



James A. Epps, Jr., Chairman

Laura M. Mathis, Executive Director

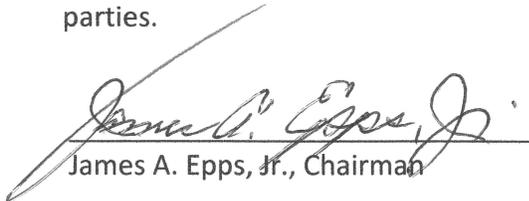
**A RESOLUTION  
OF  
THE MIDDLE GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION COUNCIL TRANSMITTING THE  
MIDDLE GEORGIA REGIONALLY IMPORTANT RESOURCES (RIR) PLAN TO THE GEORGIA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS FOR REVIEW**

**WHEREAS**, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs requires every Regional Commission in the State to prepare a Regionally Important Resources (RIR) Plan for the protection and management of the state's important natural and cultural resources; and

**WHEREAS**, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission has updated its RIR Plan according to the rules and procedures provided by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for Regionally Important Resources; and

**WHEREAS**, a required regional public hearing was conducted on April 11, 2024, providing regional stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the contents of the RIR Plan and to offer suggestions for additions or revisions to the Plan;

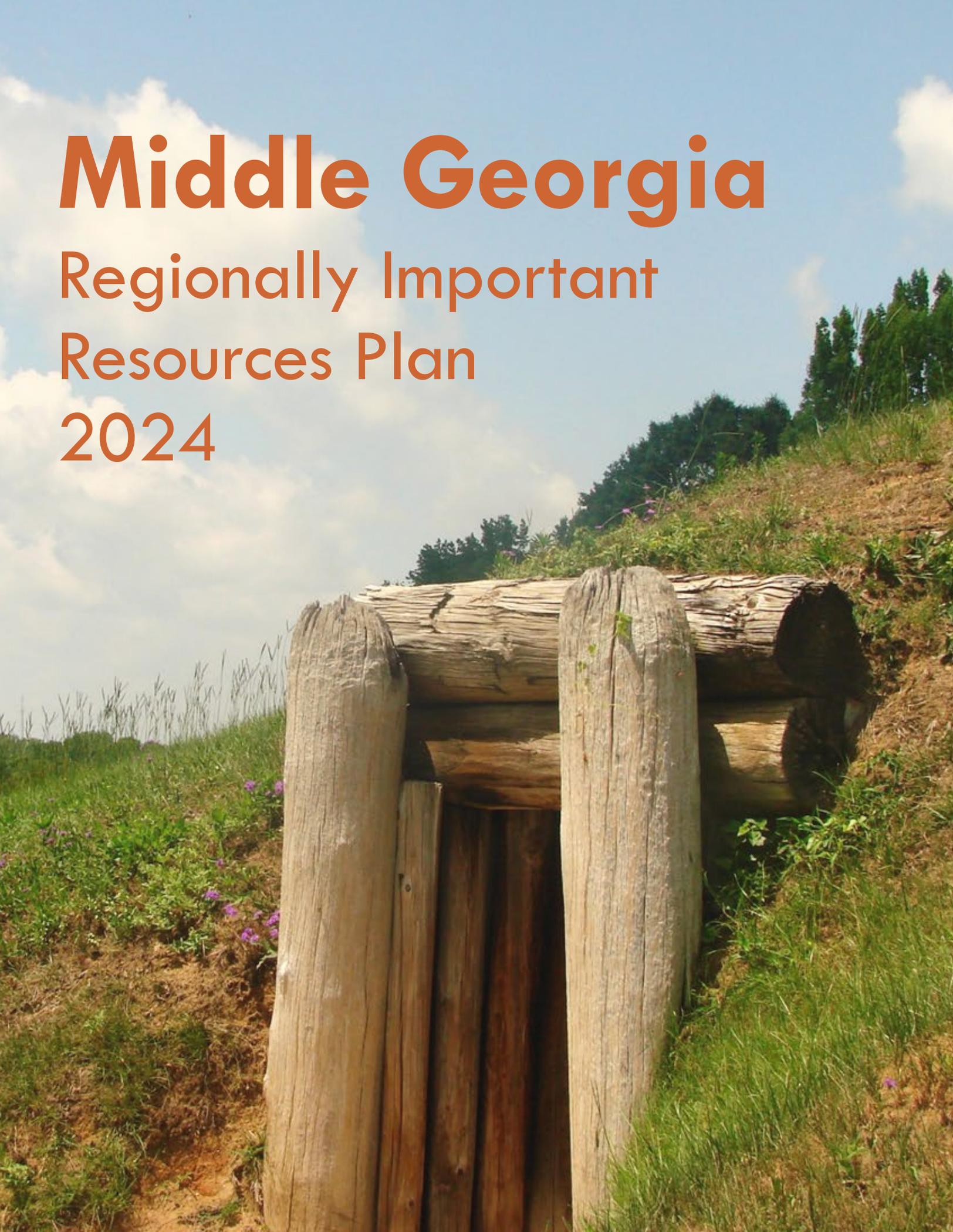
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** on the 11th day of April 2024, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Council, meeting in regular session, hereby transmits the draft Middle Georgia Regionally Important Resources Plan to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review, comment, and notification of interested parties.

  
James A. Epps, Jr., Chairman

  
Laura M. Mathis, Executive Director

# Middle Georgia

## Regionally Important Resources Plan 2024



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*Cover Photo: Earth Lodge at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park (MGRC Photo)*



## Introduction

This plan is intended to serve as a guide for the protection and management of the many important natural, cultural, and historic resources found throughout the eleven counties and twenty cities of Middle Georgia. These resources, hereinafter referred to as Regionally Important Resources (RIR), are those determined to be of value to the region and thus the state. Many of these may also have vulnerabilities due to pollution, incompatible development, or neglect. This plan seeks to lay a foundation for improved local, regional, and state level coordination in protecting and managing these important resources.

## About this Plan

The plan has been prepared by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC) in accordance with the rules and procedures established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (effective July 1, 2009) for the identification of RIRs, the development of a plan for protection and management of the RIRs, and for review of activities potentially impacting the RIRs.

The plan contains three categories of RIRs: Water Resources, Protected Lands, and Heritage Sites. Each section begins by discussing general guidance for appropriate development patterns and suggested policies for resource preservation. Individual resources are then listed throughout the plan. Finally, a map is included that highlights the identified resources and conservation areas.

## Methodology

This plan is an update to the 2010 Regionally Important Resources Plan, which was developed with a strong focus on effective data collection, research, and public engagement. Resources that were identified within the 2010 planning process were generally retained in this document without further research being required. The exceptions to this approach are the Raines-Carmichael House and the Sidney Lanier Cottage, both of which are located in Macon-Bibb County. Today, both of these properties are held by individuals who utilize these homes as private residences. While the architecture and historical significance of these homes are notable, the interest of privacy for individual residents was important, and that planning efforts could be better focused on those sites with either public or nonprofit ownership and/or management.

This plan update occurred concurrently with updates to the 2024 Middle Georgia Regional Plan. At each of the stakeholder sessions referenced in that plan, this document was also discussed. RIR nominations were also solicited at each of the single-county meetings held during that process. The MGRC Council was also kept informed throughout the planning process. MGRC received one new nomination that was not previously included in the plan or on the expanded list of natural and cultural resources developed by MGRC. This nomination was for Camp Martha Johnston in Crawford County—one of four camps owned by the Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia across the central and southern parts of the state. While the site was identified as having potential vulnerabilities, the overall significance of the property did not quite rise to the regional level due to the number of comparable facilities.



The most extensive updates were made to the map of resources and green infrastructure. MGRC staff followed the guidance from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs rules by first reviewing areas identified in the state's Environmental Planning Criteria. Other areas that are already preserved were also added to the map. The review of all of these areas presented some challenges. Namely, the addition of areas with higher groundwater pollution susceptibility would have resulted in large swaths of the region being considered a priority area for conservation. With this in mind, staff and stakeholders evaluated them and opted to remove those areas as automatically qualifying in the region's green infrastructure layer. Finally, the boundaries of the green infrastructure layer were smoothed to eliminate islands and minor appendages. This map layer was then utilized in the 2024 Middle Georgia Regional Plan and was thoroughly vetted by stakeholders as part of that planning process as well.

## Plan Implementation

The Middle Georgia Regional Commission will actively promulgate the plan in an effort to coordinate activities and planning of local governments, state agencies, land trusts, and conservation or environmental advocacy groups toward protection and management of the identified RIRs. Specifically, MGRC will work with and encourage each of these stakeholders to coordinate their activities to foster protection of the RIRs.

Additionally, MGRC will encourage local governments in the region to adopt appropriate protection measures, policies, and enhancement activities that will promote protection of the region's important resources. The Regional Commission will also encourage local governments to include the areas on the RIR Map as conservation areas in their respective local comprehensive plans and will review and evaluate local comprehensive plans for consistency with the RIR Plan.

Finally, the listing of best practices to be considered by developers when designing new developments in proximity to RIRs will be used by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission when reviewing all Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) proposed to be located within one (1) mile of any area included on the RIR Map. The DRIs will be reviewed for consistency with the recommended development standards.



Ocmulgee River (Photo Credit: Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative)

## Water Resources

Among the most important natural resources necessary to maintain an acceptable quality of life are those that can collectively be referred to as water resources. The residents of the Middle Georgia region, not unlike people all over the world, depend on water to provide for a myriad of diverse needs; among these are drinking water, sewage treatment, electrical generation, industry and mining, recreation, and irrigation of crops.

In general, Middle Georgia residents enjoy excellent water quality and water-related recreational opportunities; however, ever-increasing development and the constant danger posed by non-point source pollution from agricultural operations and urban run-off make water source protection a vital concern. The fact that drought and other weather-related phenomenon can negatively affect water supplies further accentuates the regional importance of water resources. Only through careful monitoring and thoughtful planning can the region's water resources and continued supply of quality water be maintained and preserved.

### Suggested Development Practices:

Water resources can be threatened by the potential of both point and non-point pollution entering waterbodies and negatively impacting water quality. Urban development activities can also lead to a loss of wetlands and wildlife habitats. In an effort to reduce the vulnerability of these important water resources to these threats, the following best management practices are recommended for use by developers or landowners when designing new developments within one mile of the Regionally Important Water Resources. These practices are for all types and scales of development that might impact RIRs. Additionally, they are consistent with State Planning Recommendations for development. This listing will also be used by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission for reviewing Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) located within one mile of these resources.

- ◆ For developments that meet a DRI threshold, survey the environmental features of the site including topography, soils, hydrology, trees, vegetation, and habitats. Preserve the sensitive areas identified by this survey by setting them aside as parks, trails, or greenbelts.
- ◆ Establish aquatic buffers (beyond the minimum required) that serve as natural boundaries between local waterways and new development and to protect on-site wetlands.
- ◆ Limit the proportion of the site that can be covered in impervious roofs and pavements.
- ◆ Limit pavement, replacing it with vegetated soil or with porous pavement materials wherever possible to allow underlying soil to absorb rainfall and treat pollutants.
- ◆ Construct vegetated swales as a replacement to curbs or drainage pipes and construct bioretention areas or rain gardens in parking lot islands or in pockets of residential areas.
- ◆ Limit the amount of parking to the absolute minimum necessary for the particular land use.
- ◆ For new agricultural operations, consult representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and the County Extension Service, as necessary to enact appropriate best management practices.
- ◆ For new forestry operations, consult representatives from the Georgia Forestry Commission and initiate appropriate best management practices.

## Suggested Policies and Protection Measures:

What follows is a list of general policies and protection measures that are intended primarily as guidance for local governments in planning and decision-making that affect the water resources identified in this plan. In addition, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission will use these policies and protection measures when reviewing local comprehensive plans for consistency with regional plans, and to encourage local governments in the region to adopt the policies and enhancement activities most appropriate for the protection of the resources located within their communities.

- ◆ More compact urban development will be encouraged in order to protect environmentally sensitive resources from encroachment.
- ◆ Low impact development that preserves the natural topography and existing vegetation of development sites will be promoted.
- ◆ Infrastructure networks will be developed to steer new development away from areas containing sensitive natural resources.
- ◆ The institution of green infrastructure and other techniques to protect water quality will be promoted in all new developments and redevelopments.
- ◆ Education on the benefits and practices of environmental stewardship will be promoted.
- ◆ Environmental protection strategies, such as transfer development rights, conservation easements, fee simple acquisition, and conservation tax credits will be utilized if possible.
- ◆ The community will work in coordination with state and federal agencies and other stakeholders to implement the TMDL Implementation Plans for those streams listed on the EPA 303(d) list.
- ◆ Amend existing or create new land development and stormwater management ordinances that will promote or require the implementation of the development practices listed above.
- ◆ Develop and implement a “greenspace” plan that will identify and prioritize key lands for acquisition within one mile of the Regionally Important Resources.
- ◆ Adopt an ordinance that protects and replenishes the significant tree canopies within one mile of the water resources.
- ◆ Establish a community environmental awareness and stewardship education program, involving citizens, builders and developers that has as one of its objectives, establishing an understanding of the importance of protecting the water resources in the community and how the general public can participate in efforts to protect such resources.
- ◆ Evaluate existing on-site sewerage management programs, with particular attention to sites within a mile of water resources, and amend on-site sewerage management regulations and requirements, as necessary to reduce the potential risk of contamination.
- ◆ Prepare, adopt, and implement source water protection plans for water supply intakes.
- ◆ Apply for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ WaterFirst Program.
- ◆ Sponsor or participate in annual clean-up events along water resources and their tributaries.
- ◆ Prepare, adopt, and implement National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit-driven watershed assessments and protection plans; PL-566 watershed plans; Section 319(h) grant watershed assessments; and local erosion, sedimentation, and pollution controls that provide watershed planning and management strategies.
- ◆ Prepare, adopt, and implement local water resources ordinances that address the DNR Environmental Planning Criteria.

## Identification of Sites:

In the 2010 Regionally Important Resources Plan, a total of seven water resources were identified that met the standard of regional significance. These resources all remain included in the 2024 plan update. MGRC staff conducted a review of other rivers, lakes, and streams to determine which sites may also warrant consideration within this section of the plan. First, the Towaliga River and High Falls Lake were added. High Falls State Park was previously listed as a resource, and this inclusion clarifies that the waterbody itself, including the river that feeds (and is fed by) the lake, is also significant—not merely the park site. Two additional lakes were added due to their value and vulnerability (respectively) with Javors Lucas Lake and Lake Tchukolako. Finally, recognizing that a number of creeks are listed as impaired, MGRC identified a number of these sizeable streams that flow through areas where they are susceptible to pollution. One exception to this list is the Little River, located in Putnam County. While the river is listed as impaired on the EPA 303(d) list, the river is largely isolated within the Oconee National Forest. This stretch of the river is well protected, indicating that the contaminants most likely come from organic waste or other natural sources.

## Ocmulgee River



Ocmulgee River (Photo Credit: Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative)

Value

The Ocmulgee River serves as the geographic spine of the Middle Georgia region. Going back to the earliest days of human habitation in Georgia, the Ocmulgee River was a cradle of civilization. The Ocmulgee River and adjacent wetlands contain many high-priority plant, animal, bird, and fish habitats. The beautiful diversity of topography from steep hills to lowland pasture along with a bountiful forest containing oak, hickory, sweetgum, pine trees, and abundant wildlife provides many scenic viewsheds for residents and visitors alike and a haven for those interested in hunting, bird and animal observation, and photography. Additionally, the Ocmulgee River provides outstanding passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of the Middle Georgia region including fishing, boating, canoeing/kayaking, tubing, etc.

Vulnerability

Within the urbanized section of the Ocmulgee River Basin, wetlands along the Ocmulgee River and its tributaries are under threat due to development along the river. Communities in the urbanized areas of Middle Georgia have adopted ordinances to protect these wetland areas, and it is important that such measures are properly enforced so that the beauty and usefulness of the wetland areas can be maintained. The high-priority plant, animal, bird, and fish habitats in the southern portion of the Ocmulgee River corridor may also be potentially threatened by the sale of property to private developers interested in more intensive uses. Finally, another challenge exists near Juliette. In recent years, conservationists have discovered adverse impacts to local fish populations from the Juliette Dam, which can prevent them from reaching their spawning grounds. This is another issue that may need to be addressed in the coming years.

Oconee River



Oconee River and Oconee River Greenway (Photo Credit: Visit Milledgeville)

### Value

An extremely important natural resource, the Oconee River is the water source to the City of Milledgeville's two water supply intakes. Additionally, the Oconee River and adjacent wetlands contain many important plant, animal, bird, and fish habitats; a diversity of topography; a bountiful forest with various species of hardwood and pine trees; abundant wildlife; and outstanding scenic viewsheds for residents and visitors alike to enjoy. The Oconee River corridor also provides outstanding passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of the Middle Georgia region including hunting, hiking, fishing, boating, canoeing/kayaking, tubing, bird and animal observation, and photography.

### Vulnerability

As an important water supply source, the Oconee River is vulnerable to contaminants coming from existing point and non-point sources reaching the intakes and posing risks to the water supply. Specifically, the Oconee River is vulnerable to both urban runoff and rapid growth and development upstream. Additionally, the erodibility of area soils contributes to sedimentation problems. Similarly, the passive recreational and environmental value of the Oconee River is vulnerable to point and non-point pollution contamination entering the river.

Wetlands along the Oconee River and its tributaries are under threat due to new development. Communities along the Oconee River have adopted ordinances to protect these wetland areas, and it is important that such measures are properly enforced so that the beauty and usefulness of the wetland areas can be maintained. Additionally, with the continued development of the Oconee River Greenway and its interconnected series of parks, it is critical that affected local governments and other public and private agencies ensure that sufficient regulatory measures are in place and stringently enforced to ensure appropriate management and protection of this regionally significant natural and scenic resource.

