

COVER SHEET FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING SUBMITTALS

Name(s) of Submitting Government(s): **Southern Georgia Regional Commission**

RC: **SGRC**

Submittal Type: **Comp Plan Update**

Preparer: RC Local Government Consultant: Specify

Cover Letter Date: **11/21/24**

Date Submittal Initially Received by RC: **12/3/24**

Explain Unusual Time-lags or Other Anomalies, when present:

Inaccurate/incomplete information, above, and nonconformity with the standards articulated, below, are reportable as performance errors under the terms of the annual DCA/RC contract and may lead to adverse audit findings.

- **ALL SUBMITTALS MUST BE TRANSMITTED ELECTRONICALLY USING THE DEPARTMENT'S SHAREPOINT SITE.**
- **COMBINE ALL INDIVIDUAL IMAGES, DOCUMENTS AND SPREADSHEETS INTO ONE SINGLE, SEARCHABLE PDF (INCLUDING COVER LETTERS, APPENDICES, ETC.), PUT THIS COMPLETED FORM AS THE FIRST PAGE OF THE PDF AND THEN UPLOAD IT.**
- **REVISED SUBMITTALS MUST INCLUDE THE ENTIRE DOCUMENT, NOT ONLY THE REVISED PORTION.**
- **EMAILED OR HARDCOPY MATERIALS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED.**
- **ALL SUBMITTALS MUST BE CHanneled THROUGH THE APPROPRIATE REGIONAL COMMISSION.**

November 21, 2024

Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Office of Planning and Environmental Management
60 Executive Park South, NE
Atlanta, GA

RE: Regional Plan F24 Annual Implementation Program Report Submittal

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission has completed an update of its regional plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held one required public hearing on November 21, 2024 and, at a minimum, have involved regional stakeholders in development of the annual report in a manner appropriate to our region's dynamics and resources and in accordance with the Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning, Chapter 110-12-6. Documentation of the required public hearings has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate regional staff and decision-makers have, at a minimum, reviewed the following planning documents and taken them into consideration in formulating our plan update:

- Georgia's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan,
- 2023 Suwanee-Satilla Regional Water Plan,
- 2022 - 2026 Southern Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy,
- Valdosta-Lowndes MPO 2045 Transportation Vision Plan, and
- The Regional Plan of Coastal Georgia, Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional Plan, River Valley Regional Plan, and Southwest Georgia Regional Plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact James Horton, Planning Director at [229.333.5277](tel:229.333.5277)/jhorton@sgrc.us

Sincerely,



Lee Gowen

Southern Georgia Regional Commission Council Chair

An Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

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**Southern Georgia Regional Commission
Public Hearing for the Annual Report
of the
Regional Comprehensive Plan**

Thursday November 21, 2024

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
1725 South Georgia Parkway, W
Waycross, GA 31503

1. Call to Order and Welcome
2. Purpose of the Regional Hearing
3. Contents of the Annual Implementation Report
4. Review and Adoption Process
5. Questions and Comments
6. Adjourn

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION



2024 REGIONAL PLAN ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN REPORT



SGRC
Annual Regional
Work Program
Update 2024

Regional Work Program 2023 – 2028

NOTE: Text in this Blue Color indicates New Addition of Information. No existing wording was struck.

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
ED-1: Broadband accessibility throughout the Region is not consistent.	Study existing Broadband services in the Region to understand where gaps exist.	Develop a comprehensive GIS Inventory of broadband infrastructure in the Region to be utilized in Broadband planning for local comprehensive plan updates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ Utility companies ▪ Broadband providers ▪ GTA 	Yr. 1-5 \$30,000		Underway
ED-4: The younger population is leaving the Region to find higher paying job opportunities in metropolitan areas which results in "brain drain" for the area.	Increase the number of higher paying jobs in the Region.	Update the regional comprehensive economic development strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ EDA 	Yr. 3 \$50,000		Completed

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
N/C-1: The Region's lakes and rivers have a lack of safe, clean public access points such as boat ramps, landings, and public beaches.	Study existing public water access facilities in the Region and locate areas where new ones are needed.	Develop a comprehensive GIS inventory of existing public water access facilities such as boat ramps, landings, and public beaches/swimming areas in the Region and determine future locations of new developments of such facilities throughout the Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DNR ▪ DCA ▪ EDA ▪ Nonprofit organizations ▪ USFWS 	Yr. 1-5 \$30,000		Underway
N/C-2: The Region has a severe lack of funding for preserving historic and cultural resources, which further restricts the marketing of these resources as another part of the Region's high quality of life.	Increase the number of local historic and cultural resource projects.	Develop a Children's Museum to serve as a regional hub for arts education, cultural enrichment and entertainment for youth and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ Nonprofit organizations 	Yr. 1-5 \$2,500,000		Underway Fundraising is in progress
		Develop an electronic Historic Resources Guide/Story Map for the Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DCA ▪ Nonprofit organizations 	Yr. 1-5 \$30,000		Postponed at this time due to a lack of funding and/or staff time.
		Host workshops on the acquisition of vacant/underutilized or abandoned property that could be adaptively reused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DCA ▪ Main Streets 	Yr. 2 and 4 \$5,000		Underway

