



2012-2017  
**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
(CEDS)  
FOR THE MIDDLE GEORGIA  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

**Developed by**  
CEDS Strategy Committee

**For**  
Economic Development Administration

**With Assistance from:**  
Middle Georgia Regional Commission  
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## **CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

The 2012-2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was assembled by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission staff. Information contained within the CEDS was obtained from a variety of demographic data sources, as well as the Strategy Committee appointed by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Council at its February 2012 meeting. The CEDS Strategy Committee was comprised of members from each of the 11 counties within the district. Furthermore, this committee has members from each of the required categories of participation based upon the EDA Regulations, Part 303, Planning Investments and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies.

The Committee membership was tasked with the responsibility of evaluating projects in the most recent annual update of the CEDS, identifying current and future economic development projects in need of being included in the 2012-2017 CEDS. Data contained within elements of the CEDS identifying job creation and investment within the community is the result of collaboration between Committee members and staff.

A series of meetings was facilitated by staff of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission for the purpose of generating discussion, collecting information, and developing strategies for moving forward with economic development efforts within the respective communities. Meetings were conducted in each of the 11 counties represented in the Middle Georgia district. Meetings were scheduled with the local economic development professional, when permissible, and invitations were mailed to each of the Committee members with advance notice.

The Strategy Committee also had participation from secondary educational institutions, post-secondary educational institutions, workforce development boards, minorities, private sector businesses and industries, chambers of commerce, development authorities, and retirees. In order to comply with all applicable regulations set forth in EDA Regulations, Part 303, Planning Investments and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies, the Middle Georgia CEDS Strategy Committee was comprised of representatives from the following areas public sector, private sector, workforce development, education and general public. A complete roster of the Committee members is on file at the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.

It should also be noted that the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Council took action during 2006 and 2009 to alter the existing composition of its membership to comply with applicable regulations. Previously, the governing body was comprised of one county elected official, one municipal elected official, one minority elected official, and one non-public sector individual from each of the 11 counties represented, creating a 25 percent private sector composition. As a result of new regulations, the Regional Commission Council created an additional position for private sector individuals for each of the counties represented. Consequently, the Council is currently comprised of 40 percent private sector members, in excess of the 35 percent required under the Final Rule.

## **Demographic Analysis**

### **Population and Housing**

The Middle Georgia Economic Development District (EDD) is unique in its make-up. Bibb and Houston Counties comprise most of the urban geography within the region, while much of the region is rural and more sparsely populated. This is evidenced by the fact that 60 percent of the district's total population is concentrated within these two counties. The remaining 40 percent is distributed among the other nine counties of the district. Based upon the 2010 Census, this remaining population ranges from a high of 45,720 persons in Baldwin County to a low of 9,023 persons in Twiggs County.

Between 2000 and 2010, Middle Georgia experienced a 10.0 percent growth in population. Four of the 11 counties—Houston, Jones, Monroe and Pulaski—experienced more than 20 percent growth in population. Peach and Putnam Counties experienced significant growth as well, with 17 and 12 percent increases respectively. This fast growth was balanced by Baldwin, Bibb, and Crawford Counties which were statistically stagnant with growth less than 2 percent, and a loss of population in Twiggs and Wilkinson.

Within the district, according to the US Census, the housing stock increased between the years 2000 and 2010, but at an overall rate (14.0%) below the state average (19.7%). Houston County and Putnam County both experienced the largest net increase in housing, with Houston County and Pulaski County having the highest percentage increase. Twiggs County experienced a slight loss in housing units (down 1.32%) which is not surprising given its loss in population. Middle Georgia also realized an increase in the vacancy rate between 2000 and 2010 from 12.5% to 15.1%, exceeding the State and US at 14.0 and 12.8 percent respectively.

### **Geography**

Middle Georgia has an excellent geographic position in relation to the State of Georgia and the Eastern Seaboard. There is ready interstate access to major shipping ports and large markets. There is no major east-west corridor highway running through the district at present, although the Fall Line Freeway, which is under development by the Georgia Department of Transportation, will provide a connection from Augusta to Columbus, bisecting the Middle Georgia district. As development usually follows road networks, some communities, which have experienced minimal economic development gains over the course of recent years, are planning for and anticipating economic development activities associated with the completion of this project.

The Middle Georgia EDD is characterized by a diverse geology. The district is divided by five major physiographic provinces. The northern half of the district, including most of Baldwin, Jones, Monroe and Putnam counties, as well as the northern half of Bibb, is located in the Washington Slope Province. The Fall Line Hills Province runs through the central and much of the southern sections of the district. The western tip of the district, primarily northwest Crawford County, falls within the Pine Mountain Province. The majority of Peach County and the northern half of Houston County are located on the Fort Valley Plateau. The Vidalia

Uplands Province runs through the bottom half of Pulaski County with a small portion also in Twiggs County. The most significant geological characteristic of the Middle Georgia EDD is the Georgia Fall Line, which roughly bisects the district running east to west. The Fall Line is responsible for a significant decrease in average elevation from north to south.

The Middle Georgia EDD enjoys a temperate climate, with warm summers and moderate winters. Due to lower altitude and lower latitude, average temperatures become warmer the further south one travels. Precipitation is adequate, but the district suffers from occasional long periods of drought. Although not year-round, Middle Georgia has a long growing season, which makes the district ideal for the agricultural industry. Presently, Middle Georgia's best known agricultural product is its peaches.

### Workforce Development

In the 2010-2011 academic year, there were 129 public schools within the Middle Georgia EDD, serving 77,085 students. These students were taught by 5,668 teachers, a ratio of one teacher for every 13.6 students. Public school enrollment in the district has increased slowly but steadily (by 1.74 percent) since the 2002-2003 academic year compared to the State of Georgia which experienced a 9.2 percent increase in enrollment. Across the district, some school systems experienced steep declines in enrollment such as Pulaski (-17.6%), Twiggs (-36.6%) and Wilkinson (-15.4%) Counties, while other large school systems experienced growth: Houston (14.8 %), Jones (7.3%) and Putnam (8.6%) Counties.

In spite of the low student-to-teacher ratio, education in the Middle Georgia EDD lags behind other parts of the state and nation. Public schools within Middle Georgia consistently have lower graduation rates than counterparts in other parts of Georgia or the nation. Of those students that do graduate, many are achieving below state and national averages.

- The majority of the counties in the district have high numbers of students who score lower on graduation tests and SAT than the state and national averages.
- Only 65.5 percent of all schools within the district achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) according to the No Child Left Behind requirements. This represents slightly less than the State average of 72.7 percent of all public schools achieving the designation. Monroe and Houston Counties are the only two school districts that had higher achievement rates in regards to AYP than the state average.
- Within the district, only Houston, Monroe, Pulaski, and Twiggs Counties have high school dropout rates below the State average of 3.7 percent. The remaining seven counties all have dropout rates exceeding the State average, including Baldwin County with a dropout rate nearly double the State's rate.

In 1993, the State of Georgia began administering exams to high school juniors to determine the competency of students graduating from public schools within the State. The State now

uses these tests to determine whether students will receive a diploma or certificate of attendance for their efforts in high school. In the 2010-2011 academic year, the middle Georgia region, as a whole, exceeded the state average on all four portions of the examinations. However, within the region, Monroe County fell below the state average in every category and Crawford County was below state average in social studies and math.

Academic achievement in Middle Georgia is in need of improvement. While not necessarily an indictment on the school systems, the level of educational attainment does not measure up to established state and federal benchmarks. Additional efforts should be focused for the years to come on increasing the educational attainment levels of Middle Georgia youth. With the presence of the aerospace industry in Middle Georgia, a critical area for improvement is math and science skills.

Although there are many differences within the Middle Georgia EDD, the percentage of high school graduates is below the State average in nine of the district's eleven counties. According to the 2012 American Community Survey, Twiggs County has the lowest level of educational attainment with only 61.7 percent of adults over the age of 25 with a high school diploma. Houston County, on the other hand, has 87.2 percent of the population possessing a high school diploma, or its equivalent. The State average for persons with a high school diploma is 83.5 percent.