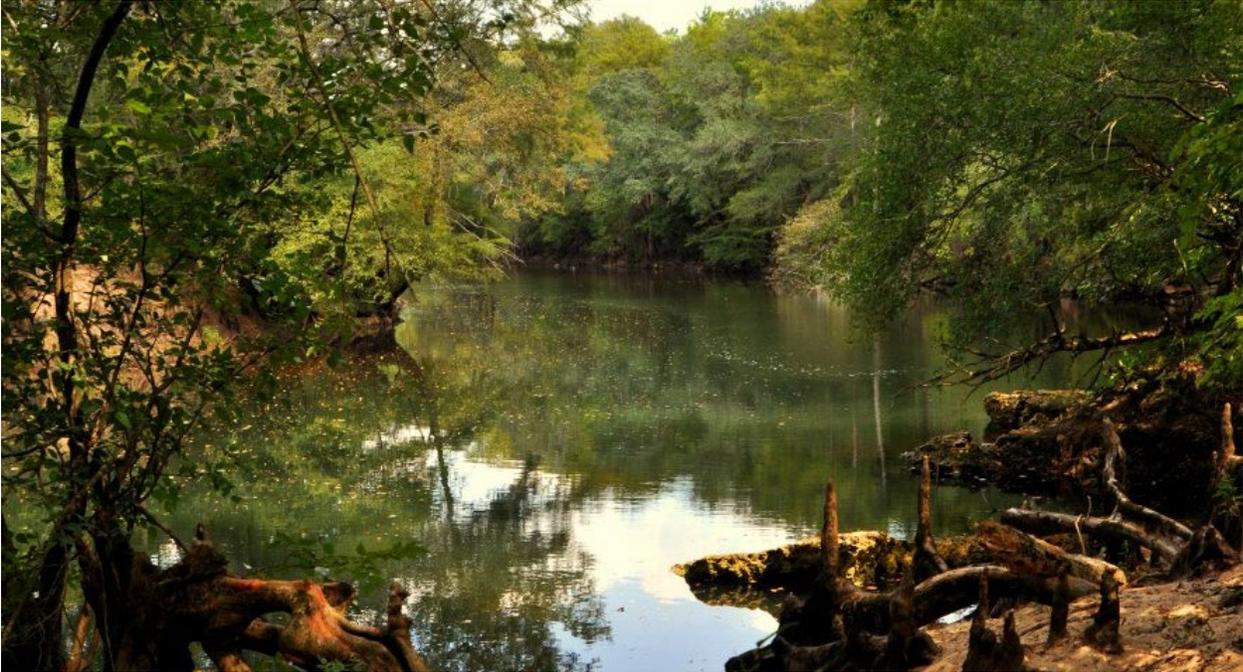
## Flint River

### Value

In Middle Georgia, the Flint River crosses the fall line and has an elevation drop of 400 feet over a 50-mile stretch before it reaches the coastal plain. Once used by a large number of steamboats between Bainbridge and its junction with the Chattahoochee, it is now a major supplier of irrigated water for the many cotton, peanut, and soybean agricultural operations that are located throughout the watershed. The Flint River is also home to an abundance of unique fish and plants including the shoal bass, highly touted among fishermen; the Halloween darter; the cypress tree; and over 20 species of freshwater mussels. It has been identified in the Georgia Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy as one of the high priority streams and watersheds in the Piedmont and Southeastern Plains eco-regions. The Flint River corridor provides outstanding passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of the Middle Georgia region including hunting, hiking, fishing, boating, canoeing/kayaking, tubing, bird and animal observation, and photography.

### Vulnerability

The Flint River and its tributaries are primarily vulnerable to point and nonpoint pollution contamination and sedimentation, potentially impacting water quality in the region. Located in more rural areas, most of the concerns come from upstream locations around metropolitan Atlanta.



*Flint River (Photo Credit: Flint Riverkeeper)*

## Towaliga River



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

Value

The Towaliga River is one of the largest tributaries of the Ocmulgee River that joins south of the river’s beginning at Lake Jackson. Among the features of the Towaliga River is the large outcropping at High Falls, which is one of the furthest north points of the Fall Line across Middle Georgia. Although the river starts in the southern suburbs of Atlanta and provides drinking water through Henry County, it also spends a while winding through Monroe County. In feeding High Falls Lake, the Towaliga River has a major role in supporting one of the region’s most picturesque sites. Here, as well as at the Ocmulgee River, cleanliness of the water is paramount.

Vulnerability

The Towaliga River is currently considered impaired throughout its entire journey through Middle Georgia due to the presence of fecal coliform bacteria and an imbalance in pH levels. This suggests continued vulnerability that may exist within the scope of the watershed, particularly as new development occurs in this fast-growing area. The high-priority plant, animal, bird, and fish habitats along the river may also be threatened by the development of more intensive uses along the river. This has already begun just north of Middle Georgia in Butts County and Lamar County. The potential for habitat loss is significant in these areas.

Lake Oconee



Lake Oconee (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)

### Value

Lake Oconee is an outstanding recreational and tourism resource for Middle Georgia. Available activities include fishing, boating, water skiing, hiking, camping, hunting, and birdwatching. Because of its beauty and the many recreational opportunities that it offers, the Lake Oconee area has become a magnet for extensive residential and commercial growth. Many residential properties along the lake have particularly high property values and can be attractive to retirees. In addition to its recreational and tourism importance, Lake Oconee could also serve as an important water supply source for new development that is projected for the area. Lake Oconee is owned and operated by Georgia Power.

### Vulnerability

An increasing percentage of the area surrounding Lake Oconee is becoming covered by impervious surface as a result of the rapid residential and commercial development that has taken place. This growth in the percentage of impervious surface can cause an increase in the stormwater runoff rates and the flow of non-point pollutants into Lake Oconee. This has been documented by the Center for Watershed Protection, which has conducted extensive work on the impacts of impervious cover on hydrologic, physical, water quality, and biological conditions of aquatic systems. Any reduction of the water quality in Lake Oconee would likely reduce the recreational value of the lake and the quality of life of those currently residing near the lake.

## Lake Sinclair

### Value

Lake Sinclair provides excellent recreational and tourism opportunities in the Middle Georgia area for both residents and visitors alike. Specific activities include boating, water skiing, camping, fishing, and birdwatching. Lake Sinclair is the site of several nationally recognized fishing tournaments and hosts nearly 5,000 avid fishermen each year. In contrast to Lake Oconee, which still draws a large share of users from tourism, the area around Lake Sinclair is gradually transitioning from seasonal residential to permanent residential development. This more permanent residency will create opportunities for new retail and service industry development in the area.

Lake Sinclair has become an important water source for existing and future residents and businesses along the lake and can serve other locations in Baldwin and Putnam Counties. At the convergence of Rooty Creek and Lake Sinclair, the Sinclair Water Authority has a water treatment plant that meets the water and fire protection demands of these areas. Lake Sinclair is owned and operated by Georgia Power.

### Vulnerability

A number of river and stream tributaries flow into Lake Sinclair. EPA has previously listed several of these streams as impaired or not meeting federal water quality standards. Contaminants from these impaired streams could find their way into Lake Sinclair and have a potential to impact the Lake's value as a recreational resource and a source of water supply. However, this has not been noticeable to date, and most of the lake's feeder creeks flow through densely forested areas, implying that contaminants are simply natural organic waste rather than a type of pollution that can be controlled through local or federal regulations.



*Lake Sinclair (Photo Credit: Visit Milledgeville)*

The lake has also seen progress in recent years with the demolition of Plant Branch, a large coal-fired power plant. Previously, Plant Branch discharged water into Lake Sinclair. Those thermal discharges from Plant Branch resulted in Lake Sinclair being listed by EPA for not meeting federal water quality standards for temperature. However, with the decommissioning of that facility, Lake Sinclair now supports its designated uses.

However, as many of the older vacation homes and trailers are replaced by newer larger homes along the lake, the older, deteriorating septic systems are replaced, thus significantly reducing the potential for fecal contamination to enter the lake. There are, however, many older systems that are still operating that need to have constant attention to ensure that septic tank leaks do not occur and do not adversely impact the water quality of the lake.

## Lake Juliette

### Value

This 3,600-acre lake provides residents and visitors of Middle Georgia with an important source of passive recreation including fishing, sailing, camping, and picnicking. Additionally, Lake Juliette and the surrounding areas are home to a number of species of birds, fish, and other wildlife. Impounded in 1980, the lake provides cooling water for Georgia Power Company's Plant Scherer electric generating facility. Currently, there are two boat ramps owned and maintained by Georgia Power Company that are available for public use.

Vulnerability

As with any water resource, Lake Juliette can be endangered by flood, drought, and man-made occurrences. Located in a very rural section of Monroe County, between State Route 18, State Route 87/U.S. 23, and State Route 83, Lake Juliette does not appear to face any immediate threat or danger from uncontrolled development. However, Monroe County’s burgeoning growth necessitates thoughtful planning in order to protect this valuable resource from future development pressures. Surrounded by Rum Creek Wildlife Management Area, Lake Juliette makes up an important component of the region’s green infrastructure network.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division and Georgia Power Company both currently monitor the lake at periodic intervals for any signs of contamination that may come from Plant Scherer or nearby development. EPA currently does not list Lake Juliette on its list of impaired waterbodies. However, many residents and environmentalists have raised concern about the burial of coal ash near Plant Scherer. Monroe County is running new water lines to serve the Juliette community, and residents have expressed fear for their health. The Altamaha Riverkeeper has focused closely on this issue, and the lake bears continued examination given these risks to health and safety.



Lake Juliette (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)

## Lake Tobesofkee



Lake Tobesofkee (Photo Credit: Visit Macon)

### Value

Lake Tobesofkee, located in western Macon-Bibb County, is a manmade lake that was originally designed and constructed to help address flooding concerns in the area. In addition to serving this purpose, the lake also provides numerous recreational opportunities for residents. These include boating, fishing, camping, swimming, and picnicking. Tennis and softball facilities are also available in the parks located in the adjacent Lake Tobesofkee Recreation Area. A variety of parks and recreational developments have been established on the shores of Lake Tobesofkee, making it an attractive amenity to existing and new residential developments near the lake. The surrounding wetlands also provide an excellent habitat for a large variety of bird, fish, and wildlife species.

### Vulnerability

Several segments of Tobesofkee Creek upstream of Lake Tobesofkee have been listed by the EPA as impaired or not meeting federal water quality standards. Point and non-point source contaminants from these impaired segments could find their way into Lake Tobesofkee and have a potential to impact the Lake's value as a recreational resource and a habitat. Lake Tobesofkee is also vulnerable to the nonpoint contaminants coming from the new and existing developments along the lake. The lake is owned and operated by Macon-Bibb County and requires regular maintenance and upkeep by a public entity. In 2024, for example, this includes the need for relatively minor (but critical) improvements to the dam's cabling system, which if not addressed, could put the entire structure at risk. All of these efforts are important to maintaining the resource but create vulnerability as an older dam structure.

## Lake Tchukolako



*Lake Tchukolako, ca. April 2024, as the lake refills (MGRC Photo)*

### Value

Although one of the region's smaller lakes, Lake Tchukolako is a focal point for the entire community of Ivey, while also serving as a symbol of Wilkinson County's rural quality of life. Originally constructed by a single developer and transferred to the Holiday Hills Property Owners Association, Lake Tchukolako is a distinctive part of the community designed as a weekend vacation retreat. As the area grew into a proper city, the lake was what continued to draw people and economic activity to the surrounding area. Reactions from residents to the loss of the lake in recent years have underscored the site's value.

### Vulnerability

With the dam's ownership resting in private hands, the fate of the City of Ivey has also gone with that lake and the surrounding Holiday Hills Property Owners Association. In May 2020, the dam breached for the first time, draining the entirety of the lake and leaving behind a swampy marshland in its place. Financing challenges and project design delays strung out through 2022 when repairs were finally able to get underway. With the lake continuing to refill, the dam breached again in March 2023, in December 2023, and once more in February 2024. Thus far, each failure has only served as a temporary setback to progress, and as the dam continues to be reconstructed, the lake is once again refilling. However, this saga demonstrates what is likely the greatest risk to the lake—failure of the dam.

## High Falls Lake

### Value

High Falls Lake is predominately located in northern Monroe County but also reaches into neighboring Butts County and Lamar County. The lake is a core element of High Falls State Park and has been rated as one of the best bass fishing lakes in Georgia. Given its proximity to population centers throughout the I-75 corridor, as well as its notoriety as the furthest south place in the state to see a major waterfall, the lake is exceptionally popular with tourists. Boating, fishing, hiking, camping, and birdwatching are all common activities for visitors in the area.



*High Falls Lake (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

### Vulnerability

The areas around High Falls, however, are experiencing increased growth and development pressures from the Atlanta metro region. While Monroe County has attempted to control growth in the area, it remains important that the local governments bordering the park and other stakeholders maintain the water quality of the Towaliga River and its tributaries within federal water quality standards. This is more difficult with three counties sharing responsibility for planning, zoning, and economic development in the area. In recent years, many large-scale development projects have occurred a few miles north of High Falls Lake in Butts County—particularly around the intersection of State Route 16 with I-75. However, this development has also begun coming further south.

Since 2022, two major Developments of Regional Impact (DRI #3757 – High Falls Industrial and DRI #4031 – Hillwood South) have been submitted and reviewed in the area south of State Route 16. The most recent of those developments proposed more than 3 million square feet of warehouse and industrial space within the viewshed of High Falls Lake—in some areas as close as several hundred feet from the shoreline. While recognizing the potential for economic development in adjacent communities provided by these sites, the vulnerability to High Falls Lake is quite elevated by these recent trends—causing significant concern for residents in the area.

### Javors Lucas Lake



*Javors Lucas Lake (Photo Credit: Macon Water Authority)*

#### Value

Located along Town Creek in southern Jones County, Javors Lucas Lake serves as the primary source of raw water for the Macon Water Authority's service area. The 6.5-billion-gallon reservoir covers 581 acres and is owned by the Macon Water Authority (MWA). Lucas Lake supplies water to residents, businesses and industries in Macon-Bibb County, southern Monroe County, parts of Jones County (in case of emergency) and has capacity to serve additional localities in Middle Georgia.

The lake is primarily listed for its value as the source of America's best tasting drinking water, but also provides ample recreational opportunities for fishing and boating (with non-gas-powered motors). The site also provides public education regarding the water treatment process. With its size and capacity, Javors Lucas Lake is an indispensable asset for the region.

### Vulnerability

The Macon Water Authority owns significant land around the reservoir allowing it to protect the quality of its source water. Jones County is also a partner in these efforts, maintaining some adjacent recreational properties and carefully reviewing permit applications. As such, Javors Lucas Lake has minimal vulnerability.

**Other Significant Creeks: Big Indian Creek, Commissioner Creek, Echeconnee Creek, Mossy Creek, Sandy Run Creek, Tobesofkee Creek, Walnut Creek**



*Big Indian Creek (MGRC Photo)*

### Value

Beyond the main rivers and lakes of Middle Georgia, a number of smaller creeks run through the cities and towns. These serve as helpful habitats in otherwise urban areas and can help control areas where new development might otherwise occur. Likewise, many present opportunities for river access or development of walking/biking trails adjacent to the stream.

### Vulnerability

The list of creeks included in this resource listing all share a similar listing as impaired on the EPA 303(d) list. Many of these creeks run through predominantly urban areas or are in close proximity to areas with many impervious surfaces. Others may also experience impacts from surface mining, especially along Commissioner Creek, which runs by major kaolin mining locations. Collectively, while no one creek will have the same impact as a major river, these streams are part of the fabric of the community and require attention to ensure that they remain viable habitats for fish, birds, and other wildlife while also contributing to the aesthetics of the community.

## Protected Lands

Parks and forestry resources perform essential functions without which the quality of life for Middle Georgia residents would be greatly diminished. Trees and shrubbery provide shade and shelter that moderate the effects of sun and wind; they help reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide, produce oxygen, filter pollutants, reduce stormwater runoff, protect the soil against erosion, and provide habitats for area wildlife. Additionally, trees and other vegetation enhance the aesthetic value of the region. The value of forests is even more apparent from a commercial standpoint. The value of wood and its by-products is evident in their widespread utility. The many and varied parks located throughout Middle Georgia also provide for unlimited recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike, as well as offering economic benefits associated with eco-tourism activities.

Middle Georgia's parks and forests are unquestionably vulnerable to the impact of urbanization. With over half of the region's forestland owned by private interests, it is quite possible that Middle Georgia's forest resources could be impacted by future growth and unconstrained development. As the value of competing land uses increases, the region could potentially expect to see more private forest holdings converted to other uses. Accordingly, the preservation of the region's protected lands is of heightened importance. Proper care and management of this green infrastructure network is critical to the long-term quality of life of communities and citizens sharing the network.

### Suggested Development Practices:

The following best management practices are recommended, when applicable, for use by developers and landowners in designing new developments to be located within one mile of the protected lands in this section and depicted on the Regionally Important Resources Map. These practices are for all types of development that might impact RIRs. Additionally, they are consistent with the State Planning Recommendations for development. This listing will also be used by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission for reviewing Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) located within one mile of these resources.

- ⊗ Linking new developments to existing residential areas via trails or greenspace.
- ⊗ For developments that meet a DRI threshold, survey the environmental features of the site including topography, soils, hydrology, trees, vegetation, and habitats. Preserve the sensitive areas identified by this survey by setting them aside as parks, trails, or greenbelts.
- ⊗ Limit the proportion of the site that can be covered in impervious roofs and pavements.
- ⊗ Limit pavement, replacing it with vegetated soil or with porous pavement materials wherever possible to allow underlying soil to absorb rainfall and treat pollutants.
- ⊗ Construct vegetated swales as a replacement to curbs or drainage pipes and construct bioretention areas or rain gardens in parking lot islands or in pockets of residential areas.
- ⊗ Limit the amount of parking to the absolute minimum necessary for the particular land use.
- ⊗ Limit clearing, grading, and disturbance on developable lots beyond what is necessary.
- ⊗ Utilize cluster development to preserve open space on new development sites.
- ⊗ Establish extensive nature landscape buffers along the periphery of a development site.
- ⊗ Site plans and building design should be sensitive to the natural features of the site including woodlands, steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains.

## Suggested Policies and Protection Measures:

What follows is a list of general policies and protection measures that are intended primarily as guidance for local governments in planning and decision-making that affects the protected lands identified in this plan. In addition, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission will use these policies and protection measures when reviewing local comprehensive plans for consistency with regional plans, and to encourage local governments in the region to adopt the policies and enhancement activities most appropriate for the protection of the resources located within their communities.

- ⊗ More compact urban development will be encouraged in order to preserve protected lands.
- ⊗ Preserving the rural character and providing opportunity for agricultural, parks, and forestry activities is vitally important to the community.
- ⊗ New land uses that contribute to protecting the environment and preserving meaningful open space are supported in the community.
- ⊗ The creation of passive recreation opportunities and the set-aside of greenspace are important to the community.
- ⊗ Education on the benefits and practices of environmental stewardship will be promoted.
- ⊗ Mechanisms to provide comment on and to assess the impact of proposed land development activities located within a mile of the protected lands will be promoted.
- ⊗ Environmental protection strategies, such as transfer development rights, conservation easements, fee simple acquisition, and conservation tax credits will be utilized if possible.
- ⊗ Amend existing or create new land development and stormwater management ordinances that will promote or require the implementation of the development practices listed above.
- ⊗ Develop and implement a “greenspace” plan that will identify and prioritize key lands for acquisition within one mile of the Regionally Important Resources.
- ⊗ Participate in state and federal programs for acquisition (fee simple or easements) of priority conservation areas identified by a greenspace plan.
- ⊗ Sponsor, in coordination with the managers of the protected lands, an annual Great American Clean-up event designed to beautify and eliminate litter around these resources.

## Identification of Sites:

In the 2010 Regionally Important Resources Plan, a total of seven park and forestry resources were identified that met the standard of regional significance. These resources all remain included in the 2024 plan update; however, the category has been expanded to include protected lands more generally: including both those that are protected today and those that are slated for additional protection in the near future. In this document, two major assemblages of land are grouped together with their various resources listed below. These are the proposed Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve boundary (inclusive of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, Brown’s Mount, and Echeconnee Wildlife Management Area) and the greater Oconee National Forest area (inclusive of the Oconee National Forest, Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge, and Cedar Creek Wildlife Management Area). Beyond these areas, all five Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites are now listed. The final additions to this list (analyzed collectively) are the remaining Wildlife Management Areas and Public Fishing Areas in the region. These contribute economically to Middle Georgia while also providing recreation and conservation.

## Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park



*Lookout from the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park (Photo Credit: Visit Macon)*

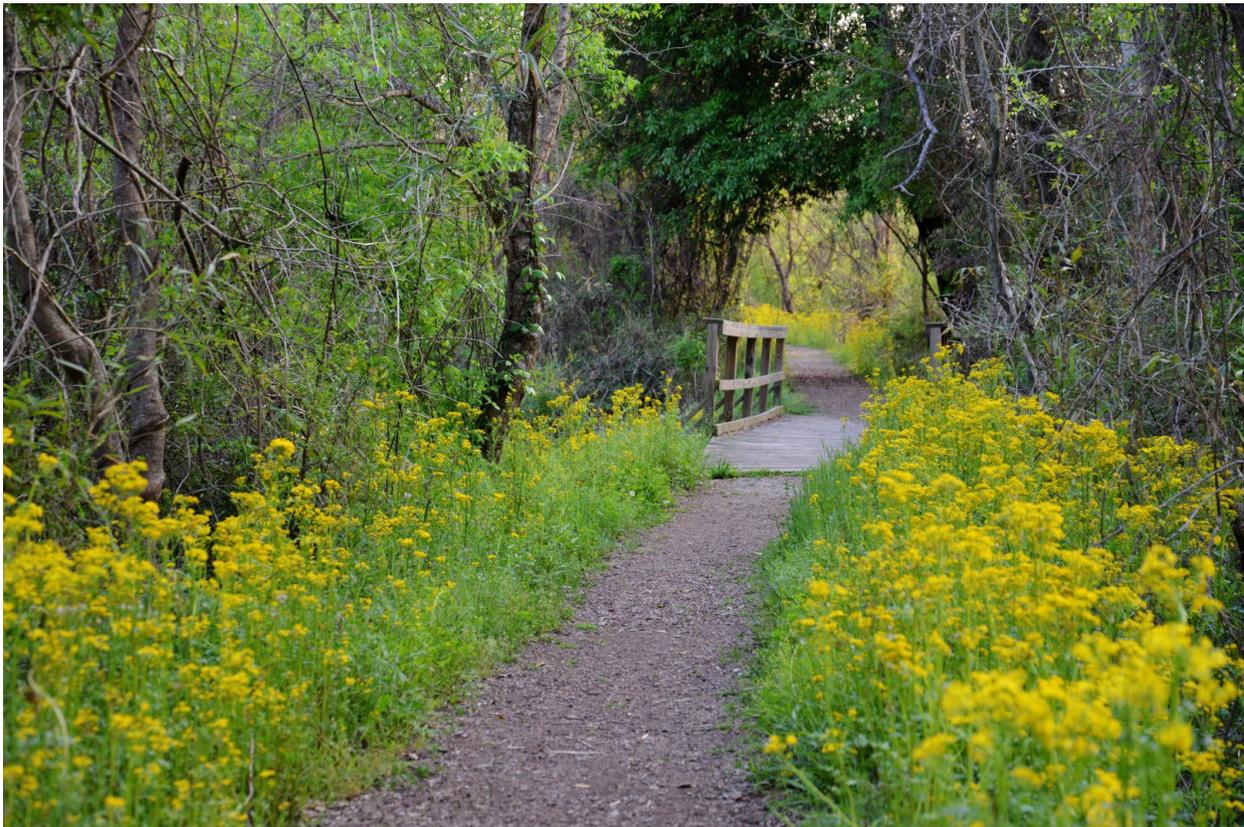
### Value

In 2010, the Ocmulgee National Monument was only discussed in the context of a heritage resource for the region. With the passage of the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019, the site was redesignated as the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park. This expanded the park's boundary, definitively establishing the site as a land resource in addition to a heritage resource. This is an interim step toward the eventual goal of establishing the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve. Legislation is imminently expected to move this effort forward, and the recommendations for land protection within this should include not only the current boundary, but rather, all of the lands within the footprint of the future national park.

Located just east downtown Macon-Bibb County, within sight of where the community of Macon developed, the park was established as the Ocmulgee National Monument in 1936 via Proclamation by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which directed the National Park Service to preserve and protect “lands commonly known as the Old Ocmulgee Fields.” From the Paleo-Indian Period to the Muskogean (Creek) Indians, the ONM site has been inhabited for over 12,000 years.

Among the most significant times in the area’s history was the period between 900 and 1150 AD when the Macon Plateau was inhabited by a farming group known as the Mississippian culture. The Mississippians were responsible for the construction of several earthen mounds that are the focal point of the ONM today. Later, around 1350-1650 the Lamar Culture, farmers and mound builders, inhabited this region. The Lamar mounds are located approximately two miles south of the Ocmulgee mounds. So significant is this site that in 1997 the Old Ocmulgee Fields were the first Traditional Cultural Property district east of the Mississippi River to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In addition to its archeological and historical significance, the fully approved acreage of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park encompasses an abundance of natural features including forested uplands, open fields, year-round wetlands and thickly wooded river floodplain, all of which provide habitat to a diverse selection of birds, plants, animals, and reptiles. Indeed, this natural beauty is consistent throughout the corridor that is proposed for designation as America’s 64<sup>th</sup> National Park. Designation as such would appropriately highlight the tremendous value of the site not only to the Middle Georgia community, but throughout the nation.



*Hiking Trails at the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park (Photo Credit: Visit Macon)*

Still today, the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park remains a significant archaeological, historical, and natural resource, while also serving as major tourist attraction within Macon-Bibb County. The park includes a visitor's center with museum exhibits on archaeology, the human settlement of the area, and the formation of the park. There are also picnic areas and five miles of trails that connect major features of the park, most notably the Earth Lodge and Great Temple Mound. The trails do not, however, connect to the Lamar Mounds; these are only accessible certain times of the year on ranger-guided tours.

If expanded, an analysis commissioned by National Parks Conservation Association and funded in part by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, indicates tremendous potential for growth. The report, "Diamond in the Rough: An Economic Analysis of the Proposed Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve," shows that consolidating the public lands along the river corridor to create a national park and preserve would dramatically increase tourism to the site, supporting restaurants, hotels, retailers, and other businesses throughout the region. Key findings from the report estimate that within 15 years of creation the park could experience a roughly six-fold increase in annual visitation, an additional \$206.7 million in annual economic activity in Middle Georgia, and an additional 2,814 jobs.

#### Vulnerability

Over the past few years the National Park staff, Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, and other local groups, have been working closely together to identify areas suitable for expansion, complete a boundary survey and expansion master plan in the hopes of providing expanded interpretation and regular access to the Lamar Mounds and transform the site into a National Park and Preserve. Despite the progress of these efforts, proposed new development or redevelopment and major infrastructure improvements, such as highway widening and reconstruction near the periphery of the park boundary have the potential to impact its historical and archeological integrity. Therefore, it is important that the respective staffs from the local planning and zoning commission, the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, and other organizations work in coordination during the project review process to assess the impact of any new development/redevelopment and road construction improvements adjacent to the park.

Regarding the potential expansion areas, a number of those lands are already in public ownership or management. While some of these may be encompassed by a National Park and Preserve boundary, the intent is not to disrupt successful public management that exists today. As such, the site does not have the same level of vulnerability as other sites may have. However, a number of critical environmental and cultural assets exist within the river corridor. Efforts to preserve the full area and provide a continuous network of green infrastructure will be critical for the future.



*Forest in the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park (Photo Credit: Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative)*

## Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge



*Bond Swamp (MGRC Photo)*

### Value

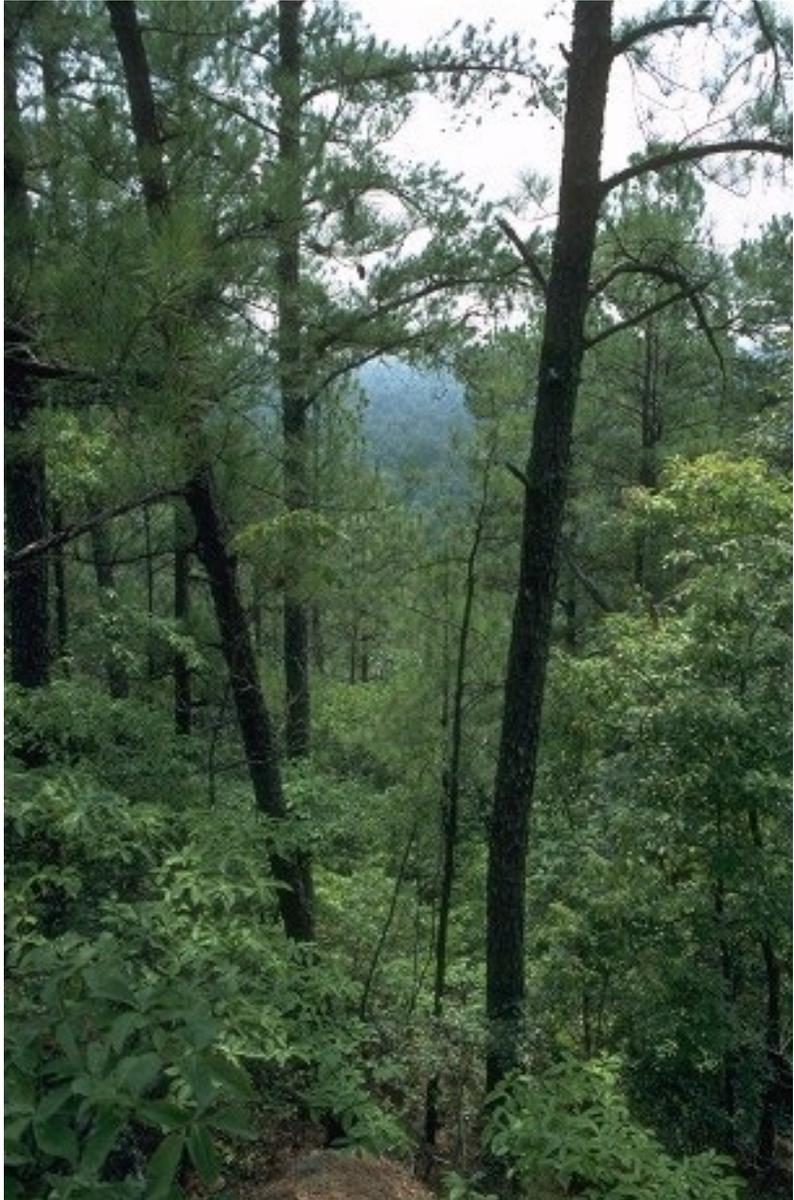
The Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is located six miles south of downtown Macon-Bibb County, also including parts of Twiggs Counties. Originally established in 1989 to protect, maintain, and enhance the ecosystem of the Ocmulgee River, it first opened to the public for general use in October 2000. Bond Swamp NWR and surrounding area is one of the largest areas of intact forested wetlands remaining in Georgia.

The refuge provides a place for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants of the Ocmulgee River ecosystem. Encompassing 7,350 acres of bottomland hardwoods, swamp forests and upland pines, the refuge provides habitat for as many as 200 species of birds including migratory waterfowl, waterbirds, shorebirds and neotropical migrants. Most notably, the area provides ideal nesting habitat for the Swainson's warbler, listed as a species of concern by Partners in Flight. Several rare species of butterfly associated with river cane habitat can also be found on the refuge. Today, the Refuge provides a number of wildlife dependent recreational and educational opportunities such as walking trails, wildlife observation, hunting, fishing, and environmental education.

### Vulnerability

Publicly held lands are important to the region for several reasons, but primarily for recreation and environmental purposes. Bond Swamp also provides a habitat for native wildlife. The Bond Swamp also serves an important function in water resource management, including the protection of water quality as well as being an integral part of the floodplain. The governmental agencies, which manage these areas have resource management plans in place to provide protection for these resources. Despite the resource management plans that are in place, Bond Swamp remains vulnerable to various types of non-point pollution coming from a variety of urban and rural uses upstream in the Ocmulgee River corridor. These contaminants in sufficient quantity can have a devastating impact on the bird, fish, and wildlife populations within the Swamp, which in turn will significantly reduce the environmental and recreational value of this Middle Georgia resource.

While non-point pollution is an external environmental threat, Bond Swamp is also threatened from within by the expanding feral hog population. Refuge administrators allow public hunting during specified times to assist with feral hog population control and deer herd management. Currently, Bond Swamp does not have a visitor center, maintenance facilities, or budget. The refuge has only one full-time employee and lacks sufficient resources. Much of the forested land adjacent to Bond Swamp is in private hands, and as timber companies continue to leave the State of Georgia, the land is sold to developers. With continued growth through the region, Bond Swamp NWR is in danger of becoming an island surrounded by a sea of development.



*Brown's Mount (MGRC Photo)*

### Brown's Mount

#### Value

Named after its original owner, George A. Brown, Brown's Mount is a prominent topographic feature located along the fall line southeast of downtown Macon.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources purchased the 165 acres of the Mount and designated it as a National Heritage Preserve in 2000. In July 2006, the State of Georgia and the US Fish and Wildlife Service entered into a management agreement, and the Browns Mount tract is now managed as part of the Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

The site contains a unique mix of forested habitats and provides important historical, archaeological, and environmental benefits to the region. It is considered a contributing property to the Ocmulgee Old Fields and is a well-documented Traditional Cultural Property associated with the Muscogee (Creek) Indians. The famous Georgia poet, Harry Stillwell Edwards built a writing cabin on Brown's Mount in 1918 calling it "Mt. Talemeco." It is believed that he wrote the famous poem, "On the Mount," from his cabin during WWI as he was listening to the soldiers below at the military training base, Camp Wheeler. The cabin burned in the 1950s, but the chimney and the foundation can be seen at the top of Brown's Mount.

#### Vulnerability

Publicly held lands are important to the region for several reasons, but primarily for recreation and environmental purposes. Brown's Mount is managed as part of the Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Most notably, the Brown's Mount tract provides protection and interpretation opportunities for important cultural and historic resources and could become an educational gateway to the Ocmulgee River ecosystem.

The plant, animal, and cultural resources of Brown's Mount are threatened from within by the spread of invasive and exotic species. Due to past land use, there is a proliferation of invasive exotic plant species including wisteria, Kudzu, Nepal grass and privet which are increasing at an alarming rate throughout Brown's Mount. The expanding feral hog population also poses a threat to the resources. Refuge administrators currently allow public hunting in the surrounding wetland areas of the refuge during specified times to assist with feral hog population control and deer herd management.

#### Echeconnee Wildlife Management Area



*Echeconnee Wildlife Management Area (Photo Credit: Georgia Department of Natural Resources)*

### Value

Like many conserved lands in Middle Georgia, the Echeconnee Wildlife Management Area is significant due to its recreation and environmental purposes. However, this site is also important for the sake of national security and economic stability. The Echeconnee WMA was first started in the 1990s to preserve lands within the highest accident potential zones at Robins Air Force Base from being developed by housing or other incompatible uses. In so doing, the region took a significant step toward protecting the future of Robins Air Force Base by making missions safer. Over time, the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority was able to procure additional property near the installation and within the areas most directly impacted by the base. A swap of property was recently completed, allowing the Echeconnee Wildlife Management Area to increase in size. A few individual property owners are also remaining within the area and may be interested in taking buyouts of their property in the future. However, any expansions of the WMA will only be conducted with willing buyers and sellers.

### Vulnerability

The Echeconnee Wildlife Management Area is expected to see relatively minimal vulnerability, due to the conservation efforts in the surrounding areas that are still ongoing. As a key element of the encroachment mitigation strategy around Robins Air Force Base, more lands may be added into the WMA in the upcoming years. The most significant potential vulnerability would come from the Ocmulgee River's listing as impaired on the EPA 303(d) list near the WMA. Parts of the Echeconnee Creek upstream are also on the EPA 303(d) list. However, the majority of water resources near the Echeconnee WMA are in compliance with pertinent water quality standards.

## Oconee National Forest

### Value

The Oconee National Forest was established in 1959 under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, to reclaim farmland that was ruined by erosion. It is comprised of more than 115,000 acres of land in Jones (16,461 acres), Putnam (37,443 acres), and Jasper Counties and provides Middle Georgia with substantial recreational, environmental and educational value. This area is part of the larger Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest unit, which spans a combined total of 865,000 acres. The entire area is operated by the U.S. Forest Service. Some of the forest's features include:



Oconee National Forest Sign (MGRC Photo)

- ✿ Several lakes and streams, including the Miller Creek Lake Recreation Area and Lake Sinclair Recreation Area
- ✿ Abundant fish, bird, and wildlife habitats, including several species that are endangered or threatened
- ✿ Camping, fishing, swimming, boating, wildlife observation and trails suitable for hiking, horseback riding, or all-terrain vehicle usage
- ✿ A trail that features two prehistoric, archaeologically significant Indian mounds.

The Oconee National Forest staff provides extensive environmental education for area residents at various sites within the forest. Additionally, the Oconee National Forest provides opportunities for scientific research on various ecosystems found within the forest. One of these areas is the Hitchiti Experimental Forest, a cooperative effort by the U.S. Forest Service, Southern Research Station, and Georgia Forestry Commission to showcase pine management for nonindustrial landowners.

### Vulnerability

The most significant threat facing the portion of the Oconee National Forest located within the Middle Georgia region is development taking place on the periphery that is not compatible with the prescribed uses of the Forest as identified in the Land and Resource Management Plan. Controlling this development is the responsibility of the local governments, specifically, Jones and Putnam Counties. Both Jones and Putnam Counties have approved Land Development Ordinances that regulate new development or redevelopment adjacent to the National Forest. It is critical that the two counties and representatives from the Oconee National Forest work in concert during the zoning review process to accurately assess the impact of any new development adjacent to the Oconee National Forest. This will become both more important and more challenging in the years ahead, especially within Putnam County, as the economic growth from the Atlanta metro area continues to spread eastward along I-20, spurred on by major economic development projects in Northeast Georgia.

### Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge



*Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

### Value

The Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge was established by Executive Order in 1939 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, as a “combination wildlife and game-management demonstration area” to demonstrate that wildlife could be restored on worn-out, eroded lands. It is located on 35,000 acres of land in Jones and Jasper Counties. The Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge is almost entirely encircled by the Oconee National Forest, making the two land areas part of a unified conservation effort in the region.

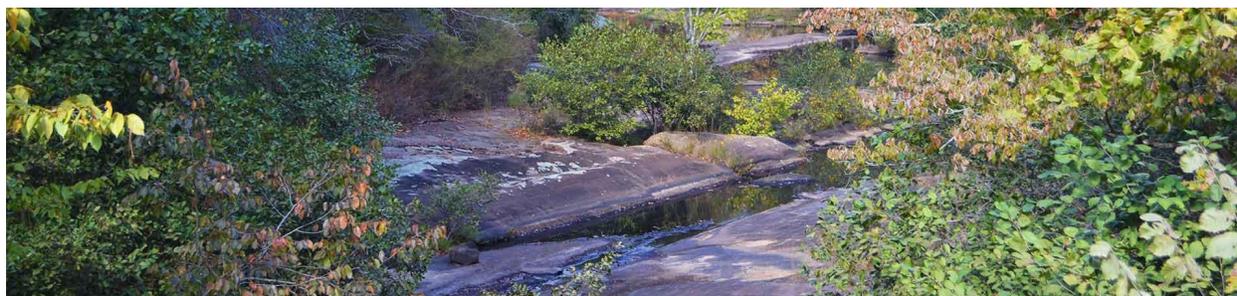
Today, the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge serves as a model forest ecosystem management for wildlife and is home to nearly 200 species of birds, including the Red Cockaded Woodpecker, which is currently on the endangered species list, as well as providing an exceptional habitat for other types of wildlife. In addition to the vast diversity of wildlife found within the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge, there are also several old homesites and cemeteries and remnants of the settlers that once lived here scattered throughout the area.

The Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge provides both residents and visitors of Middle Georgia with numerous passive recreation opportunities, including scenic drives, wildlife observations and photography, hunting, fishing, and limited camping. Staff also sponsor programs and tours to organized school, civic, professional, and conservation groups.

### Vulnerability

The Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge is threatened by increased urbanization and a proliferation of invasive and exotic species. The refuge is having increased development, mainly residential, along the southern, eastern, and western edges of the area. Invasive species such as wisteria, Nepal grass, and privet are increasing at an alarming rate throughout the refuge. However, much of the land within the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge is buffered from new development and has not seen significant pressure for conversion of land use.

## Cedar Creek Wildlife Management Area



*Cedar Creek Wildlife Management Area (Photo Credit: Georgia Department of Natural Resources)*

### Value

Cedar Creek Wildlife Management Area is owned by the United States Forest Service (USFS) and is contained within the Oconee National Forest. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources worked with USFS to construct the Cedar Creek Shooting Range within this area and to establish dove fields, campsites, and picnic shelters. However, beyond these recreational uses, the value of the Cedar Creek WMA largely matches the environmental value of the Oconee National Forest.

Vulnerability

Likewise, the threats to the Cedar Creek Wildlife Management Area largely match those seen within the broader Oconee National Forest area. The Cedar Creek Wildlife Management Area is mostly contained within Putnam County, and thus, responsibility for land use decisions around the area will be the responsibility of the Putnam County government. As development pressures come to the area, proactive land use planning decisions can help to protect the area from encroachment.

High Falls State Park



High Falls State Park (Photo Credit: Georgia Association of Conservation Districts)

Value

Located in northern Monroe County, the area now known as High Falls State Park was originally the site of a prosperous industrial town settled in the early 1800s. The town flourished for a number of years boasting several stores, a grist mill, cotton gin, blacksmith shop, shoe factory, and hotel; however, it became a ghost town when the railroad bypassed it in the 1880s.

High Falls Lake (referenced on page 18, above) is the central feature of the park, which is named for the drop in the outcroppings of rock formed by ancient glaciers in the Towaliga riverbed, High Falls offers numerous passive recreational activities that include fishing, boating, hiking, and camping. In addition to the lake, the falls and old grist mill site are the park’s most popular attractions. Other amenities of the park include 103 tent/trailer/RV camp sites, a pioneer campground, 5 picnic shelters, 1 screened group shelter, newly renovated swimming pool and miniature golf course, 4.5 miles of hiking trails, and boat rentals. Park visitors can also take advantage of seasonal events that include ranger-led nature hikes, canoe excursions, fish rodeos for children, interpretations of the night sky, and organized river clean-ups.

Vulnerability

As referenced above, both High Falls Lake and High Falls State Park are currently experiencing significant encroachment from development north of Monroe County. This new activity has begun to cause anxiety for long-time residents of the area who fear that new development will adversely impact the lake and park. While impacts are likely more prevalent for the lake itself, given that some of its shores may face continued development, these impacts will transfer to the park as well. For High Falls State Park to remain a valued destination, the location needs to remain clean, quiet, and peaceful.

Dames Ferry State Park



*Picnic Site at Dames Ferry State Park (Photo Credit: Georgia Department of Natural Resources)*

Value

Dames Ferry State Park is the only campground located on Lake Juliette, a crystal-clear lake along Rum Creek, a tributary of the Ocmulgee River. Many of the campsites have magnificent waterfront views. Fishing is a primary activity at the lake with anglers searching out bream, crappie, largemouth bass, striped bass, redear sunfish and perch. The park covers 60 acres with 30 tent, trailer and RV campsites plus two picnic shelters and a boat ramp. Although one of the smaller state park sites, Dames Ferry provides convenient access to a number of additional sites, including historic Juliette, the Jarrell Plantation, and the City of Forsyth.

### Vulnerability

Nestled alongside Lake Juliette, Dames Ferry State Park can be seen as having similar vulnerabilities to the lake and other surrounding areas. Among these concerns will naturally be the potential for new development to encroach upon the protected lands. Monroe County remains one of the more rapidly growing communities in Middle Georgia, even as the Monroe County Board of Commissioners has been intentional about smart and managed growth within the community.

However, a greater risk to the site likely comes from environmental concerns in the area. As mentioned previously on page 15, Plant Scherer is also located along the shores of Lake Juliette, only around 3 miles from Dames Ferry State Park. The concerns felt in the community around potential contamination can naturally extend to the park land as well as the water resources, even though the greatest concerns to date have focused on groundwater. It will be important for the State of Georgia to monitor any adverse impacts on Dames Ferry State Park and ensure that any negative stigma around Plant Scherer does not translate to the surrounding recreational areas.

### Balls Ferry State Park



*Boat Ramp at Balls Ferry State Park (Photo Credit: Georgia Department of Natural Resources)*

### Value

Located on the banks of the Oconee River in eastern Wilkinson County, Balls Ferry State Park has an important environmental, historical, recreational, and economic value to the Middle Georgia region. Balls Ferry State Park contains one of only two populations worldwide of the endangered Robust Redhorse Fish and is home to at least two other endangered species. Along the Oconee River near Balls Ferry State Park, there are Native American mounds and a rare intact Native American fish trap. Balls Ferry is also a designated site on the March to the Sea Heritage Trail. It was here that Sherman's right wing skirmished with Confederate troops for three days before crossing the Oconee River. In 1843, the first railroad bridge across the Oconee River was constructed in Wilkinson County near Balls Ferry, and the first bridge to provide regional automobile access from Macon to Savannah was established at Balls Ferry in 1939. The Balls Ferry State Park and the nearby Oconee River offer opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, swimming, fishing, camping, and hiking. The site currently has functionality for boating, fishing, and hunting; however, additional activities could easily be sustained at the site, particularly considering the scarcity of other state park sites near Balls Ferry.

### Vulnerability

To ensure good conditions for fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and the overall quality of the park, as well as to protect the habitat of the Robust Redhorse and other endangered and threatened fish species, it will be imperative that the local governments bordering the park and other relevant stakeholders maintain the water quality of the Oconee River within federal standards as it is currently. However, the greatest vulnerability to the site may be neglect. Once envisioned in the Feasibility Study for Balls Ferry State Park, the site could offer interpretive centers, living history demonstrations, and guided tours, as well as additional amenities for both overnight and day use. These enhancements would have a positive impact on potential visitation. This would spur the local economy and ensure funding for the preservation of the site. However, the development of these assets depends on the State of Georgia appropriating the necessary funds. The Wilkinson County Board of Commissioners provided this property to the state with the vision of supporting a full-fledged state park comparable with Dames Ferry or High Falls. This has not yet happened, and the lack of investment will become a threat to the property if changes the management approach of the site do not occur.

### Jarrell Plantation



*Jarrell Plantation (Photo Credit: Georgia Department of Natural Resources)*

### Value

Located in western Jones County, the Jarrell Plantation is owned and operated by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as a State Historic Site. This one-time active cotton plantation was owned by the Jarrell family since before the Civil War and has been incredibly well preserved.

Jarrell Plantation survived General Sherman's "March to the Sea," typhoid fever, the cotton boll weevil, the advent of steam power, and a transition from farming to forestry. It is representative of the 19th and early 20th century agricultural practices and is one of the few remaining examples of a self-sustaining farm typical of the eras before and after the Civil War. The plantation has since been developed by the State as an example of a "living" historic site.

This important resource consists of 20 historic buildings dating from between 1847 and 1940. Visitors can learn about historic farming practices through the various buildings and machinery on the property. Jarrell Plantation provides residents and visitors of Middle Georgia an example of southern plantation life. The site offers many family events, including folk life celebrations every Labor Day weekend, syrup making and storytelling in November, and special 4th of July and Christmas events. Guided interpretive tours by the Jarrell Plantation staff showcase the site's past. These tours are often taken by public school teachers and students, as they target many of the requirements set forth in state education standards.

### Vulnerability

The Jarrell Plantation is situated in the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge and, consequently, does not face significant development pressures. However, because of its rural and isolated location, the resource could be adversely affected by vandalism and theft of both above and below ground historic resources. Additionally, construction activities associated with nearby roadways must be sensitive to the architectural, archeological, and historic integrity of this resource.

## Griswoldville Battlefield

### Value

In the mid-1800s, Griswoldville developed as a small industrial town located around 10 miles east of Macon. Although originally producing agricultural and construction products, the community became a notable manufacturing site for armaments during the Civil War. As the war was beginning to reach its conclusion, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman completed a siege of Atlanta and began moving his army southward and eastward toward the City of Savannah. What would become known as Sherman's March to the Sea had its first and most notable battle at Griswoldville on November 22, 1864, only about one week after the Union troops had left Atlanta. In a decisive Union victory, the Confederate forces launched three charges on the Union defenses before withdrawing from the battle. Several key factories in Griswoldville had been burned by Union troops the night before the battle and the community never rebuilt.

While the preserved battlefield site only includes 17 acres today, the battle remains the most consequential conflict fought on Middle Georgia soil with the Union victory paving the way for the remainder of Sherman's March to the Sea. This destruction throughout the heartland of the South was a crucial turning point in the war, leading (in part) to the Confederate surrender and the preservation of the nation. The site currently includes a monument and interpretive signage. While neither the most extravagant site, nor the most significant of all Civil War battles, Griswoldville still holds an important place in Middle Georgia history that is worthy of preservation. Especially when combined with other Civil War sites such as Balls Ferry, the Dunlap House, and the Cannonball House, Griswoldville can be placed in an appropriate historical context.



*Griswoldville Battlefield (MGRC Photo)*

### Vulnerability

The Griswoldville Battlefield remains well preserved today, although the current 17-acre site is considerably smaller than the full battlefield site from 1864. Furthermore, the loss of historic structures in Griswoldville ultimately led to the town itself ceasing to exist. Encroachment of new, modern, historic structures may be the greatest threat, although development pressures have not yet been seen in that area. Furthermore, while the battlefield site is located in Twiggs County, the historic community of Griswoldville is in Jones County, with the battlefield less than 100 yards from the county line. This means that cross-county collaboration in land use will also be helpful for the process of ensuring the site's continued preservation.

### Additional Wildlife Management Areas and Public Fishing Areas: Rum Creek, Oaky Woods, Ocmulgee, Bartram Forest, Flat Creek

#### Value

Finally, in addition to the large areas referenced earlier, Middle Georgia retains a significant amount of prime hunting lands. Not only is hunting a major contributor to the Georgia economy, it remains an important recreational and cultural activity in many rural areas. In addition to the ones already mentioned, four additional wildlife management areas and two public fishing areas exist within the region (the Ocmulgee site is both a WMA and PFA).

Collectively, these areas cover more than 36,000 acres, highlighting a commitment to preservation across the region. The variety of sites also include a variety of fish, birds, and mammals that can be observed and hunted. The areas dense forests also provide shelter for a variety of species while serving as carbon sinks and part of a regional green infrastructure corridor that connects different areas of the natural environment together.



*Bartram Forest Wildlife Management Area (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

### Vulnerability

Taken collectively, the vulnerability for many of these sites lies in the potential for new development that would encroach upon these previously protected lands. Near Oaky Woods, the growth of Houston County has the potential to greatly increase the value of land previously determined to be best suited for conservation. Likewise, growth near Rum Creek in Monroe County could have similar effects, particularly as the area continues to receive greater infrastructure availability in the form of water lines being run toward Juliette. The Bartram Forest site sits adjacent to a regional development site at the intersection of US-441 and Georgia's Fall Line Freeway (GA-540). This site too could fall to the pressure of additional development. Returning to Houston County, growth in the solar industry may also change the economic calculus of land conservation. Several large tracts in the Ocmulgee corridor have been set aside for renewable energy production, which (while beneficial for having a sustainable electrical grid) can remove valuable foliage. The Ocmulgee WMA may see the least development pressure but is likewise not immune. With this in mind, the preservation of Middle Georgia's quality hunting sites will also be a priority in the future.

## Heritage Sites

As with natural and water resources, heritage resources once lost are gone forever. Many communities within the Middle Georgia region have long recognized the importance of heritage conservation and understand the vital role cultural and historic resources have in shaping community identity. Beyond the importance heritage resources have in promulgating of the often indefinable “sense of place,” these resources play a significant role in quality of life.

The identification, documentation, and recognition of heritage resources are all extremely important components of the preservation process; however, the protection of heritage resources from insensitive treatment and outright demolition is essential. While there are a number of state and national recognition programs such as the Georgia Trust’s Places in Peril, the National Historic Landmark program, the National Register of Historic Places, and the Preserve America initiative, the protection provided by these programs is minimal. Recognizing the value of historic resources will be essential for encouraging active participation in their preservation.

### Suggested Development Practices:

The integrity of heritage resources is not entirely restricted to the resource itself; viewsheds and adjacent sites and structures can also contribute to, or detract from, a resource’s historic value. Therefore, it is important to discuss appropriate development practices in regard to heritage resources and the areas surrounding them. Through the consideration and examination of the potential effects of any development undertaking (roads and infrastructure, demolition, rehabilitation of adjacent structures, infill development, redevelopment, etc.), the impacts to heritage resources and their environs can at least be lessened, if not completely negated.

The following are recommended best management practices for appropriate development for use by local governments, landowners, or developers when designing new developments within a one-mile radius of heritage sites. These practices are for all types and scales of development that might impact RIRs. Additionally, they are consistent with the State Planning Recommendations for development. This listing will also be used by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission for reviewing Developments of Regional Impact located within one mile of these resources.

- 🌍 Maintain existing street grid patterns and uniform alignment of facades in new construction by orienting new structures at similar setbacks and lot configurations as existing structures
- 🌍 Minimize the visual and environmental impacts of parking through careful consideration of location, materials, and screening to make the areas more pedestrian-friendly.
- 🌍 Enlist significant site features including viewshed corridors, trees, and existing heritage resources, to shape the identity and character of new development and redevelopment.
- 🌍 Site plans, building design, and landscaping should be sensitive to cultural and natural features of the site, including topography and views.
- 🌍 New construction and infill development should appear similar in mass, scale, and floor-to-floor heights to historic structures traditionally found in the area.
- 🌍 The literal imitation of historic styles is strongly discouraged. New construction, additions, and infill development should be compatible, but not identical, to historic buildings.

- 🌐 New construction should be distinguishable as being new so as not to lend a false sense of history and impede the ability to interpret the historic character of an area.
- 🌐 Signage should be coordinated with the architecture of the buildings, be pedestrian in scale, and lighting and color of the signs be strictly controlled.

### Suggested Policies and Protection Measures:

The following General Policies and Protection Measures are best practice recommendations for the appropriate management of the heritage sites identified in this plan. They are intended to provide guidance, direction, and assistance to local government officials and community leaders in planning and decision making that affects the identified Regionally Important Heritage Resources. The Middle Georgia Regional Commission will also utilize these policies and protection measures when reviewing local comprehensive plans for consistency with regional plans and to encourage local governments in the region to adopt protection measures, policies, and enhancement activities most appropriate for the protection of the resources located within communities.

- 🌐 Encourage the maintenance of all heritage buildings, sites, structures, districts, and objects and their adaptive reuse, when appropriate.
- 🌐 Support recognition of exemplary preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of heritage resources.
- 🌐 Encourage and support the development of historic sites as tourist attractions, if appropriate.
- 🌐 Support and cooperate with federal, state, and local historic preservation agencies, commissions, and organizations in their efforts to preserve and protect heritage resources.
- 🌐 Establish, maintain, or strengthen (as appropriate) regulations and incentives to protect the region's heritage resources from inappropriate infill development, incompatible alterations, destruction, or neglect.
- 🌐 Support decisions on new development and redevelopment that contribute to, not detract from, the region's character, identity, and sense of place.
- 🌐 Encourage development that is sensitive to the historic context, sense of place, and overall setting of the community.
- 🌐 Protect valuable heritage resources from encroachment by encouraging new development to be suitably located and contextually sensitive.
- 🌐 Encourage the adherence to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties in all projects involving heritage resources.

### Identification of Sites:

In the 2010 Regionally Important Resources Plan, a total of thirteen heritage sites were identified that met the standard of regional significance. As noted earlier, two of these have been removed due to their usage as private residences. As MGRC evaluated assets within the region that were not previously included, several additional sites were noted as being culturally important. With some historic districts previously being listed, this plan expands coverage to comparable historical districts. Further, a handful of non-historic sites have also been added. While many heritage sites are old, newer spaces can still be quite important to the heritage and culture of an area. Several are therefore included in this listing of significant sites.

## Indigenous Sites

Among the modern settlements that still remain in Middle Georgia, Culloden was the first, dating back to a local merchant's establishment of a trading post in 1739. Milledgeville would later be established in 1804 as the oldest incorporated city in Middle Georgia. However, the history of the region stretches for tens of thousands of years prior to this point. While many of the remnants of this early history have been lost to time, a number of important sites still remain in Middle Georgia, representing some of the most unique history that the region possesses. The first category of heritage sites are therefore identified as the indigenous sites. The timeline for these sites runs from ancient history until the early 1800s. Among the sites included are also those at which European settlers encountered and interacted with the Native American population. While not strictly indigenous sites, they are included in this section due to the cultural exchange that occurred.

### Ocmulgee Mounds



*The Great Temple Mound at the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve (Photo Credit: Visit Macon)*

### Review of Value and Vulnerability

As described beginning on page 23, the Ocmulgee Mounds rest upon sacred ground for thousands of Native Americans who trace their ancestry to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. This site has not always received the protection and care that it deserves, as shown most notably by the railroad construction of the 1870s that destroyed most of the Funeral Mound. These dark stains on the site's history must never be repeated. The prospect of co-management in the park's future presents a vision for our shared history toward which the Middle Georgia community may rightly strive.

For this plan, however, rather than repeat the text already written in this plan, we turn to the words of Principal Chief of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, David Hill, who stated, in 2022, “We have never forgotten where we came from and the lands around the Ocmulgee River will always and forever be our ancestral homeland, a place we consider sacred and a place with rich cultural history.”

*Rock Eagle / Rock Hawk Effigy Mounds*

Value

Believed to have been constructed between 1,000 and 3,000 years ago, Rock Eagle and Rock Hawk are the only two such bird effigy mounds known to exist east of the Mississippi River. Located approximately ten miles north of the City of Eatonton along Highway 441, Rock Eagle is in far better physical condition and is also more well-known than Rock Hawk.



*Rock Eagle Effigy Mound (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

*Rock Eagle*

Originally thought to have been constructed by Archaic Indians around 5000 BC, archaeologists now believed that the mound was constructed by Woodland Indians who may have been part of the Adena or Hopewell cultures, but more likely were from a distinct cultural group. The effigy is comprised of thousands of pieces of white quartzite laid out in the mounded shape of a large bird that measures 120 feet from head to tail and 102 feet from wingtip to wingtip. At its highest point, the chest, the rocks are piled eight to ten feet high. The wings, tail, and head are much flatter.