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
N/C-A: A regional eco-tourism marketing program for natural resources (such as the Okefenokee Swamp, Grand Bay, various water bodies, and state parks) could help to increase the utilization and funding of these resources.	Increase the utilization and funding of eco-tourism resources in the Region.	Promote and maintain the existing Eco and Agri – tourism story maps and brochures to areas beyond this Region through participation and attendance at events such as the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DNR ▪ Nonprofit organizations ▪ USFWS 	Yr. 1-5 \$15,000		Underway
N/C-B: Any possibility that provides the Region with expanded public outdoor recreation—such as greenway trails, canoe trails, and other amenities—should be explored.	Increase the number of recreational opportunities in the Region.	Create and manage a list of funding and opportunities for expanded public outdoor recreation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DNR ▪ USFWS ▪ NPS 	Yr. 1-5 \$10,000		Underway
CFS-1: Many communities in the Region have aging infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, bridges), but lack funding to address those problems.	Increase the number of grant-funded infrastructure projects in the Region.	CFS-1A Create a regional list of priority infrastructure projects to target for funding identification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DCA ▪ GDOT ▪ EDA ▪ EPA ▪ USDA ▪ GEFA 	Yr. 1-5 \$2,000	Yr. 6-10 \$2,000	Underway

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
		<p>New CFS-1 Action Step</p> <p>CFS-1B Apply for infrastructure grants in order to address aging infrastructure, growth, economic development and other issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DCA ▪ GDOT ▪ EDA ▪ EPA ▪ USDA ▪ GEFA 	Yr. 1-5 \$5,000 each grant	Yr. 6-10 \$5,000 each grant	<p>Underway</p> <p>List of Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fargo Water Well through GA DCA CDBG • EPA Drinking Water Resiliency Grant for Fargo Water Well - \$570,000 • OneGA Equity Workforce Housing Grant for Blackshear Infrastructure - \$2,450,000
H-1: More housing in downtown areas is needed.	Increase the number of housing units in downtown areas.	Develop a fact sheet for downtown housing identifying funding resources, benefits, desired amenities (including walkability and bike/ped safety), and types of downtown housing options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DCA ▪ GDOT 	Yr. 2-3 \$20,000		Postponed at this time due to a lack of funding and/or staff time.
H-2: There is a loss of historic landmark homes due to lack of investment in renovating historic housing.	Increase the number of historic homes preserved and reduce the number of historic homes lost.	Provide staff to promote the concepts of Historic Preservation and assist local governments in adopting Historic Preservation Ordinances, designating historic districts, and implementing Historic Preservation Commissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local governments ▪ DCA 	Yr. 1-5 \$25,000		<p>Underway</p> <p>Completed on an as-needed basis paid for by the requesting government and/or DCA HP Contract</p>

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
H-B1: Develop programs, and maximize use of existing programs, to assist homeowners in the maintenance and upkeep of homes and properties to avoid/minimize blight.	Reduce the number of blighted properties in the Region.	H-B1A Develop a fact sheet for code enforcement staff and jurisdictions to assist homeowners in the maintenance and upkeep of homes and properties to support the quality of housing in downtowns and in areas of neglect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 4 \$5,000		Postponed at this time due to a lack of funding and/or staff time.
		<p>New H-B1B: Action Step</p> <p>HB-1B Utilize grant funding to reduce the number of blighted properties in the Region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$5,000 each grant	Yr. 6-10 \$5,000 each grant	<p>Underway</p> <p>List of Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeland awarded CHIP for reconstruction of 5 mobile homes: \$500,000 • Waycross awarded CHIP for rehabilitation of 8 homes: \$500,000 • Douglas awarded CDBG for rehabilitation of 6 homes: \$877,225
H-6: The Region is vulnerable to natural disasters; public safety must be responsive and well-	Provide the relevant technology, equipment and critical information to public safety professionals.	H-6A Develop GIS maps to bring first responders into compliance with NexGen 911 criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ GTA ▪ FEMA ▪ GEMHSA 		Yr. 6-10 \$50,000	Underway

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equipped to ensure safe communities.		<p>New H-6 Action Step</p> <p>H-6B Apply for Grants to provide technology, equipment and critical information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ GTA ▪ FEMA ▪ GEMHSA 	Yr. 1-5 \$5,000 each grant	Yr. 6-10 \$5,000 each grant	<p>Underway</p> <p>List of Grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackshear awarded ARPA Public Safety Grant for FLOCK Cameras: \$113,520 • Pierce Count awarded ARPA Public Safety Grant for FLOCK Cameras • Blackshear awarded FEMA AFG Grant for SCBAs and Air Charging Unit: \$211,146