Specific to workforce readiness, the State of Georgia developed a program where communities can be certified as work ready. Certified Work Ready Communities have the skilled workforce that business demands and the educational infrastructure to drive economic growth and prosperity. To earn the designation, counties must demonstrate a commitment to improving public high school graduation rates through a measurable increase and drive citizens who have not received a high school diploma to take the General Educational Development. All eleven counties in Middle Georgia have obtained certified Work Ready Community status and are making progress in improving the employability of residents across the region.

The percentage of high school graduates is important as economic development prospects seek to locate in areas where the educational level of the workforce is satisfactory to operate the essential business functions. Concerted efforts must be made to encourage formal educational attainment in order to attract economic development activities that will increase the tax base and improve the quality of life for district residents.

Middle Georgia also has colleges and universities within the district that allow students the opportunity to attain higher levels of education. Three technical colleges: Central Georgia Technical College, Middle Georgia Technical College, and Oconee Fall Line Technical College are within the region. Additionally, seven colleges and universities have campuses throughout the region, some with several satellite campuses. Fort Valley State University, Georgia College & State University, Georgia Military College, Macon State College, Mercer University, Wesleyan College, Virginia College and Emory-Riddle all provide educational opportunities within Middle Georgia.

### Transportation Access

Middle Georgia is fortunate to have an abundance of transportation alternatives that positively impact economic development activities. First and foremost, the Interstate system provides Middle Georgia with access to Atlanta, the Georgia ports, and the State of Florida. Interstate 75 transverses the district from north to south providing access from points far north to the southernmost tip of Florida. Interstate 16 provides access to the Georgia ports of Savannah and Brunswick. Interstate 475 also provides a bypass for through traffic, enabling travel to take a more direct route around the City of Macon to all points south.

A complex state and federal highway network also benefits the district. Specifically, the improvements that have recently been completed or are currently underway ensure that the district stands to benefit from enhanced transportation corridors which can provide for a more compelling economic development climate for prospective businesses and industries requiring transportation of goods to and from a facility. Additional transportation improvements are either underway or are planned using both state and federal resources, which will serve to further improve transportation within, to, and from the Middle Georgia district.

Rail access is generally prevalent throughout the Middle Georgia EDD, with some areas lacking a connection. The needs of existing industry are generally being met by the current rail service. For some smaller rural communities, low levels of demand threaten future service provision. However, there is no passenger rail service to the region, although discussions have been underway for quite some time between the Georgia General Assembly and the Georgia Department of Transportation regarding the establishment of commuter rail.

There are five general aviation airports that serve Middle Georgia. The district's close proximity to Hartsfield International Airport is both a strength and a handicap. On the one hand, there is a large freight business done through Hartsfield as well as passenger service, earning Hartsfield the designation of one of the busiest airports in the nation. However, given the close proximity to Hartsfield, Middle Georgia Regional Airport is unable to attract adequate passenger service. The Middle Georgia Regional Airport has recently completed necessary improvements, both in terms of safety and facilities. Perry-Houston County Airport obtained state grant funds for improvements to runway lighting and signaling. There are real opportunities for aerospace industry growth in the fields of retrofitting and maintenance throughout the region.

### Resources

The Middle Georgia EDD faces a wide variety of opportunities and challenges in the realm of water and wastewater service delivery. From a supply standpoint, Middle Georgia has plenty of water to meet current demand, barring the effects of severe drought. More challenges to economic development lie in the treatment and distribution of water and wastewater, particularly in rural areas. There are significant costs and responsibilities involved in creating, operating, maintaining, and expanding such systems. All cities and counties within the district must carefully evaluate current and future water and wastewater needs, ensuring that appropriate infrastructure planning and permitting is followed.

The provision of electricity within the Middle Georgia EDD is very stable from a supply, capacity, distribution, and maintenance standpoint. In addition, the environment is very friendly towards commercial and industrial users, particularly larger users. Not only is there an initial choice of provider, but the larger consumers can negotiate their rate to some extent with electrical providers. Georgia's average rate is still far less than many similar states. Smaller electrical distributors are having difficulty in finding state and federal funds to aid in expansion efforts. One threat to the future provision of power includes increasing air quality regulation, which may limit the more traditional methods of power generation, such as the burning of coal.

Natural gas is a reliable, efficient, and a somewhat environmentally friendly fossil fuel. In Middle Georgia, natural gas is not only available, but is more affordable than in other portions of the country, in spite of price increases over the previous five years. The Jointly Owned Natural Gas Transmission Line (JONGTL) provides a good opportunity for growth and improvement in Middle Georgia, which has been enhanced through the completion of a loop in the line, limiting areas experiencing low pressure in winter months with high demand. There are some rural areas in the district, however, that are not currently served by natural gas providers.

Middle Georgia has a sizable number of readily accessible public industrial parks, although there are a number of counties that are lacking available space within the parks. With the recent acquisition of land in Jones County, each of the communities within the district has at least one publicly-owned industrial park within their geographic boundaries. There are several parks that need additional infrastructure development and/or larger tracts to accommodate future prospects and additional growth. In several instances, communities are partnering to jointly market and develop industrial parks in order to increase efficiencies. Increasing water and air quality regulations, certain water supply issues, and lack of zoning regulations in some communities all pose potential future threats to the success of economic development activities.

### Environment

From an environmental standpoint, the Middle Georgia EDD has a varied topography and a temperate climate. The Middle Georgia EDD possesses a number of diverse natural resources that spur economic development activities within the district including mineral deposits, forests, agricultural land, and adequate surface water. However, for sustainable development the local governments must also ensure that these resources are protected and preserved. Each new development should be examined to determine its impact on the environment in addition to the development's impact on the district's economy.

Kaolin is the most abundant mined mineral in the Middle Georgia EDD. Kaolin is clay in the form of hydrated aluminum silica that is found in large quantities in the Fall Line Hills Physiographic Province. Commonly known as "China Clay", kaolin is an industrial mineral used primarily as inert filler. Industries combine it with other raw materials called formulations and have developed over 600 different applications. Although originally used in large quantities to

produce china and ceramics, the largest single application in which kaolin is used today is for coating paper to hide the pulp strands and to give it a gloss finish. It is also used in large quantities by the paint industry as an extender to reduce the amount of titanium dioxide needed to reflect the light. Kaolin is also used in refractory clays, plastics, rubber, ceramics, and fiberglass. The total market for kaolin use worldwide is about 31 million tons per year. Within the Middle Georgia EDD, Wilkinson and Twiggs Counties have the greatest kaolin production. The economies of both Counties rely heavily on the kaolin industry and have suffered in recent years as this mature industry has failed to make significant new investments and consequently reduced the number of jobs in this line of work.

Rock and sand are other mined minerals found in the district. Rock is predominately processed into gravel for use in construction, both utilized within the district and exported out of the area. Major rock deposits are located in the Washington Slope Province. Three major rock mines are located in the Middle Georgia EDD, one in Jones County and two in Monroe County. Additional rock deposits that can be mined for gravel are relatively abundant in the northern areas of the district. Atlanta Sand operates a large sand mine in Crawford County on Highway 341. Also in Crawford County, Arriscraft International uses sand in its production of quality bricks and blocks. Arriscraft, a Canadian company, based its relocation decision mostly on the quality of sand found in Crawford County. Although additional sand deposits exist in the district, sand is less abundant than rock. Through proper planning, this resource can be used to continue development and growth in the region well into the future.

Agriculture and forestry are important sectors of the regional economy. According to the 2012 Georgia County Guide, 71 percent, or roughly 1,638,000 acres, of all land in the district is classified as forestland. Despite the large amount of land in production, the agricultural industry employs less than one percent of the district's workforce. The district's high percentage of land in agriculture and forests provides for future economic growth and development in other sectors. However, any loss of farmland will most likely reduce regional income from the agricultural sector. This can be attributed, in part, to a projected decrease in employment in the agriculture and forestry industries for the district, reflecting a current national trend. Land becoming open or vacant due to the decrease in agriculture can be used for economic development, as well as to support residential growth.

### Labor and Income

The Middle Georgia EDD has a total labor force of 235,076, as of July 2012, according to the Georgia Department of Labor. At this same point in time, the unemployment rate for the district is 10.6 percent. In comparison, Middle Georgia has a slightly higher unemployment rate than the State and national averages. Georgia's unemployment rate was 9.3 percent, and the national average was 8.3 percent at the same point in time.