The earliest known archaeological study of Rock Eagle dates from 1877 when Charles C. Jones produced measurements of the mounds. Later during the 1930s, the mound was excavated by A.R. Kelly, a University of Georgia archaeologist, who found a quartz projectile point and evidence of a human cremation. Also in the 1930s, the property was acquired by the US Government, which under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in conjunction with UGA constructed a granite viewing tower at the foot of the effigy. Today, the Rock Eagle effigy is surrounded by a high fence with access to the mound prohibited. Rock Eagle is the focal point of a larger site operated as the Rock Eagle 4-H Center, a unit of the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Cooperative Extension Service.

#### *Rock Hawk*

Rock Hawk is also located in Putnam County approximately 13 miles away from Rock Eagle along Highway 16 near Lake Oconee. The Rock Hawk site is an intrinsic feature of Georgia's Historic Piedmont Scenic Byway. Currently, there are efforts underway to develop the site into a 700-acre outdoor museum to include 15 miles of trails, an interpretive center, and viewing platform.

#### Vulnerability

As with all archaeological sites, the greatest threats to both Rock Eagle and Rock Hawk are looting and vandalism. Along with being susceptible to looting and vandalism, both sites are also vulnerable to urbanization and the growth and development that are ever-increasing in Putnam County. This is particularly relevant for Rock Eagle, where US-441 is currently being widened to allow for more traffic and greater development. It is important that both sites are protected in a way that both allows for interpretation and education but also protection of the unique resources. Further, coordination between all stakeholders, organizations, and local governments is essential to ensure proper coordination during project review process to safeguard these effigies for the education and enjoyment of future generations.

#### *Old Creek Agency Reserve*

#### Value

The Old Creek Agency Reserve is located on the banks of the Flint River in Crawford and Taylor Counties. The Creek Agency was established in 1803 by Colonel Benjamin Hawkins who represented the United States as the Principal Indian Agent for Indian Affairs South of the Ohio River from 1796 until his death in 1816. The Agency's location on the Lower Creek Trading Path placed it on the old Federal Road, established in 1806, which connected Washington D.C. and New Orleans.



*Photo at Right: Gravesite of Benjamin Hawkins at the Old Creek Agency Reserve (Photo Credit: Crawford County Historical Society)*

Hawkins built his home and a community here on the east bank (in present-day Crawford County) of the Flint River in the Creek Nation to serve as a model, for teaching agriculture, husbandry and home industry to the Creek Indians. Moravian missionaries with other Afro- and Euro-American tradesmen served as Agency teachers. During the Creek War of 1813-14, the Georgia Militia built Fort Lawrence across the river opposite the Agency (in present-day Taylor County).

Hawkins died and was buried here in 1816 in an otherwise unmarked cemetery. Former Governor David Mitchell served as agent here until 1821. When the Treaty of 1821 added the lands between the Ocmulgee and Flint Rivers to the State of Georgia, a Reserve area was established around the Agency. John Crowell was agent here until the Treaty of 1826 moved the state boundary to the Chattahoochee River. The 1825 Land Lottery extended the Reserve to the west side of the Flint River, to serve as a future town site like the old Macon Reserve. Instead, the town of Francisville developed at the Old Agency site on the Crawford County half of the Reserve and thrived from 1830 to 1850.

### Vulnerability

Although archaeological surveys have located several National Register eligible sites within the Reserve, there has not been extensive study or excavation. Most of the area is either in agriculture or forests but it is currently threatened by transitional residential development and mining operations. There have been proposals to mine for fill dirt near the intersection of GA 128 and Hortman Road, which would likely represent an encroachment on the Old Creek Agency site.

### *Fort Hawkins*

#### Value

Known as the “Birthplace of Macon,” Fort Hawkins was established in 1806 by President Thomas Jefferson along the east side of the Ocmulgee River on lands ceded to Georgia by the 1805 Treaty of Washington. Strategically located along the old Federal Road, which connected Washington D.C. to New Orleans, Fort Hawkins served as the primary Army post in the southeastern U.S interior from 1806 to 1819 and as the U.S. Creek Trading Factory from 1808-1816. The Ocmulgee River marked Georgia’s western boundary from 1805 to 1821, making Fort Hawkins a key frontier site. The location was selected by and the fort named for Col. Benjamin Hawkins.

Several different U.S. Infantry Regiments served here. A friendly Creek Indian Regiment in federal service was based here from 1812-1815. During the Creek War of 1813-14, Georgia Militia units assembled here before Brig. Gen John Floyd led them against the Red Stick Creek towns in central Alabama. That action was Georgia’s principal contribution during the Creek War and War of 1812. Fort Hawkins was also the principal depository for army supplies and rations for troops during these campaigns.

The village that grew up around Fort Hawkins, known as Newtown in 1819, was the beginning of the City of Macon, established a few years later in 1823 on the western side of the Ocmulgee River. Frontier expansion, the relocation of military and trading operations further west, and the establishment of the new city, all contributed to Fort Hawkins being decommissioned in 1828. Archeological studies were first performed in the 1930s documenting additional history of the site.



Fort Hawkins (MGRC Photo)

### Vulnerability

Several archaeological excavations were conducted at Fort Hawkins in the early 1970s, including those by South (1970), DeVorsey, et al (1970), and Carrillo (1971). More recent investigations by Dan Elliott (2005 to 2007) uncovered nearly 40,000 artifacts and located the presence of several brick buildings and one wooden structure. Fort Hawkins is listed on the National Register and is owned by Macon-Bibb County which appointed the Fort Hawkins Commission to manage activities, research, and preservation of the site. The potential threat to the site comes from encroaching development and redevelopment that could destroy surviving archeological deposits.

### Public Buildings

Looking through the 1800s and early 1900s, a number of structures were erected, which today stand as a testament to the architectural beauty of an earlier era. The majority of the most famous properties are currently held in public ownership today, although some may be the property of a non-profit entity dedicated to the facility. This section of the plan highlights some of the most notable and enduring structures that accommodate the public today, either as museums, artistic centers, or even as working governmental buildings. As a reminder, privately held residences are excluded from this list, but that is not meant to diminish their historic character, beauty, or importance to other members of the community.

*Hay House*



*Hay House (MGRC Photo)*

Value

Officially known as the Johnston-Felton-Hay House (though more commonly simply called the Hay House), this structure is considered the most advanced antebellum building in America for its style, craftsmanship, and technical innovations. Known as the “Palace of the South,” the Hay House was constructed between 1855 and 1860 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style, which was unusual for residential architecture, particularly in the South, where Greek revival architecture was popular.

The Hay House, comprised of over 16,000 square feet in 24 principal rooms, is notable for both its architectural significance and engineering advances. This four-story home is crowned by a three-story octagonal cupola that serves as part of the advanced ventilation system acting as a chimney that helps to draw hot air up and out of the house. Other technological advancements included hot and cold running water, three bathrooms, an intercom system, in-house kitchen, and central heat.

The construction of the house was commissioned by William Butler Johnston and his wife Anne who were inspired by the palazzos of Florence and Rome during their three-year honeymoon in Europe. Mr. Johnston gained his wealth through investments in banking, railroads, and public utilities and served as keeper of the Confederate Treasury during the Civil War.

After the death of Mrs. Johnston in 1896, daughter Mary Ellen and her husband Judge William H. Felton lived in the house. The Felton family's contributions to the house included some redecorating and remodeling, which included updating the plumbing and adding electricity. When the Judge and Mrs. Felton died in 1926 the Felton heirs sold the house to Parks Lee Hay, founder of the Banker's Health & Life Insurance Company. The Hays substantially redecorated the house to reflect the changing character of 20th-century living; they also added the driveway and brick gateposts, redesigned the grounds, and added the lower garden and pond.

After Mrs. Hay's death in 1963, the heirs established the P.L. Hay Foundation and operated the house as a private house museum. In 1977, ownership of the house was formally transferred to the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. The house has been operated by the Trust since that time and was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1973. In addition to being open for tours six days a week, the Hay House offers many educational programs focused on architecture and history as well as behind-the-scenes tours that showcase areas normally closed to the public. Several special events open to the public are held at the Hay House throughout the year including special holiday tours, luncheons, teas and festivals; in addition, the building and grounds are also available to rent for private events. Hay House offers significant educational opportunities and is constantly undergoing research and restoration, while remaining open to the public, thereby showing visitors interesting and informative procedures.

#### Vulnerability

While no resource is ever completely secure, the Hay House is probably the most protected of any heritage resource within Middle Georgia. Not only is the Hay House a Federally designated National Historic Landmark, but it is also owned and operated by Georgia's only statewide nonprofit preservation organization, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. There are also some local level preservation controls in place that help safeguard against incompatible development in areas adjacent to the house due to its location within the InTown Macon Historic District, which is regulated by a local ordinance administered by the Macon Historic Preservation Commission. This limits the preservation challenges to the typical environmental factors and maintenance issues experienced by an older building.

#### *Historic Courthouses*

##### Value

Among the most recognizable features of any community are the local courthouses. With 159 counties, Georgia possesses more county courthouses than any other state in the nation, aside from Texas. The courthouse is often the most prominent building in town with the city planned around it. Courthouses are graphic icons of the aspirations and pride of their communities. These instantly recognized symbols of government are also essential in their function as an integral public gathering place—important for the records they contain and day-to-day community operations as well as the meetings, events, and festivals held there. These structures are highlighted in the table below.

**Historic Courthouses by Construction Date**

County	Construction Date	City/Location	Style	Architect	Current Use
<b>Crawford</b>	1851	Knoxville	Vernacular w/Greek Revival Influence	Henry Crews (probable)	Cultural Facility
<b>Pulaski</b>	1874 (1897 & 1910 renovations)	Hawkinsville	Neo-Classical	Unknown	Courthouse
<b>Baldwin</b>	1887	Milledgeville	Neo-Classical Revival w/ Victorian Clock Tower	McDonald Bros. and P.E. Dennis	Georgia College Campus Facility
<b>Monroe</b>	1896	Forsyth	High Victorian	Bruce & Morgan	Courthouse
<b>Twiggs</b>	1902-03 (1979 renovation)	Jeffersonville	Romanesque	J. W. Goluke & Co.	Courthouse
<b>Putnam</b>	1905	Eatonton	Neo-Classical Revival	J. W. Goluke & Co.	Courthouse
<b>Jones</b>	1906	Gray	Romanesque	J. W. Goluke & Co.	Courthouse
<b>Macon-Bibb</b>	1924	Macon	Neo-Classical Revival	Curran R. Ellis	Courthouse
<b>Wilkinson</b>	1924	Irwinton	Colonial Revival	Alexander Blair	Courthouse
<b>Peach</b>	1935-36 (1972 renovation)	Fort Valley	Colonial (Williamsburg) Revival	Dennis & Dennis	Courthouse
<b>Houston</b>	1948 (2023 renovation)	Perry	Art Deco	E. Oren Smith	Perry City Hall

Table 1: County Courthouses of Middle Georgia

There is an increasing recognition of the importance of Georgia’s courthouses within the state; and much has been done to help protect, preserve, and promote their continued utilization. Regionally in Middle Georgia, the majority of county courthouses remain in use as such. Three Middle Georgia counties: Baldwin, Crawford and Houston, have constructed new courthouses. Each of these county’s historic courthouses have been put to different uses. The historic Baldwin courthouse is now part of the Georgia College and State University’s campus. The historic Crawford County Courthouse, one of the oldest courthouses in Georgia, holds a modest collection of historic documents and artifacts maintained by the Crawford County Historical Society. Finally, the historic Houston County courthouse has recently been renovated to serve as City Hall for the City of Perry.

Out of the 11 historic courthouses in the Middle Georgia Region, nine of them are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The majority of these were listed as part of a Multiple Property Nomination submitted in 1980. The two courthouses that are not currently listed have been deemed eligible for listing by the Georgia Historic Preservation Division. The historic Houston County Courthouse located in downtown Perry was constructed in 1948 in the Art Deco style; it is not listed because it was not 50 years old at the time the Courthouse Multiple Property Nomination was completed in 1980 or amended in 1945. The other eligible courthouse is the Wilkinson County Courthouse constructed in 1924, which objected to the documentation and listing of the courthouse at the time of the Multiple Property Nomination.

Vulnerability

Despite many of the Middle Georgia courthouses still being actively used as the seat of county government, it is difficult to definitively state that these landmark buildings will never be vulnerable to growth and development. Growth, and sometimes the lack of growth, has endangered a number of historic courthouses throughout the state. Some counties that are pressured by growth and the need for additional space to carry out mandated functions have demolished or abandoned their courthouses to build larger, often non-descript buildings on the outskirts of town. Others, however, have sensitively expanded their historic courthouse or built nearby office buildings to accommodate additional needs. In Georgia’s small, rural counties, that have neither the population nor the tax base to keep their impressive courthouses in the condition they desire, the courthouse often suffers from deferred maintenance, a major cause of physical threats to historic courthouses.



*Crawford County (Old Knoxville) Courthouse (MGRC Photo)*

Currently, Old Knoxville Courthouse in Crawford County is the most endangered by deterioration. As the oldest standing courthouse in Middle Georgia, it needs significant improvements, but Crawford County lacks the funding to make those upgrades, especially as the County currently does not have a need for the space in the building. Alternatively, the Macon-Bibb and Jones County courthouses are most notably in need of additional space. These facilities will require either expansion or the relocation of some offices and functions to off-site locations.

*Old Governor's Mansion*



*Former Governor's Mansion (Photo Credit: Visit Milledgeville)*

Value

The Old Governor's Mansion in Milledgeville, originally constructed in 1839, was planned and built as the first official residence for Georgia's chief executives. Designed by noted architect Charles Clusky, an Irish immigrant, and built by Timothy Porter of Farmington, Connecticut, the mansion is one of the finest examples of High Greek Revival architecture in the nation. Distinguishing features include a Palladian façade with prostyle portico and a plan with round and octagonal rooms.

The mansion's history encompasses the antebellum, Civil War, and early Reconstruction periods of Georgia's history. Prominent state leaders including George Crawford, Howell Cobb, and Joseph E. Brown resided in the building and used it as a stage for speeches and to introduce guests of national standing. The building figured prominently during the Civil War both for its function as Georgia's seat of government and as a "prize" claimed by General William T. Sherman on November 22, 1864, for use as his headquarters during his March to the Sea.

After the Civil War, in 1868, when the State Capitol was relocated from Milledgeville to Atlanta, the mansion was virtually abandoned. The building was used by the Middle Georgia Military and Agricultural College (now Georgia Military College) as barracks from when the school was chartered in 1879 until 1889 when the mansion was given to the newly formed Georgia Normal and Industrial College [currently known as Georgia College and State University (GCSU)] for use as a presidential residence. It served as the home of every GCSU president until 1987.

In 1973, the Old Governor’s Mansion was designated a National Historic Landmark. The initiative to restore the Mansion to its antebellum appearance began in the late 1990s. Actual restoration work, funded through the Georgia General Assembly and the Woodruff Foundation, began in 2001. The Old Governor’s Mansion, still owned and operated by GCSU, now serves as a historic house museum open for public tours.

Vulnerability

The Old Governor’s Mansion, although located within the locally designated Milledgeville Historic District, is not bound by local regulations and design review procedures since the building is owned and operated by Georgia College and State University. However, because public funds would ultimately be involved in any work done on site, improvements would be subject to the Georgia Environmental Policy Act. The vulnerability of this building to inappropriate changes or even demolition will arise if GCSU ever decides to relinquish its ownership of the building to an owner that is not as preservation minded.

*Old State Capitol*

Value

The City of Milledgeville, chosen for its central location and ample springs, became Georgia’s fourth capital city in 1804. The Old State Capitol building is believed to be America’s first public building constructed in the Gothic revival style, featuring battlements and pointed arch windows. It was designed by Colonel B. W. Froebel and architects Smart & Lane and built by General Jett Thomas in 1807 at a cost of nearly \$80,000, with later additions in 1828 and 1837 pushing the total cost to around \$200,000. Partially destroyed by a fire in 1941, the exterior of the building was reconstructed to its former design using the original architectural drawings of Smart & Lane.



*Former Georgia State Capitol Building (Photo Credit: Visit Milledgeville)*

Perhaps the most well-known event held at the building was the Secession Convention, which convened there on January 16, 1861, and passed the Secession Act three days later. During the Civil War, the statehouse square served as a campground for General W.T. Sherman's provost guard, who also burned the brick State Arsenal located on the north side of the building and exploded the brick magazine on the opposite side. In the 1860s after the Civil War, the Gothic gates at the north and south entrances to the square were constructed of remnant bricks from the destroyed arsenal and magazine. The building served as Georgia's capital from its construction in 1807 until 1868 when the capital was moved to Atlanta.

After the capital was moved to Atlanta, the building served as Baldwin County's courthouse for several years. In 1879 when the Georgia Military and Agricultural College [now Georgia Military College (GMC)] was chartered, the building became an integral part of the school and has remained as such to this day. The Old Capitol currently houses classrooms, faculty offices, and administrative offices for GMC, as well as the restored legislative chamber where the 1807-1862 legislative branch of government for the state met. Georgia's Old Capital Museum, a repository for regional history, occupies the ground floor of the building.

### Vulnerability

Occupying a prominent position both on the campus of GMC and in the City of Milledgeville, the Old Capitol Building is both a community and regional landmark deserving of continued preservation and protection. While GMC's recent demolition of two historically significant barracks buildings, which were listed as contributing properties within the nationally significant Milledgeville National Register Historic District, it is possible the Old Capitol building may eventually be considered obsolete and in need of replacement or significant alteration. Since the Old Capitol is owned and operated by an institution of higher education, the building is not bound by local regulations and design review procedures. However, because public funds would ultimately be involved in any work done on site, improvements would be subject to the Georgia Environmental Policy Act. The vulnerability of this building to inappropriate changes or even demolition will arise if ownership of the building is transferred.

### *Terminal Station*

#### Value

Known as "The Crown Jewel of Downtown Macon," Terminal Station provides a picturesque framing to the end of Cherry Street—downtown's most active thoroughfare. Terminal Station was constructed in 1916 and is one of the largest railroad stations still standing in the State of Georgia. The building is in the Beaux Arts style and was designed by architect Alfred T. Fellheimer, who had previously become famous for his design of Grand Central Station in New York City. At its height, Terminal Station was able to support hundreds of arrivals on a daily basis. The station served passenger rail trains until 1971. However, the infrastructure to support passenger rail service remains in place at Terminal Station. The building is now owned and operated by the Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority (MTA) with the facility serving as an intermodal hub for all the MTA bus routes. In addition, Greyhound Lines also operates their intercity bus service out of Terminal Station. While portions of the building remain in use for general governmental operations, this share has dropped in recent years, allowing for more room to grow MTA operations, especially if passenger rail service were able to resume in Macon-Bibb County.

