT in implementing the state’s Complete Streets Policy throughout the region.	MGRC, GDOT	Ongoing– Listed under Transportation in the next plan.
	Assist in communication between affected jurisdictions and public entities on decisions likely to impact them.	Provide technical assistance and staff support to the Middle Georgia Clean Air Coalition and take actions to improve air quality.	EPA, EPD, MGRC, Local Governments	Ongoing – Listed under Natural and Cultural Resources in the next plan.
		<i>Assist local governments with coordinating TMDL and Watershed Improvement Plans.</i>	<i>MGRC, EPD</i>	<i>Canceled – Staff certification has lapsed and no recent interest from local governments.</i>
<b>Facilitate communication and dialogue among regional leaders to help create a regional approach to solving problems.</b>	Assist in communication between affected jurisdictions and public entities on decisions likely to impact them.	Conduct Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs to ensure consistency of proposed projects with regional and local plans.	MGRC	Ongoing
		Review and comment on long-range transportation plans for consistency with the Regional Plan.	MGRC	Ongoing
		Review and comment on developments in close proximity to resources identified in the Regional Resource Plan.	MGRC	Ongoing
		Review all Developments of Regional Impact submitted by Regional Commissions that adjoin Middle Georgia.	MGRC	Ongoing
		Review statewide plans and programs for local and regional application.	MGRC	Ongoing
		Review local comprehensive plans and service delivery strategies.	DCA, MGRC	Ongoing

## APPENDIX G: ADOPTION RESOLUTION

<INSERT AFTER PLAN ADOPTION>