According to Georgia Department of Labor data, three counties within the district had unemployment rates below the State and national average, while the remaining eight exceeded the State and national rates. Houston, Jones, and Monroe Counties each had experienced

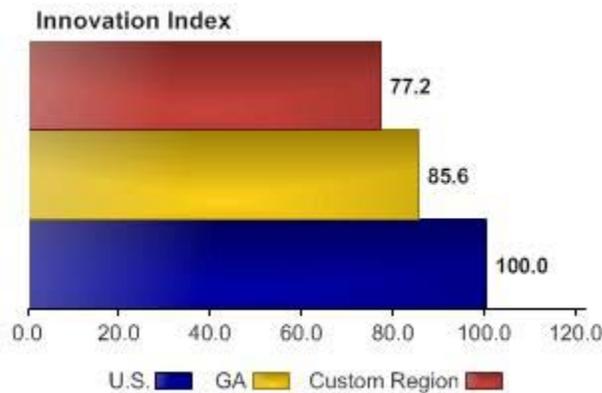
unemployment rates between 8.1 and 9.3 percent during July 2012. The remaining counties had rates ranging from 10.0 to 13.1 percent during the same period.

Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. has projected the work-age population, defined as persons 18 to 64 years-old, through 2040 for each county within the district. In each county except Pulaski, Twiggs and Wilkinson, the working age population is projected to continue increasing until the year 2040.

### Innovation in Middle Georgia

The U.S. Economic Development Administration sponsored the Innovation in American Regions project to develop new tools to support strategic economic development planning in rural regions. The goal of this work is to help rural planners assess their region's comparative strengths and weaknesses with respect to fostering innovation-based growth. The project team developed an Innovation Index reflecting a region's innovation activity and capacity, together with an interactive database containing the index and its component indicators for every county in the nation.

**The Innovation Index for Middle Georgia is 77.2 compared to 85.6 for the State of Georgia and 100 for the U United States.** The Innovation Index consists of five components: human capital; economic dynamics; productivity and employment; economic well-being and state context. The full report on innovation in Middle Georgia is on file with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.



### **SWOT Analysis within the Middle Georgia District**

#### Strengths

Within the Middle Georgia District, a number of strengths are present that support economic development activities within the 11 counties. These strengths which are present within the district are not prioritized; however, they are joined together to enhance the ability to recruit businesses and industries to the area.

There is a **sizable available workforce** within the Middle Georgia district. Department of Labor annual average statistics indicate that the number of persons in the workforce increased by 18,429 between 2005 and 2012. These individuals provide a talent pool with diverse skills and abilities. Furthermore, with an unemployment rate that has increased within the past two years, a sizable number of persons are actively seeking employment.

Also within Middle Georgia, the **average wages** are below that of other parts of the State and nation. Creating a competitive advantage for businesses and industries, while providing adequate, livable wages for the employees, results in a financial incentive for prospective companies to locate within the district. Average weekly wages (for all sectors) within the district were \$597 in the year 2004 according to Georgia Department of Labor Annual Averages. This is compared to an average weekly wage of \$704 in the State during the same period.

The **cost of land** within the district is increasing, but remains lower than other portions of the State and nation that are growing more rapidly. As the Interstate 75 corridor continues to develop, the price of land is likely to continue increasing to the point that it may become a weakness for the area. More rural portions of the district (Crawford, Pulaski, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties) still have sizable tracts of undeveloped land at much lower costs than more rapidly developing areas.

For the most part, the district currently exudes a **pro-growth environment**. Within each of the counties in the district, local leaders are seeking additional economic development opportunities to create jobs, increase private investment, and increase the local tax base. This pro-growth stance toward most kinds of development provides prospective businesses and industries with a number of potential areas to investigate for location of their facilities. It is recognized that not all members of the general public within these communities are in favor of development. However, the general consensus is that the district is willing to work with all potential businesses and industries to determine if they are a compatible match for Middle Georgia.

The Middle Georgia district is blessed to have **adequate water resources** to support major commercial and industrial endeavors. These water resources are available in each of the municipalities within the district. Furthermore, water resources are available in unincorporated portions of the district where densities permit such development. Each of the industrial parks within the district is served with water and sewer resources. However, infrastructure expansion may be necessary to ensure delivery of the service to appropriate sites within the parks.

The **cost of energy** within the district is less expensive than the national average. Residential, commercial, and industrial rates are each below the national average. However, the electrical costs in the State of Georgia are approximately in the middle when compared to neighboring southeastern states.

Additionally, the district boasts a **number of industrial parks** with available land for industrial development. Within each of the counties in the district, there is at least one publicly-owned industrial park suitable for location of prospects or expansions. Almost without exception, each of the parks has access to water, wastewater, and road infrastructure. However, the mere presence of utilities and roads does not indicate that they are in adequate quality or quantity to serve all prospective businesses and industries.

As detailed in previous sections, the Middle Georgia district has an **abundance of natural resources** that can be utilized for economic development activities. A number of natural resources within the region are currently being mined, and have the future potential to be mined, to create jobs and to add to the economic base of the member communities. While many of these resources have defined life spans, the availability of these resources is projected for many years to come.

The district is **geographically situated** in the middle of the state. The State of Georgia is also geographically located in the center of the southeastern United States. This geographic advantage enables businesses or industries either currently operating in the district or considering locating within the district access to a large number of markets. Coupled with access to two current deep-water ports within a three and one-half hour drive in Savannah and Brunswick, the location of the district is primed to obtain economic development successes.

Last, but definitely not least, is the **presence of Robins Air Force Base** in Warner Robins. The Base represents the largest single industrial complex within the State of Georgia. While employing nearly 23,000 military personnel, contractors, and civilians, the presence of the Base provides an estimated economic impact of over \$4.49 billion annually. This facility enables Middle Georgia to promote economic development opportunities related to aerospace within the district.

### Weaknesses

Although a number of strengths are identified as being present within the district, there remain areas that can be improved to ensure that the economic future of Middle Georgia remains bright. One of the most glaring weaknesses is a **low district-wide educational achievement level**, with scores and high-school graduation rates below State and national averages. Low educational attainment levels can be a deterrent for a number of businesses and industries seeking to locate within the State or region. A concerted effort of community leaders, parents, students, and school personnel is needed to seek measures to enhance the educational experience, which will result in greater earning potential within the district.

Similarly, a number of Middle Georgia's "best and brightest" youth graduate from high school, attend college, and then begin careers in other parts of the state or nation that are deemed to provide greater opportunities. This "**brain drain**" as it has been termed, is a concern of prospective businesses and industries in need of a highly skilled workforce. Companies seeking to locate within the district are aware that a number of highly skilled individuals have left the

area, resulting in a lower-skilled workforce to handle company operations. A number of highly-skilled, well-paying jobs are needed in the district to afford young people the opportunity to return to Middle Georgia for employment after college.

Also negatively affecting economic development within the district is a **designation of air quality non-attainment** within Bibb County and southeastern Monroe County. Fortunately, Bibb County and southeastern Monroe County were recently removed from the non-attainment list for particulate matter. However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that ozone levels within these areas exceed the allowable safe limits. A non-attainment status negatively impacts economic development within the district. Further, if this designation should move further south and encompass Robins Air Force Base, this could negatively impact the future of the facility in future Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) processes.

As stated previously, Robins Air Force Base is a tremendous economic engine within the community. However, the **dependence of the community on the Base** is higher than desired. Twenty-one percent of all wages earned in Middle Georgia are attributed to Robins Air Force Base and nearly 8 percent of the labor force is employed at RAFB. This does not indicate a community with a diversified economy, but quite the contrary. It indicates that if the Base were to be negatively impacted, the economic outlook for Houston County and the Middle Georgia district would be devastated.

A number of communities within Middle Georgia have had economic development efforts stifled due to a **lack of available wastewater collection and treatment facilities** within their jurisdictions. Without available wastewater treatment facilities, prospective businesses and industries would be required to collect all wastewater generated on the facility in septic tanks. Certain businesses and industries find this method of wastewater disposal impractical to complement their operations. In some portions of the region, concentrations of persons located within a given area make the installation of a wastewater collection and treatment system financially infeasible. These portions of the region may continue to experience a lack of economic growth into the future without such facilities.