Beyond the practical transportation uses of the space, Terminal Station is also an aesthetically beautiful building that could fit in place through a variety of different scenes and settings. In recent years, it has become one of the most frequent backdrops for movies and TV series filmed in Macon-Bibb County such as *The Underground Railroad* (2020) and *Black Widow* (2021), with scenes from *Superman* (2025) also anticipated to be shot at Terminal Station. The facility has also become a common venue for weddings and other major social functions given its soaring windows, marble floors, and large open space.



*Terminal Station (Photo Credit: Visit Macon)*

### Vulnerability

The Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority is highly invested in preserving Terminal Station and ensuring that it can remain not only a beautiful facility, but also an operable hub for passenger rail services. Although the building is more than 100 years old, the facility underwent major renovations as recently as 2002 and remains in good shape. The greatest challenge will be continuing to maintain the facility in a time of ever-increasing budget challenges. MTA has been a strong steward of the building's historic integrity, but most transit authorities do not have to maintain a similar space given their tight operating margins. Terminal Station sits within Macon Railroad Industrial District, which has strong local protections. As such, concerns about incompatible surrounding developments should be minimal. That means that maintenance needs will likely be the priority of the future.

*Performance Theaters*

Value

Middle Georgia contains four historic performance theaters that date 100 years or more in age. These are (in chronological order) the Grand Opera House in Macon-Bibb County, the Old Opera House in Hawkinsville, the Douglass Theater in Macon-Bibb County, and the Macon City Auditorium, also in Macon-Bibb County. Each of these sites is discussed in brief below.

*Grand Opera House*



*Grand Opera House Interior (Photo Credit: Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation)*

The Grand Opera House in Macon-Bibb County was originally constructed in 1884 as the Academy of Music by W.R. Gunn. From 1902 through 1905, the building underwent a significant renovation in which the original front façade was removed and replaced with the seven-story Grand Building with shops in storefronts along the street. The original auditorium of the Academy was retained and the building re-opened as the Grand Opera House in 1905. Over the years the Grand presented minstrels, vaudeville, burlesque, musical, comedy, and drama hosting productions from Ben Hur in 1908 to Charlie Chaplin conducting the John Phillip Sousa Band to raise money for the war effort.

Later, when the Grand was turned into a movie house in 1936, the first-floor boxes were torn out. During its tenure as a movie theatre, the Grand hosted Macon's only world premiere of a major motion picture held with the screening of "God is My Co-Pilot." The last movie shown at the Grand was "The Sound of Music" in 1965; shortly thereafter the building fell into disuse and was slated for demolition to make way for a downtown parking lot. The threat of demolition spurred a group of citizens to form the Macon Arts Council to raise funds to restore and operate the Grand.

Nationally renowned Macon architect, Ellamae Ellis League contributed to the restoration work on the Grand and by April 6, 1970, the Grand was celebrating its re-opening with Robert Shaw conducting the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. In 1995, Bibb County and Mercer University entered into a long-term lease agreement whereby Mercer would undertake the management of the Grand Opera House. Today, the venue is flourishing under its administration of Mercer University and remains a vibrant cultural facility integral to the region.

*Old Opera House*



*Hawkinsville Opera House (MGRC Photo)*

Since its completion in 1908, the Hawkinsville Old Opera House, also known as the City Auditorium, has been the center of arts and culture in both the City of Hawkinsville and Pulaski County. Designed by noted Macon architect and theatrical designer, W.R. Gunn, the theater was constructed at a cost of \$16,470 in 1907-1908.

At the time of its construction, the Opera House housed both City Hall and a 576-seat auditorium, which had the largest seating capacity of any public building in Pulaski County. The Opera House's 75-foot stage featured a wide variety of events from traveling acts to politicians and even famous entertainers. In addition to ticketed performances, church services were held in the Opera House when a local church burned. Later, during the early 1950s, after a fire destroyed the local movie theater, the Opera House was used as a movie theatre.

Between 1999 and 2001, the Opera House underwent a SPLOST-funded \$1.7 million rehabilitation project. Rehabilitation work included adding upholstered, historical-style seats, installing a new copper standing seam roof, restoring and augmenting the 1907 lighting system, updating all plumbing and mechanical systems, and installing an elevator and restroom facilities. Today, the Hawkinsville Old Opera House is owned by the citizens of Hawkinsville and is operated and managed by non-profit Hawkinsville-Pulaski County Arts Council.

*Douglass Theatre*



*Douglass Theatre (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

In 1921, the Douglass Theatre was established in its current location on Broadway by Charles Henry Douglass, African American entrepreneur. With a capacity of 750-800 seats, the Douglass was specifically designed to host both live performances and to show silent films complete with live musical accompaniment. Although the theatre was primarily geared toward Macon’s black community, some white performers were featured at the venue; however, the most notable acts were some of the most famous black jazz and blues singers of the time including Gertrude ‘Ma’ Rainey, known as “Mother of the Blues;” Bessie Smith, known as “Empress of the Blues;” Ida Cox and Butterbeans and Susie, a black vaudeville comedy team. Later, in the 1940s, musical greats such as Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington both performed at the Douglass. Charles Douglass continued to operate the Theatre until mid-1927 when he sold or leased the theatre to Benjamin W. Stein of Valdosta. Charles Douglass reacquired the Theatre in May 1929 and shortly after upgraded the facilities to accommodate the new talking picture films. Charles operated the Douglass Theatre until his death in 1940 at which time operations were assumed by his wife Fannie and sons Charles Henry (d. 1945) and Peter G. Douglass.

In 1958, on Saturday mornings, local DJ Hamp Swain hosted a live radio broadcast talent show, The Teenage Party, at the Douglass which featured local performers, including Otis Redding. During the 1960s, the Douglass continued to showcase up-and-comers such as Little Richard and James Brown and operated until Peter G. Douglass' death in 1973 at which time the Theatre closed. A few years later in 1978, the City of Macon assumed ownership of the Douglass; however, it sat empty until the 1990s when it underwent complete rehabilitation. Restored and fully equipped, the Douglass re-opened to the public on January 11, 1997, and has since been an important cultural event facility for the community featuring a wide variety of films, performances, and special events.

#### *Macon City Auditorium*



*Interior of Macon City Auditorium (Photo Credit: Visit Macon)*

#### Value

The Macon City Auditorium has a prominent place in the fabric of downtown Macon-Bibb County, situated directly across and just downhill from Macon City Hall. The building was designed by New York architect Egerton Swartwout. Construction began in 1923 and was completed in 1925—allowing the Macon City Auditorium to currently be celebrating 100 years gracing the presence of downtown's skyline. The facility has a unique architectural claim to fame of being covered by the world's largest copper dome. At a size of 14,000 square feet, it can hold around 2,700 patrons. The auditorium has hosted hundreds of major performances with local names like Otis Redding, Jr. and the Allman Brothers Band among them. Perhaps most notably, however, it was on the stage in 1947 when Little Richard made his public debut at the age of 14. With that performance from the Macon City Auditorium to the rest of the world came the sensation that would become known as Rock and Roll—Middle Georgia's greatest musical contribution to the world.

Vulnerability

All four Performance Theatres are important community facilities which feature regular theatrical and musical performances, pageants, movies, and other cultural events. In addition to being similar venues, each of these buildings are located within National Register listed and locally designated historic districts. Typically, buildings located within locally designated historic districts would be subject to design review through the local historic preservation commission. However, since all buildings are under public ownership none are required to go through the local design review process, which leaves the buildings themselves vulnerable to incompatible alterations or additions. Although not required, both communities should strive to adhere to the local historic district regulations whenever possible to set an example of good stewardship so that these important heritage buildings can retain their historic integrity while continuing to be integral community gathering places.

The other natural concern is the deterioration that can come with age. The Hawkinsville Old Opera House has regularly needed improvements with the city often looking for grant funding that can help support the structural integrity of the site. Similarly, the Macon City Auditorium closed for several months in 2022 as it underwent its first renovation since the 1970s. Work included repairs to the copper dome, new flooring, and new seat covers alongside crucial waterproofing and sealing work. This came in at a cost of over \$10 million—underscoring the high cost of preserving these most impressive sites.

Historic Districts



*Historic Home on College Street in the Macon Historic District (Photo Credit: Visit Macon)*

The 2024 Regionally Important Resources Plan identifies a total of 18 different historic districts that are recognized in either a town center, central business district, or a large residential neighborhood following traditional design patterns. Of these districts 17 are already listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The final district has very high potential for listing and has begun to focus on local protections as well. This review does exclude some of the districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These include districts that were strictly industrial, limited to only one site, or were otherwise smaller than a typical downtown area or neighborhood. The districts are discussed below and grouped by the county in which they are located.

**Baldwin County National Register Historic Districts**

*Milledgeville*



*Downtown Milledgeville (MGRC Photo)*

Value

The City of Milledgeville first began development in 1803. The city was designed by Benjamin Easley on lands ceded to the U.S. Government by the Creek Indians one year prior. Milledgeville is unique in that it was designated as Georgia’s future capital city before a groundbreaking occurred. Milledgeville is perhaps the only city in the nation that developed fully utilizing Federal-style architecture, which is sometimes referred to as the “Milledgeville Federal” style due to its prominence. Milledgeville is also one of only two cities in the United States that was planned, designed, and built specifically to be a capital. The other city to share this distinction is Washington, D.C., which was planned by French engineer Pierre L'Enfant. The historic district is roughly bounded by Irwin Street, Thomas Street, Warren Street, and Fishing Creek. The district was listed in the National Register on June 28, 1972.

Vulnerability

The Milledgeville community has placed a premium on effective historic preservation over the years, and the city is one of nineteen cities to be recognized as a Georgia Exceptional Main Street (GEMS) community, due in large part to success in maintaining a vibrant and historic downtown area. Milledgeville is also a Certified Local Government with a local historic preservation ordinance. With that said, there have been some encroachments upon the historic area. Therefore, it is important that all local groups, government organizations, and educational institutions recognize the necessity of working together to utilize these properties in a sensitive manner and to serve as dedicated stewards of the built environment and collective heritage.

**Crawford County National Register Historic Districts**

*Roberta*



*Monument in Downtown Roberta (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

Value

Roberta was not the original settlement in Crawford County, with that title being held by Knoxville, which had previously been established on the Federal Road and designated as the county seat. However, when the railroad bypassed Knoxville, the community of Roberta began to develop in 1886 as a rail depot. Roberta remains a small town today that has since been bypassed by the interstate, with the city’s population peaking around 1,000 residents in the early 2010s. The historic district is roughly bounded by E. Cruselle Street, Kirby Street, Agency Street, and Matthews Street. The district was listed in the National Register on May 19, 1989.

Vulnerability

Development in the City of Roberta has not occurred at such a rapid pace that it has risked major changes to the character of the historic district. However, new developments such as a Dollar General have occurred on the periphery of the district. Furthermore, Roberta does not have a Main Street program or Downtown Development Authority to advocate for historic preservation. Lastly, no local ordinances exist to protect historic structures. As such, the primary protection for the district is the slow pace of growth, which may change over time.

**Jones County National Register Historic Districts**

*Old Clinton*



*Homes in Old Clinton Historic District (MGRC Photo)*

Value

The town of Clinton was founded in 1807 as the Jones County seat. The community grew quickly. In 1816, Clinton formally incorporated and by 1820, Jones County was the second most populous county in the state, according to the US Census. By 1835 Clinton was the largest town west of Milledgeville, and had become the social, economic, education, and cultural center of the Georgia frontier in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The town underwent a gradual decline that began in 1843 with opposition to a rail line locating near town. This resulted in the railroad passing through Gray (the modern county seat), located one mile east of Clinton. Clinton experienced another setback in 1864 during General Sherman’s March to the Sea when over one-third of the town was destroyed. The 1905 decision to move the county seat to Gray sealed the community of Clinton’s fate as a smaller settlement in the shadow of Gray. Despite this decline, many historic structures remain, making Old Clinton a rare example of a largely intact early 19<sup>th</sup> century rural frontier village—the largest one of its kind remaining in Georgia. The historic district runs along Gray Highway, starting roughly one mile west-southwest of downtown Gray and traveling around a half-mile back off the highway. The district was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 12, 1974.

Vulnerability

The Old Clinton Historic District is at risk to encroachment from strip commercial development and road widening projects. The vulnerability of the community to insensitive new construction, demolition of the historic resources, and loss of character and integrity. The Gray Highway corridor has been particularly susceptible to strip development. The threat to this rare historic community was significant enough that the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation chose the Old Clinton Historic District as one of the ten resources listed on its 2008 list of *Places in Peril*. Jones County has taken an active response to these concerns by implementing design guidelines for the district and becoming designated as a Certified Local Government. As such, the vulnerability is considerably lower than it might have been in the past. The lingering concern for the Old Clinton residents is now annexation by the City of Gray. If a landowner was successfully annexed, the historic protections on the property implemented by Jones County would be lost.

**Macon-Bibb County National Register Historic Districts**

*East Macon*



*Mill Hill Arts Center in East Macon (Photo Credit: Macon Arts Alliance)*

Value

East Macon is the cradle of the community—where the settlement originally called Newtown first began. While the remnants of the early community have long since disappeared, a variety of (primarily residential) structures still exist dating back to the early 1900s. East Macon was a uniquely planned area with significant buildings and architecture, but which also continues to evolve today. The historic district is roughly bounded by Emery Highway, Coliseum Drive, Clinton Street, Fletcher Street, and Fairview Street. The district was listed in the National Register on April 1, 1993.

Vulnerability

The East Macon Historic District is likely to see heavy pressure for redevelopment in the coming years. A number of older structures have fallen into disrepair and may receive code enforcement action. Furthermore, as the gateway to the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, the area has tremendous potential to support new tourism-centric businesses. Macon-Bibb County is also promoting redevelopment of the old Bibb Mill site adjacent to this district. That too may result in spillover effects that place historic properties of East Macon at risk.

In the community, overall, Macon-Bibb County has an active interest in preservation. Historic Macon is a particularly robust organization that can effectively advocate for preservation-minded development and redevelopment. Furthermore, Historic Macon is highly successful at helping developers secure historic tax credits if desired. This translates to some of the zoning decisions made as well, as Macon-Bibb County does have several local historic districts designated. However, East Macon is not one of these districts. The result is that historic properties within this area are more vulnerable to being lost than others throughout Macon-Bibb County. This presents an opportunity for additional preservation efforts.

*Fort Hill*



*Barbershop and Homes in Fort Hill Neighborhood (MGRC Photo)*

### Value

Immediately adjacent to the East Macon Historic District, and surrounding historic Fort Hawkins, is the Fort Hill Historic District. Like in East Macon, development in the Fort Hill neighborhood started as early as the 1820s. However, the bulk of development occurred between the 1870s and 1940s. The area is primarily residential in character but also includes several corner stores, churches, and community buildings scattered across the neighborhood. The historic district is roughly bounded by Emery Highway, Second Street, Mitchell Street, Morrow Street, and Schaeffer Place. The district was listed in the National Register on April 16, 1993.

### Vulnerability

The Fort Hill neighborhood is not facing as many new development pressures as the nearby East Macon area; however, the threat from blight and neglect may be even greater. Particularly in the areas west of Lexington Street, a number of homes have fallen into disrepair, and the neighborhood is characterized by litter, illegal dumping, and general disinvestment. Several historic structures in this area have already been lost, particularly along Emery Highway. Redevelopment in the 1960s not only led to the demolition of many structures in the area, but also altered the street network— affecting connectivity between the Fort Hill neighborhood and remainder of the community. With that said, a number of well-maintained homes remain, and new affordable housing (and historically compatible) developments have occurred adjacent to the historic district. This may bring new lift into the area with positive externalities.

In the community, overall, Macon-Bibb County has an active interest in preservation. Historic Macon is a particularly robust organization that can effectively advocate for preservation-minded development and redevelopment. Furthermore, Historic Macon is highly successful at helping developers secure historic tax credits if desired. This translates to some of the zoning decisions made as well, as Macon-Bibb County does have several local historic districts designated. However, Fort Hill is not one of these districts. The result is that historic properties within this area are more vulnerable to being lost than others throughout Macon-Bibb County. This presents an opportunity for additional preservation efforts.

### Macon

#### Value

The Macon Historic District is the community's most densely developed area and represents the cultural heart of not only Macon-Bibb County, but all of Middle Georgia. With nearly 1,000 contributing historic structures (including at least 34 that are listed on the National Register separately), the downtown area contains a mix of structures and uses that contribute to a revitalized and thriving downtown, which is listed as a Georgia Exceptional Main Street (GEMS). The area has experienced a resurgence in the past decades with many older buildings experiencing adaptive reuse that is consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The community of Macon was first laid out in 1823 by James Webb following a grid pattern that would also include several wide boulevards. The community continued to develop over the next century with the basic building and street pattern in place by the 1940s. Among the most defining features are the mansions along College Street, which served as the residences for many of the community's early elites. Also notable is the downtown architecture with a variety of architectural styles creating a unique and memorable environment.

The historic district's original boundary, designated on December 31, 1974, was roughly set by Riverside Drive, Broadway, Elm Street, and I-75. On July 27, 1995, the district was officially increased to add an area roughly bounded by Adams Street and Linden Avenue, as well as the areas surrounding Tattnall Square. Also added was an area bounded by Broadway, Third Street, between Poplar Street, and Pine Street. The full area includes the heart of downtown, the College Hill corridor, Huguenin Heights, and the Tattnall Square neighborhood. Among the areas missing is the medical district located just southwest of the town center. This area will be able to accommodate future growth and redevelopment with less impact on surrounding historic structures.



*Cherry Blossoms on Third Street in Downtown Macon-Bibb County (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

### Vulnerability

The Macon Historic District has widely become recognized as a gem of the community and a place with the ability to bring different and diverse individuals together. As the downtown economy has continued to grow, more interest in redevelopment has occurred, which has placed pressure on a variety of older structures that may have seen better days. As incredible as it may have seemed fifteen years ago, downtown is experiencing a renaissance with more people wanting to live, work, and play within the Macon Historic District. While the future can always be uncertain, this momentum currently seems to be a very good thing for downtown. Investors are once again seeing the value of investing in the area, with many also being attracted to the existing buildings that create a strong framework from which revitalization can occur.



*The Dannenberg Lofts: Adaptive Reuse of an Old Department Store (MGRC Photo)*

In the community, overall, Macon-Bibb County has an active interest in preservation. Historic Macon is a particularly robust organization that can effectively advocate for preservation-minded development and redevelopment. Furthermore, Historic Macon is highly successful at helping developers secure historic tax credits if desired. This translates to some of the zoning decisions made as well, as Macon-Bibb County does have several local historic districts designated. Nearly all of the Macon Historic District is included in a local historic district with stringent regulations. Some of these are regulations on residences, while many others are a result of location within the Central Business District. Whatever the source of regulation, though, the result is that Macon Historic District properties should be relatively safe from incompatible development, provided that existing ordinances continue to be utilized.

### *North Highlands*

#### Value

The North Highlands plantation was owned by Thomas Woolfolk, who in the 1830s, subdivided the area to be used for farms and homesteads. Over time, these smaller properties developed into one of the community's first and innermost suburbs in the early 1900s. A variety of well-maintained architectural styles are present throughout the area, which retains a strong residential character to this day. The historic district is roughly bounded by Nottingham Drive, Boulevard, and Clinton Road. The district was listed in the National Register on November 22, 1993.