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
LUT-1: The Region is experiencing increasing development pressures on environmentally sensitive lands and farmland; new development needs to be steered more into the urban areas.	Reduce the acreage of environmentally sensitive land and farmland that is developed each year.	Develop a GIS application for Land Use, which will provide information such as conservation, affordable housing, lots suitable for development, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 1-3 \$35,000		Postponed at this time due to a lack of funding and/or staff time.
LUT-I: Expand the Regional Public Transit Plan to include incentives for private investment to increase public transit.	Increase private investment in public transportation.	Seek partnerships with public and private industry/businesses to increase usage of public transit and micro transit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GDOT ▪ Local Governments ▪ Local Business & Industry 	Yr. 2-3 \$30,000		Completed In partnership with NADO a study was completed to identify transportation options for commuting to work.

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LUT-J: Location and proximity of significant ports (Savannah, Brunswick, and Jacksonville), interstates (I-75 and I-10), and federal highways (US-82, US-84, and US-1) are vital opportunities to integrate land use planning, transportation, and economic growth.	Consider transportation projects of regional significance when recommending projects for inclusion in plans, studies, and as part of the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) process.	Map proposed Regional TIA projects and evaluate them in the context of their connection to regional and statewide transportation networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ GDOT ▪ EDA 	Yr. 1-5 \$10,000		Completed
LUT-K: Analyze best practices and make recommendations regarding rail safety.	Produce studies and plans to analyze the current situation and recommend best practices to increase rail safety.	Complete a report analyzing rail safety in the VLMPO and/or Region and making recommendations to increase rail safety if deficiencies are noted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GDOT ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 3-4 \$40,000		Underway
IC-1: Insufficient coordination and information sharing between local governments.	Initiate events that lead to information sharing and coordination between local governments and other relevant stakeholders.	Host annual or semi-annual SGRC 101 learning sessions to increase networking and information sharing amongst new leaders and introduce new leaders to the services provided by SGRC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$20,000	Yr. 6-10 \$20,000	Underway
		Host an annual Local Government Officials Appreciation Event to increase networking and information sharing amongst local leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Governments ▪ GEMA ▪ FEMA ▪ Businesses 	Yr. 1-5 \$50,000	Yr. 6-10 \$50,000	Underway Event cancelled 2024 due to Hurricane Helene Damage September 27, 2024

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
<p>IC-A: Lack of periodic regional intergovernmental training to support a consistent knowledge base and forge connections.</p>	<p>Initiate periodic intergovernmental training events for local leaders.</p>	<p>Host biennial model ordinance workshops and planning commission trainings, pre-update comprehensive plan workshops, and grants training workshops in strategic locations within the Region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Governments ▪ Carl Vinson Institute ▪ DCA 	<p>Yr. 1-5 \$20,000</p>	<p>Yr. 6-10 \$20,000</p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>Projects Completed FY24</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Planning and Zoning 101 – invited entire region planning commission members to participate June 25, 2024. 2.Pre-update Meeting for Charlton, Cook, Echols, and Clinch Counties July 23, 2024 in Homerville. 3. CED and DCA Compliance Training Workshop June 4, 2024 4. CED and DCA Housing Symposium September 17, 2024

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
<p>IC-B: Local governments can take advantage of the resources available through the Regional Commission for joint regional projects.</p>	<p>Provide resources to local governments to promote information sharing and maintain compliance with State mandates.</p>	<p>Conduct plan implementation assistance meetings with each local government in the Region no less than once every thirty months and assist local governments with completing required reports and with submittal of applications and certifications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Governments 	<p>Yr. 1-5 \$30,000</p>	<p>Yr. 6-10 \$30,000</p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>Projects Completed FY24</p> <p>Plan Implementation meetings have been conducted with the following between December 2023 through October 1, 2024:</p> <p>Atkinson, Pearson, Willacoochee, Bacon, Alma, Brooks, Quitman, Coffee, Ambrose, Broxton, Douglas, Nicholls, Echols, Pierce, Blackshear, Offerman, Patterson, Charlton, Folkston, Homeland, Clinch, Argyle, DuPont, Fargo, Homerville, Cook, Adel, Cecil, Lenox, Sparks, Tift, Omega, Tifton, TyTy, Waycross</p>