Within the district, a number of counties have large **single-industry sector dependence** where a significant portion of the community is either working in a single industry sector or a majority of the tax base is attributed to a single industry within the community. In addition to Houston County previously discussed, Twiggs and Wilkinson Counties each have a large number of persons within the community working in the kaolin industry, in addition to the fact that kaolin mining and manufacturing facilities have historically been the largest taxpayers within the counties. With this industry sector declining in each of the two counties, the need to diversify the economy is great. In Baldwin County, a sizable number of individuals are employed within the public sector, including mental health facilities, correctional facilities, one university, one two-year college, one technical college, two local government entities, the Baldwin County Public School System, and various state agency field offices.

Regarding transportation, some groups within the district contend that the **lack of passenger rail service** available to destinations such as Atlanta limits the economic opportunities of district residents. The concern is that without passenger rail service, economic choices are limited. Others are concerned that the cost associated with the rail service outweighs any economic gains.

Also regarding transportation, the **district's proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport** is perceived by some to hinder air traffic into and out of Middle Georgia. While the Middle Georgia Regional Airport has offered a number of commuter jet flights from Macon, it has been difficult for carriers to fill enough seats on various flights to make the operation financially viable. Carriers have resorted to canceling flights in the past, causing hesitancy by passengers to schedule subsequent trips on the airline.

### Opportunities

Opportunities within the district are numerous. The **emergence of manufacturing and distributing alternative fuels** has proven to be attractive within Middle Georgia. A number of other facilities are in discussion with Middle Georgia communities regarding potential investments. Not only do alternative fuel facilities provide direct jobs at the facilities, the potential exists for a great portion of the agricultural land (or undeveloped land) within the district to be used for the production of feed stock to support this emerging industry.

Many communities across the district are eagerly awaiting the **completion of the Fall-Line Freeway** by the Georgia Department of Transportation. The Fall-Line Freeway is scheduled to go through six of Middle Georgia's counties, based upon the latest design. In September 2012, a large section of the Fall Line Freeway in Twiggs and Wilkinson Counties opened and the final leg is slated to begin construction in early 2013. When this corridor connecting Columbus to Macon to Augusta is completed, economic opportunities are enhanced in areas that have not experienced economic gains in recent years. Plans are already in place by several communities to take advantage of the improvement of this transportation network to enhance economic development within the district.

As Middle Georgia has lagged behind much of the State in regards to educational attainment by district residents, the focus of the technical college's have served to provide **educational resources** to all district residents. Crawford County, Pulaski County, Putnam County, and Twiggs County have each constructed new satellite campuses of technical colleges or workforce development centers. Baldwin County's technical college is presently overcrowded and intends to double the size of the campus in the next three to four years. Three counties (Peach, Monroe, and Wilkinson) have each begun discussions to determine how courses could be offered within their communities to afford local residents access to educational resources within their hometown.

The **presence of medical facilities** within the district presents a great opportunity within Middle Georgia for years to come. As baby-boomers pass the 60-year-old mark in record numbers, the medical needs within the district, state, and nation are forever altered. Coupled with a number

of quality hospitals within the district, Mercer University's medical school presents a great opportunity to train medical professionals that can meet the changing needs of Middle Georgia healthcare. Additionally, the technical schools and colleges within the district must adapt and ensure that curriculum and program offerings mirror the demand within the area.

Additional opportunities for Middle Georgia include efforts to **enhance the aerospace industry**. Due to the presence of RAFB and several airports, opportunities to manufacture, repair, or overhaul aircraft exist within the district. These facilities provide for a great opportunity to partner both the public and private sectors in an attempt to strengthen this industry to provide additional jobs and private investment within the district.

Several developments within the district highlight the opportunity to **capitalize on tourism and eco-tourism events**. In addition to the high volume of tourism traffic for events such as the Cherry Blossom Festival and the Georgia National Fair, a number of historic sites and places of interest exist within the district to attract visitors to the area. The state park are planned for development within Middle Georgia in Wilkinson County east of Toombsboro and coordinated marketing of places of interest within Middle Georgia could result in visitors and revenues associated with attendance at these locations.

One of the most recent economic development opportunities within the district surrounds a **cooperative economic development marketing** approach being discussed between most of the counties within the district. Although each community has individuals responsible for coordinating economic development efforts, and each county participates in a joint development authority, the consensus is that even more regional cooperation would benefit all communities. Discussions presently involve coordination of this enhanced cooperation be overseen by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.

### Threats

The Middle Georgia district is heavily dependent on Robins Air Force Base, as evidenced in the data previously provided. In addition, Twiggs and Wilkinson Counties struggle with their reliance on kaolin, a limited natural resource. The **lack of diversification** is a potential threat to the region.

The district is faced with **urban sprawl** in most all of the counties. The traditional neighborhoods experienced in years past where shops supported nearby residences have disappeared. They have been replaced by commercial shopping strips and retail establishments locating in high-traffic areas. The sprawl that has resulted has strained district infrastructure in many cases, as well as eliminating greenspace and open space in Middle Georgia.

Like many other portions of the country, Middle Georgia has experienced economic development setbacks due to **globalization**. Specifically within Middle Georgia, textile, manufacturing, and kaolin operations have suffered due to overseas competition. The result is that American companies must reinvent themselves to produce higher quality goods at lower

costs. With the emergence of a number of overseas competitors, the full implications of globalization have not been fully felt within Middle Georgia.

### **Identification of Economic Clusters Growing or Declining in the Region**

Several readily identifiable economic clusters within Middle Georgia are in a state of transition. While some sectors are declining, others are increasing in terms of jobs and investment within the community. Five clusters will be identified and analyzed in the subsequent narrative.

#### **Textiles**

The textile industry in Middle Georgia, like much of the state and nation, has experienced a significant decline in recent years as many of the processes and operations have transitioned to overseas markets. Over the past five years, a number of Middle Georgia textile manufacturers have ceased operations, resulting in vacant buildings and local residents without jobs. Without exception, these industries have indicated that overseas competition stifles the wages that can be paid to employees in order for the local facility to remain profitable.

#### **Kaolin**

Another sector declining within the Middle Georgia district surrounds the kaolin industry. Kaolin is a white clay mineral used in household items (such as ceramics and incandescent light bulbs), health and beauty products (such as toothpaste, cosmetics, and previously in Kaopectate), in food products (such as food additives and a spray-coating on fruits and vegetables), as well as in coated paper products. Again, overseas competition from South America and Asia have hampered Middle Georgia's kaolin mining industry by paying lower wages and failing to follow the same environmental reclamation requirements as American industries.

A number of kaolin facilities within Middle Georgia have ceased operations or reduced operations within recent months. Hardest hit by these closures are the two counties (Twiggs and Wilkinson) whose local economies are the most dependent upon the kaolin industry. Recent closures and downsizings include BASF (formerly Engelhard) and Imerys Kaolin.

#### **Natural Resources**

Despite the losses suffered within the district from the mining of kaolin, industries processing natural resources are on the increase. Through several expansions and recent announcements, this industry cluster will play a greater role in the regional economy in years to come.

#### **Warehousing and Distribution**

Also providing an economic stimulus within the region is the increase in the number of warehouse and distribution facilities located in the district. Several years ago, the Macon Economic Development Commission identified the warehouse and distribution industry as being one of the best fits for the area due to Middle Georgia's proximity to major interstate networks, air transportation, and major eastern-seaboard ports. Within the past five years, Bibb County has benefited from the focus placed upon the recruitment of warehouse and distribution activities.

### Biofuel

One cluster has been termed an emerging cluster in Middle Georgia as it is just being established, but is anticipated to grow in coming years. With a great deal of discussion at state and national levels about alternative fuels, a bio-fuel cluster is anticipated to emerge within the district over the coming years. Due to highway and rail access, the district is primed for growth in this sector. Multiple Middle Georgia communities are courting bio-fuel facilities at this time, and a number of potential bio-fuel companies are actively pursuing locations within Middle Georgia.