Vulnerability

The North Highlands neighborhood has been fully developed for quite some time, and few infill opportunities remain. Accordingly, North Highlights should not be at risk of major disruptions from new development. Macon-Bibb County recently developed one of the largest remaining tracts of land on the edge of North Highlands as a local park, providing another level of protection. For these reasons, little disruption would be likely to occur within North Highlands except for the possibility of rehabilitation that does not meet appropriate standards. There is some potential for new commercial growth along Clinton Road, which could affect noise levels or create visually incongruent changes. However, these properties are limited in number and generally screened by surrounding trees. Furthermore, by virtue of their inclusion in the Ocmulgee Crossings Tax Allocation District, if new development did happen on those adjacent parcels, Macon-Bibb County could potentially condition public funds on making appropriate preservation considerations.

In the community, overall, Macon-Bibb County has an active interest in preservation. Historic Macon is a particularly robust organization that can effectively advocate for preservation-minded development and redevelopment. Furthermore, Historic Macon is highly successful at helping developers secure historic tax credits if desired. This translates to some of the zoning decisions made as well, as Macon-Bibb County does have several local historic districts designated. However, North Highlands is not one of these districts. The result is that historic properties within this area are more vulnerable to being lost than others throughout Macon-Bibb County. This presents an opportunity for additional preservation efforts.



*Home in North Highlands Neighborhood (Photo Credit: North Highlands Neighborhood Association)*

*Pleasant Hill*

Value

The Pleasant Hill Historic District was developed beginning in the 1870s with build out continuing through the 1930s. Pleasant Hill was home to the most prosperous and influential Black residents of Macon during this time. A variety of modest but attractive homes were owned by doctors, educators, attorneys, businessmen, ministers, and more. One of the Black community’s most active commercial districts existed in the heart of Pleasant Hill—directly where Interstate 75 would eventually cut through the community. With the loss of social connectivity coupled with aggressive redlining policies, Pleasant Hill began to experience a significant amount of disinvestment and a decline in its population, built environment, and economic wellbeing.

Despite these challenges, Pleasant Hill endured as a close-knit community. The likes of U.S. Congressman Jefferson Long, Medal of Honor recipient Rodney M. Davis, and the “Architect of Rock and Roll” Little Richard all called this neighborhood home, making it one of the most culturally significant communities within Macon-Bibb County. Even as some structures have deteriorated over time, Pleasant Hill continues to be a significant asset to the region. The historic district is roughly bounded by Sheridan Avenue, Schofield Street, Madison Street, Jefferson Street, Ferguson Street, and Galliard Street. It is bisected on a north-south line by Interstate 75. The district was listed in the National Register on May 22, 1986.



*Little Richard House and Resource Center (Photo Credit: Visit Macon)*

Vulnerability



Gravesite of Rodney M. Davis (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)

Pleasant Hill suffers from significant vulnerabilities due to its history of upheaval and disinvestment. The decision by early transportation planners to construct I-75 directly in the heart of Pleasant Hill remains a scar on the fabric of the community. In recent years, the widening of the highway has only reopened many of these wounds.

While the Georgia Department of Transportation invested in mitigation for the neighborhood during this most recent round of construction, it did not erase the challenges that the community continues to face. Furthermore, additional homes and businesses have been impacted. Any future work on the interstate will necessarily risk adverse effects on the historic district. In addition, the community has felt a general impact from the loss of historic structures as the demolition of blighted property has continued to occur. There is no shortage of distress in Pleasant Hill, which many residents will attribute to neglect from the broader city.

The challenges in Pleasant Hill are not simply limited to older structures or a loss of connectivity. The neighborhood’s historic Linwood Cemetery has been plagued by overgrowth that has deteriorated many gravesites. Sidewalks are overgrown while recreational spaces feel bland and barren. Many residents also struggle economically. Residents of Pleasant Hill have taken initiative to steer their own future through community planning. This direction includes a focus on preserving the neighborhood’s rich history but will also require partners for preservation given the lack of available funding. So, here in particular, community engagement will be key for preserving a piece of Macon-Bibb County’s unique history.

In the community, overall, Macon-Bibb County has an active interest in preservation. Historic Macon is a particularly robust organization that can effectively advocate for preservation-minded development and redevelopment. Furthermore, Historic Macon is highly successful at helping developers secure historic tax credits if desired. This translates to some of the zoning decisions made as well, as Macon-Bibb County does have several local historic districts designated. However, Pleasant Hill is not one of these districts. The result is that historic properties within this area are more vulnerable to being lost than others throughout Macon-Bibb County. This presents an opportunity for additional preservation efforts.

### Shirley Hills



*Streetscape in Shirley Hills (Photo Credit: Shirley Hills Neighborhood Association)*

#### Value

The Shirley Hills Historic District developed quickly in the 1920s and 1930s on land that had previously been owned by Augustus Bacon, who was a Georgia legislator and United States senator. Most of the properties developed on fairly large lots. Today, the community is known for its unique houses (several of which were designed by notable Macon architects) and beautifully landscaped yards. The original historic district, designated on August 17, 1989, was roughly bounded by Senate Place, Parkview Drive, Curry Drive, Briarcliff Road, Nottingham Drive, and the Ocmulgee River. On May 28, 2014, the district was officially increased outward to add an area roughly bounded by Boulevard, Woodland Drive, Waveland Circle, Nottingham Drive, Briarcliff Road, and Upper River Road.

#### Vulnerability

Shirley Hills is tucked away off the main thoroughfares and functions as a peaceful retreat from some of the busier areas of the community. The result is that minimal growth pressures have been seen or experienced within the neighborhood. Further, while the neighborhood is not particularly dense, its development patterns and zoning also limit the potential for new infill development. These factors reduce vulnerability for Shirley Hills. In the community, overall, Macon-Bibb County has an active interest in preservation. Historic Macon is a particularly robust organization that can effectively advocate for preservation-minded development and redevelopment. Furthermore, Historic Macon is highly successful at helping developers secure historic tax credits if desired. This translates to some of the zoning decisions made as well, as Macon-Bibb County does have several local historic districts designated. However, Shirley Hills is not one of these districts. The result is that historic properties within this area are more vulnerable to being lost than others throughout Macon-Bibb County. This presents an opportunity for additional preservation efforts.

*Tindall Heights*



*Old Store and Homes in the Tindall Heights Neighborhood (MGRC Photo)*

Value

The Tindall Heights Historic District was developed between the 1870s and 1940s as a predominately middle-class neighborhood. In contrast to Pleasant Hill (on the other side of downtown), Tindall Heights was primarily a white community. Many homes remain in the area today, along with a few corner stores and churches. However, this area has also seen challenges with blight. The value historically comes from many of the older homes that do still remain along with the design of the community as another early “suburban” neighborhood away from Downtown Macon, though still within a short distance. This also remains an example of an area that could provide ample affordable housing within proximity of the city center provided that the quality of housing stock could be improved. The historic district is roughly bounded by Broadway, Eisenhower Parkway, Felton Avenue, Nussbaum Avenue, Oglethorpe Street, and the Central of Georgia railroad. The district was listed in the National Register on July 1, 1993.

Vulnerability

Tindall Heights is not currently facing new development pressures, even as the neighborhood has ample availability of homes and empty lots within a one mile walk of downtown. Given that the pace of new development is slow, the area is experiencing less pressure on historic structures from new developments. However, this also means that a number of blighted and distressed properties exist within the area too. Many of these have previously been demolished by Macon-Bibb County while others are still awaiting condemnation. While many nice homes remain in the area and some new (historically compatible) infill has also occurred, the threat of blight will likely remain this area’s greatest risk in the near future.

In the community, overall, Macon-Bibb County has an active interest in preservation. Historic Macon is a particularly robust organization that can effectively advocate for preservation-minded development and redevelopment. Furthermore, Historic Macon is highly successful at helping developers secure historic tax credits if desired. This translates to some of the zoning decisions made as well, as Macon-Bibb County does have several local historic districts designated. However, the bulk of the Tindall Heights neighborhood is not located in one of these districts. The result is that historic properties within this area are more vulnerable to being lost than others throughout Macon-Bibb County. This presents an opportunity for additional preservation efforts. The exception is the Beall's Hill neighborhood, which does have additional protections in place, but has also seen significantly more redevelopment in recent years.

### Vineville



*Aerial Photo of Homes in Vineville Neighborhood (Photo Credit: Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation)*

### Value

Outside of the Macon Historic District, the Vineville Historic District has the greatest number of historic structures which span over a century of development between the 1830s and 1930s. Vineville began its development as a collection of large plantation estates before properties were eventually subdivided and infill development occurred over time. Being situated a bit further out of town, Vineville was previously its own neighborhood along the road that connected Macon to Forsyth. However, by the early 1900s, the community had been annexed and additional growth took off in the area. The end result is that Vineville is able to represent another (slightly further out) early suburb that characterized typical American developments on the urban outskirts in the early 1900s. The historic district is roughly defined by the Vineville Avenue corridor between I-75 and the Georgia Academy for the Blind. It also includes side streets such as English Avenue, Pierce Avenue, Hines Terrace, Buford Place, Corbin Avenue, and Stanislaus Circle. The district was listed in the National Register on November 21, 1980.

Vulnerability

With a particularly active neighborhood association, Vineville residents can be passionate advocates for historic preservation. Homes are generally well maintained but developed about as densely as possible in most areas. As such, there is less pressure for new development or redevelopment that could jeopardize the neighborhood’s historic integrity. In the community, overall, Macon-Bibb County has an active interest in preservation. Historic Macon is a particularly robust organization that can effectively advocate for preservation-minded development and redevelopment. Furthermore, Historic Macon is highly successful at helping developers secure historic tax credits if desired. This translates to some of the zoning decisions made as well, as Macon-Bibb County does have several local historic districts designated. The entirety of the Vineville Historic District (plus a few additional properties around the perimeter) is included in a local historic district with stringent regulations. As a result, the Vineville Historic District properties should be relatively safe from incompatible development, provided that existing ordinances continue to be utilized.

**Monroe County National Register Historic Districts**

*Culloden*

Value

Culloden was the first European settlement within Middle Georgia, dating to 1739. Although the community would not be incorporated until 1887, it was still a noteworthy early settlement. The community contains a number of historic buildings today, though some have fallen into disrepair. Among the most notable is the Culloden United Methodist Church, which was constructed in 1893. Many additional structures date back to the early 1900s. The historic district generally contains Hickory Grove Road, Main Street, College Street and Orange Street. The district was listed in the National Register on March 13, 1980.



*Culloden Town Center (MGRC Photo)*

Vulnerability

No significant development in the City of Culloden has occurred in recent years, minimizing the risk of changes to the character of the district. The greatest challenge has been the gradual decay of older properties which may become difficult to salvage if improvements are not made. Culloden does not have any local programs or groups that can help advocate for historic preservation, and no local ordinances exist to protect historic structures. As such, the primary protection for the district is the slow pace of growth. However, that will not be sufficient to stop the trend of older buildings falling into disrepair. Interventions may be needed to save several older structures.

*Forsyth Commercial*



*Businesses on the Square in Downtown Forsyth (Photo Credit: City of Forsyth)*

Value

The City of Forsyth was founded in 1823 as the county seat of Monroe County. Forsyth was one of the earliest railroad towns in the state, with the line from Forsyth to Macon being the first passenger rail service in Georgia during the 1830s. Forsyth is built around a central courthouse square, with the oldest structures dating back to the 1890s. The remainder of the downtown square took form throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Forsyth retains this historical development pattern around the town center, although several modern buildings have also been built in recent years—namely the new Forsyth City Hall. Collectively though, Forsyth retains one of the most intact historic courthouse squares of any community in the region.

The historic district is roughly bounded by Main Street, Lee Street, Johnston Street, Adams Street, Jackson Street, Kimball Street, and Harris Street. The district was listed in the National Register on January 13, 1983.

### Vulnerability

The City of Forsyth has made investments in creating a prosperous downtown anchored with historic properties. Forsyth maintains a Classic Main Street program and received a Rural Zone designation to help aid in rehabilitation of historic properties. Forsyth is also a Certified Local Government with a local historic preservation ordinance. Monroe County and Forsyth are growing communities, though. There is certainly potential for continued interest in growth that may or may not be compatible with the existing built environment. As in many other communities, Forsyth will benefit from collaboration on the development and reuse of properties in a careful and deliberate manner.

## **Peach County National Register Historic Districts**

### *Byron*



*Small Businesses in Downtown Byron (MGRC Photo)*

### Value

The City of Byron began as a minor rail stop in the 1850s and remained that way for a couple of decades. As additional shops and homes developed, a city was incorporated in 1874, named after famous poet Lord Byron. The town center generally developed around the 1910s and 1920s, though the community remained a small and largely agricultural city for many years. Once Interstate 75 passed alongside Byron in the 1960s, the city began to experience more sustained and rapid growth. However, the historic core remains a small strip of properties near that original rail depot. Most of the growth in recent years has occurred along major transportation corridors and in newly built subdivisions outside of the core downtown area. The historic district is centered around the Central Georgia Railroad tracks from Jackson Street to Vinson Street, including side streets of Main Street, Church Street and Academy Street. The district was listed in the National Register on June 20, 1995.

Vulnerability

Byron has made the enhancement of its downtown historic district a priority, particularly regarding the management of infrastructure for improved safety and aesthetics. The old town center has seen new investment in recent years highlighted by the Drugstore Deli, which has served as an anchor restaurant for the past decade. However, the bulk of attention has been focused on the GA-49 corridor and interchanges with I-75. Byron also adopted a local historic preservation ordinance that can support continued preservation of the town center. Byron continues to grow rapidly giving the city a unique opportunity to plan for and direct its future patterns of development.

*Fort Valley Downtown and Railroad*

Value

The City of Fort Valley was first settled around 1825 as a trading post with Native Americans as the Georgia frontier pushed westward. The city was later incorporated in 1856. The community quickly became an agricultural powerhouse given the quality of surrounding landscape. The city continued to develop with the founding of the Fort Valley High and Industrial School in 1895, which would later become Fort Valley State University. Blue Bird also began their bus manufacturing business in 1927. The bulk of the downtown area developed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although a major tornado in 1975 would later rip through downtown—leading to a loss of several historic structures. Aside from this, many commercial structures remain intact through the downtown area. However, blight has taken hold of several structures that are simply underutilized today. The result is a historic district that is not as appealing to the eye as its potential might indicate. The historic district is roughly centered on the intersection of GA-49 with Main Street and Church Street. The district was listed in the National Register on August 12, 2010.



*Gazebo in Downtown Fort Valley (Photo Credit: City of Fort Valley)*

Vulnerability

Fort Valley has not experienced major growth in recent years, indicating that there may not be major threats to the city’s historic built infrastructure. Fort Valley is also a Certified Local Government with a local historic preservation ordinance, which should also serve to protect the historic structures from adverse impacts. Proposed developments around the community have the potential of changing this trajectory. However, downtown development activities have ebbed and flowed in recent years with momentum proving difficult to maintain. As such, the future of the Fort Valley Downtown and Railroad Historic District is somewhat up in the air. A renewed focus on revitalization has the potential to leverage the community’s historic resources for economic growth. Pursuing incentives like the Rural Zone program could also help.

**Pulaski County National Register Historic Districts**

*Hawkinsville Commercial and Industrial*



*Pulaski County Courthouse in Hawkinsville Historic District (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

Value

The City of Hawkinsville was incorporated in 1830 as a primary transportation hub along the Ocmulgee River. The community thrived and continued to develop throughout the 1800s with the city’s river commerce competing favorably with rail for many years, particularly when Sherman’s March to the Sea interrupted rail service to major ports.

Hawkinsville was able to serve many of the agricultural transport needs of Pulaski County farmers while also serving as the northernmost terminus of steamboat lines that traveled up the Ocmulgee. While Macon, approximately 45 miles to the north, would remain the region's primary urban center, Hawkinsville grew at a respectable pace. In 1910, Hawkinsville had a population of nearly 3,500 residents, making it the third largest city in Middle Georgia, and among the 35 largest cities in the state by population. Hawkinsville would also become a popular winter equestrian training center around the early 1900s, spurred on by local investments in the city's agricultural economy. The result of this growth was a relatively large and prosperous downtown for its era. While growth has stayed far below the historic pace, Hawkinsville still has one of the largest historical downtown areas in Middle Georgia. The historic district is roughly bounded by Dooly Street, Broad Street, Houston Street, and 3rd Street. The district was listed in the National Register on December 13, 2004.

#### Vulnerability

The City of Hawkinsville has made the maintenance of its historic downtown a priority. This has also been aided with support from Pulaski County, given the close collaboration between the two local governments. Utilizing resources such as the Archway program from the University of Georgia, Hawkinsville and Pulaski County have regularly looked for ways to make the community more attractive and more vibrant. Hawkinsville has maintained a Classic Main Street program and received a Rural Zone designation to help aid in rehabilitation of historic properties. The city is also a Certified Local Government with a local historic preservation ordinance. In recent years, the city has also adopted ordinances to encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures, easing regulations for second story residences in the historic district. While Hawkinsville is not a rapidly growing community, the continued existence of Robins Air Force Base presents opportunities for new residents to locate in the area if seeking a quieter alternative to Warner Robins. Leveraging these connections, Hawkinsville continues to invest in being a place with high quality of life. While the historic district is somewhat threatened by blight, addressing those concerns has been a major priority for all local government entities. Thus, with continued collaboration and a focus on utilizing the community's resources to the fullest of their abilities, Hawkinsville is in a good position to utilize its history for a more prosperous future.

### **Putnam County National Register Historic Districts**

#### *Eatonton*

#### Value

Eatonton is the second-oldest incorporated city in Middle Georgia, only behind the former state capital of Milledgeville. Incorporated as the county seat in 1808, the community served as both a convenient stopping point between Milledgeville and Athens, as well as between Atlanta and Augusta. Among the first industries to grow in the surrounding area was the dairy industry, which began to boom after the Civil War with growth continuing through the 1940s and 1950s. To this day, Eatonton is still known as the "Dairy Capital of Georgia." By the 1950s, much of the historic downtown had already been built with many of those historic structures remaining to this day. The city is also known for a collection of beautifully preserved historic mansions. As a result, the historic district in Eatonton is rather large for a town of its size, including not only the commercial core, but also many residences. This district is roughly bounded by Walnut Street, Lafayette Avenue, Carriage Way, Phillips Drive, Pine Avenue, and Putnam Avenue. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on June 13, 1975.



*Businesses in Downtown Eatonton (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

### Vulnerability

The growth of Putnam County’s tourism economy has led to additional growth—particularly over the past 30 or so years. However, the community was also hit harder than most by the 2008 recession given the importance of a vibrant homebuilding industry that had developed throughout the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These simultaneous challenges and opportunities have had competing effects on the Eatonton Historic District. As a matter of policy, Eatonton has adopted a local historic preservation ordinance that can support continued preservation of the town center. Crucially, the community also operates a Classic Main Street Program and utilizes a Downtown Development Authority that has been instrumental in the preservation of historic structures such as the Pex Theater downtown.