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
EDU-3: There is insufficient coordination between the education sector and other local governments and agencies.	Develop programs in partnership with the education sector and local governments and agencies to further educational opportunities and career readiness for students.	Partner with University Agricultural programs and County Cooperative Extension offices to develop hands on, outdoor classrooms for agricultural and natural resource and conservation education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Governments ▪ University System of Georgia ▪ GDA/Georgia Grown ▪ Library System ▪ Cooperative Extension offices ▪ 4-H ▪ FFA 	Yr. 1-5 \$30,000	Yr. 6-10 \$30,000	<p style="text-align: center;">Underway</p> <p>The Sector Partnership programs that are offered by Workforce Development address these needs. Currently we have created the South Georgia Healthcare Alliance made up of business/industry, partner agencies and secondary and post-secondary education. This has been on-going for 5 years.</p>
EDU-A: Increase accessibility of schools. EDU-A: Increase accessibility of schools.	Reduce the number of crashes that occur in school zones.	Conduct a study of transportation safety in and around school zones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GDOT ▪ Local schools ▪ Local governments 	Yr. 1-5 \$15,000		<p style="text-align: center;">Underway</p>
	Increase the number of students who walk or bike to school.	Promote National Bike to School Day through events in the Region during the month of May.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCA ▪ Local Governments ▪ Local BOEs ▪ GDOT/SRTS 	Yr. 1-5 \$10,000		<p style="text-align: center;">Underway</p> <p>Projects Completed FY24</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bike and Pedestrian Safety Campaign monthly through Instagram and Twitter 2. Bike and Pedestrian learning session at Hahira Elementary for 30 students March 8, 2024 3. Promoted National Bike Month activities on Instagram and Twitter in May 2024

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
EDU-B: More workforce training programs could be established through coordination with businesses and industries.	Increase the number of businesses or industries involved in regional workforce development programs.	Hold bi-monthly meetings of the Southern Georgia Workforce Development Board to promote increased coordination of businesses and industries for workforce training programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workforce Development Board ▪ Private sector 	Yr. 1-5 \$10,000	Yr. 6-10 \$10,000	<p style="text-align: center;">Underway</p> <p>Workforce Board Meetings (WDB) are held at least quarterly – but on average 5 times per year. The WDB is by federal law made up of at least 51% private sector members. Our Business Services Manager works directly with business and industry in our 18 counties to ensure that our training programs focus on demand occupations for our region.</p>
SA-1: The senior population continues to grow rapidly, which produces a greater demand for services. The housing, transportation, recreation, and health needs of this population are not adequately addressed.	Increase the number of recreational opportunities available to seniors.	Develop community gardens at senior centers throughout the Region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AAA ▪ Local Governments ▪ AARP ▪ Non-Profits 	Yr. 1-5 \$10,000	Yr. 6-10 \$10,000	<p style="text-align: center;">Underway</p> <p>Projects Completed FY24</p> <p>Utilizing senior center volunteers, a community garden was established at the City of Willacoochee Senior Center in 2024</p>
	Increase the number of transportation options for seniors.	SA-1A Update and improve the Senior Walking Maps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GDOT ▪ Local Governments ▪ AARP ▪ Non-Profits 	Yr. 4-5 \$30,000		Completed

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
		<p>New SA-1 Action Step</p> <p>SA-1B Apply for grants to increase recreational opportunities for seniors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AAA ▪ Local Governments ▪ AARP ▪ Non-Profits ▪ DNR ▪ NPS ▪ OPB 	<p>Yr. 1-5 \$5,000 each grant</p>	<p>Yr. 6-10 \$5,000 each grant</p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>Projects Completed FY24</p> <p>Grant for Banks Lake water quality study</p> <p>Douglas Eastside Park LWCF Project awarded: \$500,000</p> <p>Blackshear City Park LWCF Project – application underway.</p>
<p>SA-A: Participate in the AARP Livable Communities initiative to support the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities and rural areas to be great places for people of all ages by working toward providing safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.</p>	<p>Encourage the provision of safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.</p>	<p>Amend the Area Plan on Aging to incorporate necessary activities to support the mission of the AARP Livable Communities initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AAA ▪ Local Governments ▪ AARP ▪ Non-Profits 	<p>Yr. 2 \$50,000</p>		<p>Underway</p> <p>AAA Applied for AARP Community Challenge Grant and was awarded a grant of \$6,000 for Age-Friendly improvements to Bazemore Park in Waycross, Georgia</p>

Priority Need/Opportunity	Strategy	Action	Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	FY24 Accomplishments Underway, Completed, Postponed, Cancelled/Deleted
SA-B: Health transportation providers could provide greater access to services.	Increase utilization of health transportation providers.	Develop a program with Medicare to provide additional transportation for medical trips for seniors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GDOT ▪ FTA ▪ AARP ▪ AAA 	Yr. 1-5 Staff Time	Yr. 6-10 Staff Time	<p style="text-align: center;">Underway</p> <p>Currently our transportation provider (RMS) has a large contract with Modivcare, a provider of Non-Emergency Medical Transport. This includes transportation for our aging population throughout the region.</p>