### Aerospace

The aerospace industry has been of significant importance to the Middle Georgia district over the past 70 years. With the presence of Robins Air Force Base and a number of aircraft manufacturers and suppliers, Middle Georgia has placed significant importance on furthering this sector. Current efforts are underway to attract large aerospace projects to the district, which will generate substantial private investment and jobs. Universities, colleges, and technical colleges within the district each understand the significance that aerospace employers play on the district and offer courses and training, which support the aerospace sector.

## **MIDDLE GEORGIA CEDS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The fundamental vision of the Middle Georgia EDD is to reduce unemployment and underemployment rates, reduce poverty rates to below state and national averages, reduce out-migration, raise per capita and family income levels to higher levels than at present, create business and employment opportunities and an environment favorable to business and industry expansion, and to grow personal and corporate wealth. This vision will be achieved by following the general goals listed below. Achievement of, or movement in the positive direction of, any one of these goals will cause direct and indirect impacts on the other goals identified herein. The general goals associated with economic development within the Middle Georgia EDD include:

- Expand district infrastructure capacity;
- Develop significant economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district;
- Assist existing business and industries;
- Improve the employment, income, and living standard of district residents;
- Diversify local economic base; and
- Stimulate economic development in more rural counties.

More specific objectives identified for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy are created to target specific activities essential toward achieving overarching economic development goals within the district. Each of the following objectives relate to at least one of the overarching goals:

- Enhance the local transportation network;
- Enhance water, sewer, gas, and rail infrastructure systems;
- Enhance access to economic development activities through aviation facilities;
- Enhance access to skills training by furthering workforce development activities;
- Promote partnerships with existing businesses and industries to ensure their continued success within the community;
- Recruit suppliers and end-users for materials processed within the district;
- Create jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district;
- Attract higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district;
- Promote economic development that reduces dependence upon single industries within communities;
- Promote economic development opportunities that strengthen existing economic bases within Middle Georgia communities;
- Enhance the historic-heritage tourism industry; and
- Increase the local tax base as a result of economic development projects.

## STRATEGIC PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES

### *Identification of Vital Regional Projects*

#### **Develop Aerospace Industry in Middle Georgia**

Robins Air Force Base is the largest Industrial Complex in the State of Georgia. Additionally, it is the largest single employer in Middle Georgia. Recognizing the importance of this industry and striving to enhance the Aerospace resources, the State formed the Middle Georgia Innovation Center for Aircraft Logistics (MICAL) in 2004. MICAL is a membership organization commissioned by Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue that emphasizes innovation by increasing the overall level and the flow of aerospace technology and research from institutions of higher education into the public sector, especially the WR-ALC, the private sector and the marketplace, and increases technology jobs in the region as a result.

The primary goal addressed through this project is to **develop significant economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district**. This will be accomplished through the objectives of **enhancing access to economic development through aviation facilities, promoting partnerships with existing businesses and industries to ensure their continued success within the community, and creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district**.

Interested partners include specifically Houston County and the cities of Warner Robins, Centerville, and Perry; Robins Air Force Base; the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Partnership; Houston County Development Authority; the Middle Georgia Regional Development Authority; the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority; the Robins Regional Chamber of Commerce; the Middle Georgia Regional Commission; and approximately 23 other counties. Entities responsible for implementing this activity include the City of Warner Robins, Houston County, Robins Air Force Base, the State of Georgia, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Partnership, Houston County Development Authority, and the Middle Georgia Regional Commission. Agencies offering economic development programs that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Department of Defense, and other federal and state agencies.

#### **Regional Transportation Improvements**

Without adequate transportation routes into and out of industrial and commercial areas, economic development efforts are certain to be limited in their successfulness. Transportation infrastructure is essential to deliver goods and products from its origination as raw materials, through the processing phases, and culminates with its delivery to its final destination with consumers. In addition to the transportation of raw materials, supplies and goods, efforts are underway to explore the possibility of a passenger rail between Atlanta and Macon. Middle Georgia is fortunate to have a number of interstate, federal, and state highways crisscrossing the district to form a strong transportation network, an asset to the area. However, each

community throughout the district has identified specific needs within their communities that warrant highlighting due to their impact on economic development activities. The process of the Transportation Investment Act of 2010 identified nearly 300 critical road infrastructure projects that are needed in Middle Georgia.

Beyond roads, airport infrastructure across the region is in need of improvements as well. A Rosser study was completed to determine the feasibility of a Regional Airport located at the corner of Highway 441 and 112 near Wilkinson County. During the next five years, the recommendations from the study should be evaluated and implemented. In addition, improvements at Houston County-Perry Airport, Middle Georgia Regional Airport, Baldwin County Airport, and Hawkinsville Pulaski County Airport have been identified as needed over the next five years.

The primary goal addressed through these projects is to **expand district infrastructure capacity**, which affects all portions of the region. Interested partners include each county, each municipality, and the Georgia Department of Transportation.

### **Expand the Region as a Freight and Logistics Hub**

The network of road, rail, and air infrastructure presents the potential for Middle Georgia to grow and expand into a freight and logistics hub.

Implementation of these activities will be through each of the 11 counties within the district, a number of municipalities, development authorities, joint development authorities, and applicable water/sewer authorities. Availability of land for industrial purposes will position counties for economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district, as well as improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents. The accomplishment of these goals will meet the objectives of ***creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district, attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district, and promoting economic development that reduces dependence upon single industries within communities***. The benefits of this activity are numerous – economic development will foster job creation and the further expansion of the tax base. Potential economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, Georgia DCA, GEFA, and SPLOST revenues.

### **Acquire and Develop Additional Industrial Property**

Although each of the counties within the Middle Georgia district presently have publicly-owned industrial properties, a number of the communities are seeking land suitable for industrial development. In total, seven counties within the Middle Georgia district are presently seeking additional industrial locations for development. These communities are undertaking the process of identifying parcels suitable for industrial development, working toward acquiring the properties, providing infrastructure necessary for industrial development in these locations, and beginning to market the sites.

Implementation of these activities will be through each of the 11 counties within the district, a number of municipalities, development authorities, joint development authorities, and applicable water/sewer authorities. Availability of land for industrial purposes will position counties for economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district, as well as improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents. The accomplishment of these goals will meet the objectives of ***creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district, attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district, and promoting economic development that reduces dependence upon single industries within communities***. The benefits of this activity are numerous – economic development will foster job creation and the further expansion of the tax base. Potential economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, Georgia DCA, GEFA, and SPLOST revenues.

### **Regional Collaboration for Economic Development**

Economic developers within the Middle Georgia district have expressed interest in the Middle Georgia Regional Commission coordinating regional economic development efforts within the district. Each of the 11 counties in the district have economic development efforts currently underway, but lack a coordinated effort to disseminate information and data regarding collective opportunities in the district. A number of economic developers and local leaders have requested that the Middle Georgia Regional Commission coordinate a collaborative effort that will jointly market the communities to the state, nation, and world.

In addition to collaboration in marketing Middle Georgia, the creation of a Regional President's Council would afford the presidents of colleges and universities located in Middle Georgia the opportunity to network, collaborate, and explore additional ways that they can support economic and community development in the region. The goal of this effort is to engage the talent of the colleges and universities beyond their walls. Fort Valley State University, Mercer University, and Georgia College and State University already have strong relationships with their host communities. This effort seeks to expand these relationships and partnerships.

Implementing this activity will be local economic development professionals and the Middle Georgia Regional Commission. This activity would assist in the fulfillment of the regional goals of ***improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents*** and ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties***. The achievement of these goals will enhance the objective of ***attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district***. Potential economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include each of the counties represented in the district, Georgia DCA, and the Georgia General Assembly.

## **Develop Wilkinson/Baldwin County Industrial Site (Fall Line Industrial Park)**

Another project of regional significance is the industrial mega-site being planned in the eastern section of the region. Baldwin County, Wilkinson County, and the Fall Line Regional Development Authority have joined forces to begin this project in earnest. The site is located at a proposed intersection of two major transportation arteries: U.S. 441 and the proposed Fall Line Freeway. The site requires public ownership, and land needs to be purchased from the Georgia Forestry Commission in order to make the project feasible. Appraisals have been completed on the property currently owned by the State of Georgia. Once an agreement has been reached on the purchase price, marketing of the property to industrial prospects will begin. The site will require the full complement of infrastructure, including water, sewer, electric, gas, roads, and rail. In the short-term, water and sewer capacities must come from the City of Milledgeville and Baldwin County because of existing facilities and the sheer volume needed for industrial use, as well as distances and accessibility to water and wastewater treatment. Water lines must be extended approximately 1.5 miles, while sewer lines will be extended approximately 5-6 miles.