Collectively, Eatonton appears to be in the middle of a shift in its economic focus. While industry is still an important part of the community (and available industrial properties are available), the opportunity for Eatonton to lean into its tourism potential can lead to additional growth. Specifically, Eatonton has embraced its artistic heritage—particularly in the form of writers, but now also as painters and sculptors leaning into the community’s artisan village and as supporters of public art. By focusing on these tangible products of the community’s heritage, historic preservation comes as a natural byproduct, ensuring that Eatonton’s growth is due to (and in turn must also preserve) its uniqueness as a cultural hub.

**Other Local Districts Pending Designation**

*Perry*

Value

Houston County was created from newly ceded Creek Indian lands in 1821, and a small settlement, renamed Perry, was established at the county seat in 1824. Throughout the early years of the city’s history, it served core functions for the surrounding county and eventually became a stagecoach stop. However, significant growth would not occur until the 1910s and 1920s, when the downtown area took on its current shape. Throughout the 1920s, Perry’s downtown continued to prosper, and the New Perry Hotel was built in 1925 to serve tourists passing through town on their way to Florida along US-41.



*New Perry Hotel (MGRC Photo)*

Following the development of Robins Air Force Base, the City of Perry truly boomed, quadrupling between 1940 and 1960 as the city also became connected via Interstate 75. Today, Perry remains one of the fastest growing communities in Middle Georgia, overtaking Milledgeville to become the region’s third-largest city by population as of the 2020 Census. At the same time though, Perry also retains a charming historic downtown with many structures that could be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Vulnerability

Perry maintains several local historic districts. However, the city has not actively pursued listing the downtown historic district on the national register; nor has the city pursued designation as a Certified Local Government. Noting these factors, along with Perry’s status as a growing community, Perry’s historic properties could be vulnerable to loss. Previous growth in Perry has trended to outlying areas, but with a modern focus on the residential marketplace, downtown Perry is also seeing new construction—including new loft apartments and storefronts. Care will be necessary to ensure that these new structures are compatible with existing developments. However, that in and of itself will also be a challenge, due to the relatively small size of Perry’s downtown. With limited room to grow, historic structures in Perry could be at risk for demolition that makes way for larger structures.

Toomsboro



*Aerial Photo of Downtown Toomsboro (Photo Credit: Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation)*

Value

The Town of Toomsboro was incorporated in 1904, though a community had formed earlier along a line of the Central Georgia Railroad running from Macon to Savannah, with a train depot being established in Toomsboro (at the time called “Toomsborough,” later shortened due to difficulties in fitting the name on train tickets) in 1856. In the early-to-mid 1900s, Toomsboro had an active downtown district with a train depot, several mills, a blacksmith, bank, post office, and a hotel. The most recognizable building in Toomsboro—the Swampland Opera House—opened in 1975, repurposing a large structure built in 1916 that housed several different stores over the years. The opera house was a popular attraction in Toomsboro for several years, hosting weekly dancing and singing events that attracted many residents and visitors to the area. The building still retains its interior seating and stage structures today. This collection of structures in the downtown area is unique among other towns of its size, representing a unique clustering of historic structures.

Vulnerability

The main threat facing Toomsboro is neglect and lack of maintenance leading to deterioration. The old train depot is at particular risk of demolition by neglect, as it has already suffered noticeable roof damage due to recent storms. Many of the buildings in Downtown Toomsboro have been vacant for over 20 years, and the resulting damage from lack of maintenance on the buildings can be easily seen. Furthermore, since 2002, a single individual has owned most of these properties in and around downtown Toomsboro and has not sought significant building rehabilitation efforts. After failed redevelopment plans for the properties, this owner has been seeking to sell the large number of parcels that he owns since 2012, and more seriously since 2018. The uncertainty places Toomsboro at risk and is a reason why the town is pursuing historic preservation ordinances to protect the community from incompatible development or demolition.

## Heritage Tourism Sites

The final category of heritage sites throughout Middle Georgia are those that may not otherwise be considered a historical site but are nonetheless important to the region as a source of civic pride. These facilities also come with a focus on attracting tourism to their communities—either because of their inherent uniqueness or due to the scale at which their impact can be felt. This list initially contained six such tourist draws for the region that were not listed elsewhere. However, a seventh special venue was able to be added to this list just before the plan was finalized.

Another common thread across these sites is that any type of vulnerability is minimal, provided that management of the sites continues to be professional and that each site continues to attract visitors. Naturally, that could be a concern for almost any heritage site on the list that requires basic maintenance and operations. The sites in this category all have professional management at the moment, and no additional vulnerability concerns have been identified for any of these other properties. As such, the “vulnerability” assessments are not included below.

### *Georgia National Fairgrounds*



*Aerial View of Georgia National Fairgrounds (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

Value

The idea for a statewide agricultural exhibition center was first developed by several legislators in the 1980s. When a working group of civic and political leaders was brought together, they quickly ascertained the value of such a facility. Among the early leaders was Representative Larry Walker from Perry. With his leadership, the State of Georgia passed legislation in 1985 that created the Georgia Agricultural Exposition Authority. This group developed a competitive process by which a site could be selected for the fairgrounds. Perry and Macon were the two finalists for the location with Perry ultimately being selected. The first Georgia National Fair was held in October 1990. Since that time, the Georgia National Fairgrounds & Agricenter has been an important gathering place for the region and the state—helping to coin the City of Perry’s eventual motto, “Where Georgia Comes Together.” The Georgia National Fair remains the facility’s signature event on an annual basis, attracting more than a half million visitors annually.

*Georgia Sports Hall of Fame*

Value

The Georgia Sports Hall of Fame was founded in 1956 to honor outstanding Georgia athletes—particularly those from the preparatory school level. However, it was expanded to include collegiate, amateur, and professional athletes in 1963. The Georgia General Assembly codified the hall of fame in 1978, but it had no physical space until funding was appropriated in the 1990s. The modern facility that hosts the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame and an accompanying museum today opened in 1999. At a total size of 43,000 square feet, it is the largest state sports hall of fame in the nation as well as a valuable and flexible space for the community.



*Georgia Sports Hall of Fame (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

Georgia Writers Museum



Interior of the Georgia Writers Museum (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)

Value

While it is one of the smaller museums in the region by size, the Georgia Writers Museum punches above its weight in terms of its content. Eatonton, home of the museum, is also the hometown of two of Georgia’s most famous writers: Joel Chandler Harris, and Alice Walker. Flannery O’Connor also called the countryside between Eatonton and Milledgeville home. Between the exhibits for these three authors and more than 90 additional writers from across the state, the Georgia Writers Museum is an exceptional educational experience.

As of the publication of this plan, the Georgia Writers Museum is undergoing substantial renovations and improvements, supported with funding from the Georgia Council for the Arts. The updated facility will be a 21st-century experience, complete with virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and interactive displays. With this promise of a one-of-a-kind experience, plus the wide content already available to the public, the Georgia Writers Museum is most certainly another valuable attraction that highlights the cultural heritage of Middle Georgia.

*Museum of Aviation*

Value

The Museum of Aviation opened to the public on November 9, 1984, with 20 aircraft on display in an open field and another 20 were in various stages of restoration. The Museum of Aviation has grown to become the second largest museum in the United States Air Force and the fourth most visited museum in the Department of Defense. Today, the museum's collection includes over 85 historic U.S. Air Force aircraft, missiles, cockpits, and other exhibits. The facility spans several different hangars and a large outdoor area covering 51 total acres. Many of the aircraft on display have been carefully restored by experts at Robins Air Force Base. In this sense, the work of the Museum of Aviation also serves to inspire the next generation of airmen who may also be stationed, or work as civilians, at Robins Air Force Base in the future.



*Exterior of the Eagle Building at the Museum of Aviation (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

Beyond the importance of the museum for documenting history, the museum is also host to the National STEM Academy. Through this work, students and their teachers can participate in a variety of field trips and individual programs that integrate innovative, hands-on STEM disciplines, including the Arts such as history, literature, and more. These programs are offered for learners as young as age 4. Since its founding in 2012, students have arrived from 20 states and six different counties—totaling over 400,000 participants.

*Tubman Museum*



*Tubman Museum (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)*

Value

The Tubman Museum was established in 1981 by Fr. Richard Keil, pastor of Saint Peter Claver Catholic Church in Macon. A longtime dream of Fr. Keil’s was to create a museum in the South dedicated to African American history and culture. The goal of the space was to create a space in the south where the cultural contributions of the Black community would be embraced and celebrated. Today, the Tubman Museum contains the largest collection of African American art, history, and culture in the southeastern United States. The museum also maintains a wide array of exhibitions, programs, classes, publications, and services geared toward children, adults, families, students, and teachers alike.

After originally opening in an abandoned warehouse on Walnut Street, the Tubman Museum moved to a new, prominent, location on Cherry Street (across from the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame) in 2015. The new facility (at 49,500 sq. ft.) is more than five times larger than the original space, providing more space in which to conduct its mission. As it continues to grow, the Tubman Museum honors its unique origin and traditions while strengthening its commitment to educating people about African American art, history, and culture.

### Whistle Stop Café

#### Value

Perhaps the most famous cinematic location within Middle Georgia is the Whistle Stop Café in the community of Juliette. The building was constructed in 1927 by Edward L. Williams, Sr. and was operated as a general merchandise store until his retirement 1972. The building was periodically rented out, but housed few long-term businesses for almost two decades until the site was selected for filming of the 1991 film, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, based on Fannie Flagg's 1987 novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*. After the film became popular, Robert Williams, a descendant of Edward L. Williams, Sr., decided to establish a real café at the location. Over 30 years later, the Whistle Stop Café is still in operation, serving a variety of classic southern dishes, including the iconic fried green tomatoes.



Whistle Stop Café (Photo Credit: Explore Georgia)

Critically for the community, the Whistle Stop Café is not a single attraction, even while serving as the focal point of the film. Tourists frequently visit the café for food only to spend a day wandering the iconic streets of Juliette that were also featured in the film. As a result, the community has been revitalized by the film, taking what was once a quiet corner of Monroe County and transforming the set into an exciting tourist destination for all generations.

*Atrium Health Amphitheater*

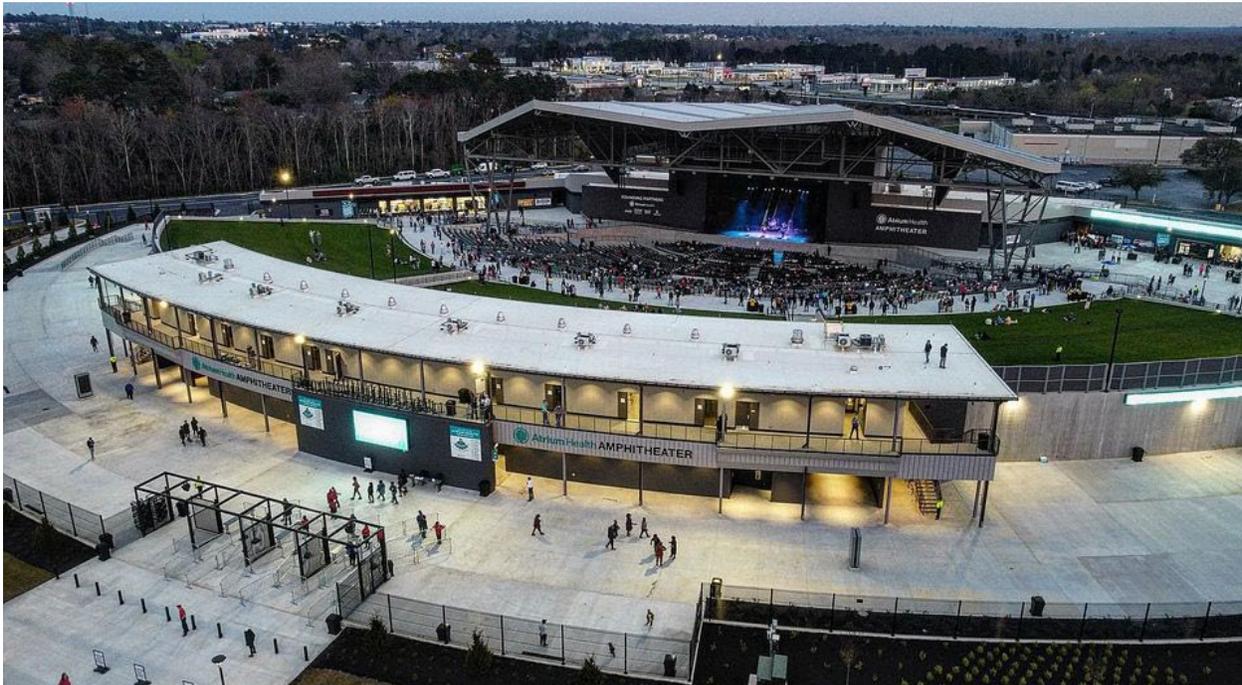


*Construction of the Atrium Health Amphitheater in 2023 (Photo Credit: Macon-Bibb County)*

Value

The newest Regionally Important Resource to Middle Georgia is the Atrium Health Amphitheater. Built in 2022-24, the Amphitheater is part of a larger revitalization effort surrounding the Macon Mall. The overall plan provides for the maintenance of existing retail stores, the attraction of new shops and restaurants, and the relocation of government offices to remaining vacant spaces.

The Atrium Health Amphitheater officially opened on March 24, 2024, with a performance by Southern Rock and Roll legends Lynyrd Skynyrd and ZZ Top. The facility contains space for 12,000 visitors, making it the second-largest amphitheater in the state, and the largest outside of the Atlanta metro area. At a cost of \$45 million, the facility represents a major investment by the community in itself and in the belief that Middle Georgia’s musical heritage will continue to attract visitors through the future as a symbol of the community’s resurgence.



*Opening of the Atrium Health Amphitheater, Middle Georgia’s Newest Music Venue (Photo Credit: Macon-Bibb County)*

## Regionally Important Resources Map

The following page includes the Regionally Important Resources (RIR) Map. This single map highlights all of the various assets found within Middle Georgia. Many sites are shown as polygons that cover a large area. However, the historic districts and sites are generally represented by a single pushpin that notates the area. This helps to limit clutter on the map. Also for that purpose, an inset map of the Downtown Macon-Bibb County area is also provided.

The RIR Map is a detailed illustration of all of the important natural and cultural resources located within Middle Georgia. First and foremost, it depicts all resources described within this plan. These were all either nominated by stakeholders or were individually determined to have sufficient value for inclusion by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission staff.

Another important feature of the RIR Map is a set of layers combined to form a contiguous regional green infrastructure network. This layer matches the “conservation” layer found within the Middle Georgia Regional 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.

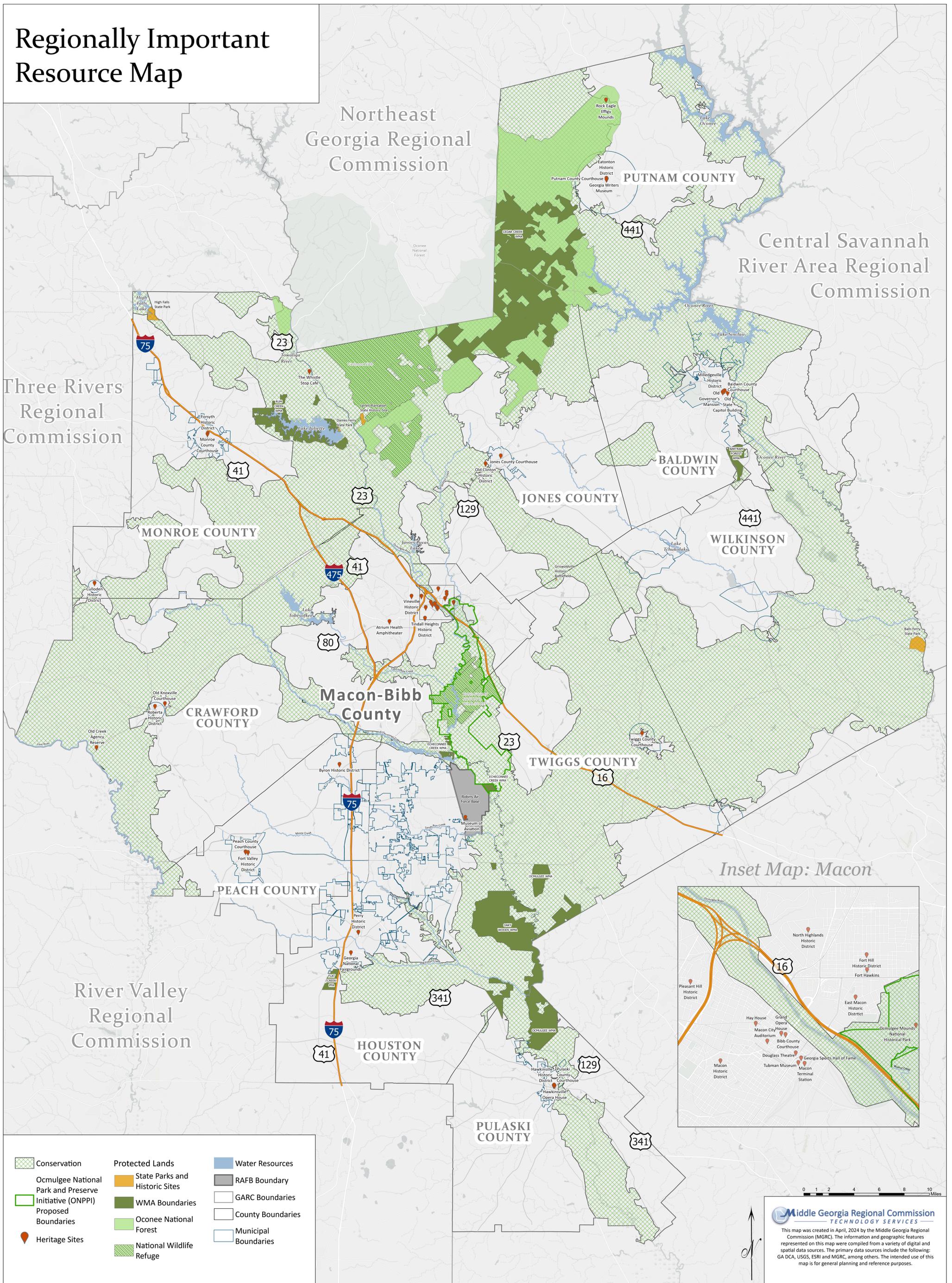
These data sources helped to define the final layer for the plan. While one option would have been to designate any area with any single conservation value as part of the green infrastructure layer, that would have proved impractical in many areas—leaving some communities with little to no developable 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.

This map is very detailed and may not be fully readable depending on the scale at which it is viewed. At any time, an electronic web map of the Regionally Important Resources can be provided by contacting the Middle Georgia Regional Commission. The map will also be available on the MGRC website at: <https://www.middlegeorgiarc.org/regional-plan/>.



*Oaky Woods Wildlife Management Area (Photo Credit: Georgia Department of Natural Resources)*

# Regionally Important Resource Map



*Inset Map: Macon*



- |  |                                |                      |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Conservation                           | State Parks and Historic Sites | Water Resources      |
| Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve    | WMA Boundaries                 | RAFB Boundary        |
| Initiative (ONPPI) Proposed Boundaries | Oconee National Forest         | GARC Boundaries      |
| Heritage Sites                         | National Wildlife Refuge       | County Boundaries    |
|  |                                | 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, ESRI and MGRC, among others. The intended use of this map is for general planning and reference purposes.