The primary goal addressed through this project is to **develop significant economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district**. The objectives to be met through this activity are to enhance local infrastructure systems, attract higher-paying jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district, and promote economic development that reduces dependence upon single industries within communities. When the park is completed, it would improve the employment, income, and living standard of those people in a wide multi-county area, here again including several counties outside of the region. Other substantial benefits include major capital investment and the building of local tax bases.

Implementation of this activity will be the responsibility of the Fall-Line Regional Development Authority, Baldwin County, and Wilkinson County. Economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, Georgia DCA, and GEFA.

## **Develop I-75 Corridor in Houston and Peach Counties**

Houston and Peach Counties have targeted the I-75 corridor for industrial development. Middle Georgia's geographic location provides easy access to all of the southeastern United States, as well as Georgia's ports. The development of this corridor will allow for the creation of quality, well-paying jobs for Middle Georgia residents as they seek to build personal wealth and improve their quality of life.

Implementation of this activity will be the responsibility of the Houston County Development Authority, the Development Authority of Peach County, cities, and counties. **Expanding the district's infrastructure capacity** and **diversifying local economic bases** are the goals sought to be achieved through this activity. Achieving these goals will enable the communities to meet the objectives by **creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district, promoting economic development that reduces dependence upon single industries within communities, and**

**attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district.** Economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, Georgia DCA, SPLOST, and GEFA.

### **Develop Balls Ferry State Park**

Slated to be located in the southeastern part of Wilkinson County, the proposed Balls Ferry State Park project is an important economic development project for Wilkinson and surrounding counties. This will be the only Georgia State park to combine Indian history, Civil War history, and Revolutionary War history. Georgia Technical Institute recently completed a feasibility study determining the project's economic viability and projected visitors. Wilkinson County has acquired the property on which the park will be developed for approximately \$1.5 million and subsequently deeded the property over to the Georgia State Properties Commission. In summer 2012, the environmental assessment for the initial phase of development (day use facilities) was complete, and the construction is slated to begin in early 2013.

The project meets the general goal of **stimulating economic development in the more rural counties** as well the secondary objectives of **enhancing heritage tourism opportunities** and **promoting economic development activities that reduce dependence upon single industries within communities.** Implementation will be completed by the Georgia State Properties Commission. Project partners and sources of funding include the five counties (Baldwin, Wilkinson, Washington, Johnson, Laurens) and the cities found therein, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the State of Georgia.

### **River Corridor / Blueway Development**

Over the past ten years several projects surrounding river corridor development have been initiated in Middle Georgia. Middle Georgia has the Flint River, Oconee River, and the Ocmulgee River that touch 10 of the 11 counties of Middle Georgia. The presence of this rich natural resource has led to the development of the Oconee River Greenway in Baldwin County, the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail in Bibb County, and the Ocmulgee River Park in Pulaski County. A new effort is to create an Ocmulgee Blueway that will connect all points along the River.

Middle Georgia Regional Commission prepared, in partnership with other regional commissions, Phase II of the Multi-Region River Corridor Feasibility Study. The study examines, in detail, the feasibility of establishing linkage and connectivity, to the greatest extent possible, through the use of multi-use trails, greenways, conservation areas, and recreational facilities along the Ocmulgee River and the Oconee River. Starting in Athens-Clarke County and ending at Jackson Lake in Butts County, the proposed river corridor would seek to connect significant historic, cultural, and environmental resources while accentuating the history and uniqueness of the surrounding areas. The feasibility study inventoried resources and assets, both existing and planned; assessed potential impacts (environmental, economic, social, etc.); identified barriers and impediments; discussed solutions and alternatives; determined cost estimates; and identified potential funding sources. Phase I of the study was accomplished in 2011 and

contains primarily a descriptive inventory of river corridor resources and assets. Phase II, completed in 2012, presents a comprehensive analysis of the results of the inventory and offers specific strategies for successful implementation.

This project will seek to achieve the goals of *diversifying local economic bases* through achieving the objective of *enhancing the historic-heritage tourism industry* in Middle Georgia.

### **Develop and Promote Historic Heritage Tourism Industry**

Heritage preservation and tourism have long been major contributors to economic development in Middle Georgia. Statewide, tourism is Georgia's second most important industry. The Middle Georgia region, an integral portion of the resource-rich Historic South Georgia area, continues to benefit from its priceless legacy of cultural and historic resources. Each of the localities within the Middle Georgia region are actively engaged in a variety of Historic Preservation projects geared to spur economic development within their community and the region as a whole. Success of these projects is indicated by the City of Macon, located in Bibb County, recently named as one of the top ten tourist destination places in the nation. Localities have achieved rewarding results by leveraging historic preservation and heritage tourism programs with other community development projects and programs including Better Home Town community programs, OneGeorgia projects, and TEA program funding.

The result of this project would be an enhanced ability throughout the district for direct and spin-off job creation. Successful implementation will provide a myriad of long-term economic improvements and also address the general goal to **improve the employment, income, and living standard of district residents** in a wide, multi-county area, even including some counties outside of the MGEDD through the objective of **enhancing the historic-heritage tourism industry**. Other benefits include increased state and local tax revenues not incurred by residents.

Interested partners include Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties; all cities located therein; cities and counties outside the region; and the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

### **Workforce Development**

As outlined in the demographic analysis, Middle Georgia lags behind the State in most educational categories creating additional barriers to economic development. Workforce development and training are essential to regional growth and prosperity and should be pursued aggressively. A regional workforce summit is planned in December 2012 to develop new strategies and approaches to this challenging issue.

The result of this project would be ***assistance to existing business and industries with a work ready workforce; improved employment, income, and living standard of district residents; enhanced access to skills training by furthering workforce development activities;***

***partnerships with existing businesses and industries to ensure their continued success within the community; and attract higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district.***

Interested partners include Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties; all cities located therein; cities and counties outside the region; and the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

## **Health Care**

The Middle Georgia region recognizes the importance of available and affordable health care as a quality of life factor in economic development. This becomes especially challenging in attracting health care professionals to rural communities and supporting and growing new specialties and research efforts in the region. Simultaneously is the need to find alternative resources to sustain medical treatment to the underinsured so as not to negatively impact current medical practices and specialties in the area. The region seeks ongoing funding to support such efforts as volunteer clinics; preventative and wellness programs and education; and incentives to attract medical professionals in under-represented medical specialties to this area.

The result of this project would be ***improved employment, income, and living standard of district residents; enhanced access to skills training by furthering workforce development activities; and attract higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district;***

Interested partners include Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties; all cities located therein; cities and counties outside the region; and higher education institutions.

## **Renew Focus on Downtown Areas**

Middle Georgia communities have a valuable economic development resource in their historic downtown areas that they would like to take advantage of. Following a movement away from central business districts towards the periphery in the 1970s and 1980s, communities across the country are beginning to revitalize unique city centers as economic centers. Central to these efforts are livable, pedestrian-friendly downtowns that embrace mixed-use developments where one can live, work, and play. Middle Georgia communities, with a wide variety of historic and culturally significant downtown areas, are primed for growth in these areas.

Many Middle Georgia communities have already initiated efforts to revitalize downtown areas and bolster economic activity in the area. Many communities have organizations such as Downtown or Urban Development Authorities and Main Street Programs that provide guidance and coordinate redevelopment and development efforts. Projects such as the Pillowtex Mill in Hawkinsville, the Dannenburg in Macon, and the Baldwin Hotel in Milledgeville exemplify

progressive downtown residential redevelopment projects that will help to support associated commercial development.

Renewed downtown centers, particularly in urban areas, are attractive to young people, which also addresses a concern shared by many Middle Georgia communities. Towns in the district have expressed concern over the aging workforce and lack of young people to fill soon-to-be-vacated positions. Younger segments of the workforce want to live and work in the same area instead of commuting. This movement away from traditional ideas where one lives in one area and travels to another area for work is a result of a decreased dependence on automobiles, environmental awareness, decreases in scale of desired housing, and socialization opportunities presented in downtown areas. A recently completed study in Macon shows demand for an additional 1,175 downtown residential units over the next five years.

The result of downtown revitalization efforts would be ***improved employment, income, and living standard of district residents; enhanced livability in central business districts; and the overall attractiveness and vibrancy of downtown areas in Middle Georgia.***

Interested partners include Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties; all cities located therein; cities and counties outside the region; and higher education institutions.

### **Support Robins Air Force Base by Enhancing the Military Value**

Robins Air Force Base is Middle Georgia's largest employer and the largest industrial employer in Georgia. Currently, there are 22,911 civilian and uniformed employees directly tied to this facility. In 2011, the presence of Robins created an estimated \$4.49 billion impact. In today's political climate, there are often calls for cuts to the federal government including defense spending. In the event of Base closure or mission loss, the effects to the region would be devastating. The Middle Georgia region works on a daily basis to address "inside the fence" and "outside the fence" challenges to enhance the military value of Robins Air Force Base.

The community has taken a major role in alleviating the problem of encroachment. Simply stated, encroachment is residential land surrounding RAFB that is incompatible with the missions of the military installation, which poses a potential threat to civilian health and safety. The objective the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens in member Counties and the State. Given this, one of the major issues facing Middle Georgia is encroachment of property around Robins Air Force (RAFB). Maintaining RAFB military viability and mission capability by preventing or eliminating incompatible development has been the charge given to the CGJDA. To this end the CGJDA intends to acquire 250 properties deemed to be "encroaching" on RAFB due to the inclusion of residential properties. Over the past four years, the CGJDA and the MGRC have worked with surrounding counties, community partners, the State of Georgia, and the Department of Defense to protect one of Middle Georgia's greatest assets. Combined efforts have resulted in leveraging \$26 million from seven different partners. In September 2012, the project reached a

milestone when the CGJDA purchased its 100<sup>th</sup> property. While there is still much work ahead, Middle Georgia has clearly placed the issue of encroachment front and center with a mandate for completion in the next five years.

This project will promote economic development opportunities that ***strengthen existing economic base*** within Middle Georgia communities. This activity would assist in the fulfillment of the regional goals of ***improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents*** and ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties***. The achievement of these goals will enhance the objective of ***attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district***.

Interested partners include Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties; all cities located therein; cities and counties outside the region; and the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

### **Expand Alternative Financing Programs**

Over the course of the last three years, Middle Georgia has launched two new alternative financing programs to support economic development. Both the Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) and the EB-5 Immigrant Investor program will facilitate economic development in very different ways. The goal for the next five-year period is to expand the utilization of these programs.

#### ***Foreign Trade Zone***

On August 11, 2009, the Foreign Trade Zone Board approved a 949-acre sub-zone of Georgia Foreign Trade Zone 26 in Middle Georgia. For the purposes of the application, tracts of land were identified where known or potential users of the foreign trade zone status are or will be located. The initial parcels in the Middle Georgia sub-zone are:

- 230 acres of Airport East Industrial Park
- 184 acres of Sofkee Industrial Park
- 215 acres of Twiggs County Industrial Park
- 320 acres of Rumble Road Industrial Park

If a qualified user is identified in a location not included in the original FTZ sites, Georgia Foreign Trade Zone 26 may modify the boundary of the site to meet the needs of the user. There is a cost associated with a boundary modification. In the event that Georgia Foreign Trade Zone 26 determines that there is no available acreage in the current sub-zone, an expansion application can be filed with the Foreign Trade Zone Board. There is a cost associated with an expansion.

Now that the Middle Georgia sub-zone has received the FTZ designation, Middle Georgia is ready for a company (or user) to apply for activation of the site. This is an additional approval process during which the company provides detailed information on goods and materials as well as completes the background/security clearance required.

Financial benefits FTZs offer:

Duty Deferral:

Imported products admitted to the FTZ are not entered into the Customs territory until their withdrawal from the FTZ. Therefore, users obtain a cash flow savings by deferring Customs duties until the merchandise leaves the FTZ for consumption in the U.S.

Duty Elimination:

Imported products admitted to the FTZ and subsequently destroyed in the FTZ or exported from the FTZ are not subject to Customs duties.

Duty Reduction:

Imported products admitted to the FTZ can be placed in a special status that allows the merchandise to be classified and appraised in its condition as withdrawn from the FTZ. For manufacturers this means that an imported component with a higher rate of duty can be classified and appraised in its finished product form, with a potentially lower rate of duty, thereby reducing the amount of duty owed.

Zone-to-Zone Transfer:

If the company utilizes more than one FTZ, merchandise may be transferred from zone to zone in order to extend the deferral benefits further. This benefit can be implemented up and down the supply chain by incorporating the activities of suppliers and customers.

Direct Delivery and Weekly Entry/Export:

From a just-in-time inventory perspective, the FTZ program offers significant benefits. Users may obtain permission from Customs to move merchandise directly from the port of arrival to the FTZ avoiding delays at congested ports and minimizing exams. On the outgoing side, users may obtain permission to ship unrestricted weekly (24 hours per day, 7 days per week) based on an estimate approved by Customs before the start of the business week. Broker fees and merchandise processing fees paid to Customs may be significantly reduced by filing one entry per week versus daily entries or one per shipment. Goods move in and out of the facility on an expedited basis allowing for a seamless supply chain from vendor to customer without maintaining unnecessarily high levels of inventory.

Production Equipment:

Certain duty deferral and reduction benefits also apply on production equipment admitted to the FTZ for assembly and testing prior to use in production.

### *EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program*

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service administers the Immigrant Investor Program, also known as "EB-5," created by Congress in 1990 to stimulate the U.S. economy through job creation and capital investment by foreign investors.

All EB-5 investors must invest in a new commercial enterprise

- Established after Nov. 29, 1990, or
- Established on or before Nov. 29, 1990, that is:
  - Purchased and the existing business is restructured or reorganized in such a way that a new commercial enterprise results, or
  - Expanded through the investment so that a 40 percent increase in the net worth or number of employees occurs.

The project must create or preserve at least ten full-time jobs for qualifying U.S. workers within two years (or under certain circumstances, within a reasonable time after the two-year period) of the immigrant investor's admission to the United States as a Conditional Permanent Resident. Direct jobs are actual identifiable jobs for qualified employees located within the commercial enterprise into which the EB-5 investor has directly invested his or her capital. Indirect jobs are those jobs shown to have been created collaterally or as a result of capital invested in a commercial enterprise affiliated with a regional center by an EB-5 investor. A foreign investor may only use the indirect job calculation if affiliated with a regional center.

A Regional Center is a private enterprise or corporation or a regional governmental agency with a targeted investment program within a defined geographic region.

The EB-5 Regional Center Program does not require that the foreign investor's enterprise itself directly employ ten U.S. workers. Instead, it is enough if ten or more jobs will be created directly or indirectly as a result of the investment. The Regional Center Investment Program aids foreign investors by directing and professionally managing their investment in the designated business and geographic focus of their Regional Center.

A Regional Center obtains its designation by submitting a detailed application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Once USCIS has approved a Regional Center application, an investor seeking an EB-5 green card through the Program must make the qualifying investment (i.e., \$1 million or \$500,000) within an approved Regional Center. However, the requirement of creating at least ten new jobs is met by showing that as a result of the new enterprise, such jobs will be created directly or indirectly.

Before an investor can participate in a Regional Center's EB-5 investment program, each investor must independently petition USCIS for an EB-5 visa. USCIS solely determines whether the investor qualifies for the EB-5 visa. USCIS's diligence includes a detailed review of the sources of the investor's funds, family history, and other representations of the head of household and his immediate family member under the age of 21.

As with the regular EB-5 program, qualified investors investing through a Regional Center first receive a conditional green card valid for two years. At the end of that time the investor files another application with USCIS showing that their money was "at risk" during the two-year period and that the jobs have been created. Once those applications have been approved, the

investor and his immediate family become permanent green card holders and can later apply to become U.S. citizens. The whole EB-5 process takes approximately three to five years or longer depending upon the timeliness, quality, and validity of the investor's submissions.

The result of this project would be ***assistance to existing business and industries with a work ready workforce; improved employment, income, and living standard of district residents; enhanced access to skills training by furthering workforce development activities; partnerships with existing businesses and industries to ensure their continued success within the community; and attract higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district.***

Interested partners include Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties; all cities located therein; cities and counties outside the region; and the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

## **Vital Baldwin County Economic Development Projects**

### **Expansion of Infrastructure to Support Economic Development**

Currently, Milledgeville and Baldwin County have prioritized three locations where infrastructure improvements are essential for commercial and industrial economic development.

In the past, the U.S. 441 corridor was an area where water and sewer infrastructure improvements were implemented. Since that time, new needs have developed, including roadway repair on U.S. 441 from Robinson Mill Road to Lake Sinclair, which has begun to erode and develop potholes. Additionally, this corridor lacks adequate lighting, green spaces, and safety features that would create an attractive climate for retail and tourism.

State Route 22, which extends from Macon into Milledgeville, is home to an Industrial Park with several large industrial facilities. Current conditions are that Route 22 is two-lanes from downtown Gray to Triumph Aerospace, at which point it becomes four-lanes. These conditions are not ideal for truck traffic traveling to Macon from Baldwin County. In order to increase the accessibility of industrial facilities, Highway 22 should be widened to four-lanes from the Jones County line to the Triumph facility.

Community leaders anticipate the completion of the Baldwin County portion of the Fall-line Freeway in three to four years. The County sees the development of an industrial park along this section as appealing due to the roadway access provided by the nexus of Highway 441 and the Fall-line Freeway. This land is currently undeveloped and will require additional infrastructure improvements, including water, sewer and power to encourage location of industry. Expanding the existing infrastructure network within Baldwin County is aimed to accommodate future economic growth within the County by addressing the general goal of ***expanding district infrastructure capacity*** while targeting the specific objectives of ***enhancing the local transportation network and enhancing water, sewer, gas, and rail infrastructure***

**systems.** In addition, enhancing service delivery also assists existing business and industry as well as the general populace. The implementing entities are the City of Milledgeville and Baldwin County. Interested stakeholders include Baldwin County, the City of Milledgeville, the Development Authority of Milledgeville-Baldwin County, and the region as a whole. Economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include USDA, Georgia DOT, Georgia DCA, SPLOST, and GEFA.

### **Expansion of Milledgeville/Baldwin County Industrial Property**

The Development Authority of Milledgeville-Baldwin County has completed a number of infrastructure improvements to enhance the industrial park located along State Route 22. In order to make the park more attractive to prospective businesses and industries, the Development Authority has completed road, water, sewer, electricity, fiber optic cable, and natural gas improvements. In addition, the Development Authority constructed a 62,000 square-foot spec building which is capable of being expanded to 134,000 square feet. Currently, staff is searching for a tenant for this facility.

Moving forward, further acquisition of new industrial property has become a greater priority, like the proposed park along the Fall-Line Freeway, and development of new infrastructure. The community is actively looking for opportunities for industrial property acquisition to provide locations for new business and expansion of existing businesses. The planned acquisition of industrial property will be conducted with a goal of economic diversification. Specifically, staff will look for locations that could be utilized by aerospace industries, high water users, and warehouse distribution centers. These are industries that would be complimented by current Baldwin County strengths and help to inject much-needed economic diversity.

Expanding the industrial property would address the goals of *diversifying the local economic base* and *improving the employment, income, and living standards of district residents*. More specific objectives include *creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district, promoting economic development that reduces dependence upon single industries within communities* and *attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district*. As previously mentioned, Baldwin County's economy is highly dependent on state agency employment located in the community. Over-dependence on single or limited economic sectors can render local economies more vulnerable to recession.

The implementing agency is the Development Authority of Milledgeville-Baldwin County. Interested partners include Baldwin County, the City of Milledgeville, the Baldwin/Milledgeville Development Authority, and the region. Economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include USDA, Georgia DCA, EDA, SPLOST, and GEFA.

### **Make Improvements to the Baldwin County Airport**

Baldwin County operates the Baldwin County Airport, which is able to accommodate some small jet traffic into and out of the facility. The community has determined that the facility's

inability to accommodate large jet traffic has inhibited some economic development opportunities as executives are unable to fly into and out of the community.

Baldwin County has made improvements to the airport by utilizing the allocation of SPLOST funds and assistance from outside agencies. In the past four years, the terminal building has been relocated, bringing the airport into compliance with FAA standards. Within a year, the airport will receive new fencing surrounding the runways, which will provide greater safety to the planes.

Locals would like to see additional changes to the airport to increase its capacity. In the future, the County would like to see the expansion of additional hangars to accommodate additional plane traffic. Also planned are runway improvements that include new striping, painting, and signage. These alterations will increase the safety and visibility of the runways. An additional improvement is the need for a new fuel system with greater capacity and reliability.

By enhancing the quality and usefulness of the Baldwin County Airport, the regional goal of **expanding district infrastructure capacity** will be achieved through the objective of **enhancing access to economic development activities through aviation facilities**. The benefits of making expansions to the airport could lead to the attraction of new industry, including the creation of jobs and additional capital investment acting to expand the local tax bases.

The implementing entity is Baldwin County. Interested partners include Baldwin County, the Development Authority of Milledgeville-Baldwin County, and the region. Economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include the FAA, DOT, and SPLOST.

### **Development and Construction of a Convention/Conference Center**

Baldwin County, the City of Milledgeville, and various groups from within the community recognize the benefit that a convention/conference center could have on the community. With the presence of public colleges, a public technical college, and an abundance of state agencies located within the community, a convention/conference center could greatly enhance the community. Leaders have identified numerous potential conventions/conferences that have contacted Milledgeville and Baldwin County to schedule sessions, only to be turned away due to the lack of a space that could accommodate their needs. Currently, Central Georgia Technical College has a facility that has been utilized for some of the desired purposes. However, the community sees the need for a facility that will meet all the needs and uses desired.

In hopes of developing and constructing such a facility, a feasibility study was completed indicating the need for such a facility. This was followed by a conceptual plan that has been completed. It has been determined by local leaders that this project must be undertaken by a private entity, rather than the local government, Chamber of Commerce, or Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Constructing this facility in Milledgeville/Baldwin Park would address the goal of *improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents* through the objectives of *creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district* and *enhancing the historic-heritage tourism industry*. The benefits of attracting new events to the community would result in the creation of jobs and additional capital investment, which would expand the local tax base.

The implementing agency is a presently unspecified private developer who will work in concert with the Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau, Main Street Program, Downtown Development Authority, City of Milledgeville, and Baldwin County. Economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include USDA, Georgia DCA, SPLOST, and GEFA.

### **Creation and Marketing of a Community-Wide Vision**

The interested parties in Milledgeville and Baldwin County have determined that in order to attract development there must be a focused community vision that is uniform and unique to the community. The community vision will then be used to make improvements that will help increase and maximize the current strengths of the area. Once this vision is solidified, there are plans to market the community based upon this focus.

One part of this vision is the promotion of Baldwin County and Milledgeville as a retirement community that offers seniors a comfortable and inviting place to live. As a retirement community, leadership wants to promote the strengths that are already offered including quality health care, higher education institutions, and natural and historical resources. Part of the ongoing work will be to continue to support and grow these resources, while searching for other avenues to attract seniors, including public transportation, street improvements and green space development.

The growth of the area as a center for technology is a way to increase the quality of life and innovation. In recent years, Milledgeville-Baldwin County has reached its goal of becoming a wireless community. Leadership does not wish to cease in these efforts but instead to search for additional ways to make technology accessible to all citizens and to utilize the technology to increase the efficiency and convenience to citizens. Additionally, technological forward-thinking will help to attract up-and-coming industries.

Connected to the expansion of technology, the community has shown interest in fostering the development of locally grown industries. There is recognition that young entrepreneurs are not staying in the community to implement ideas but are migrating to other places. Rather than solely focusing upon new industries, the desire is to create an environment that will allow local individuals and small businesses the best opportunity to develop, maintain, innovate, and expand. The Community leadership would like to develop a central location that will be made available to local individual needing business and technology information and resources. Additional ideas of interest include incentivizing expansion and capital acquisition assistance.

This project supports the regional goal of promoting ***partnerships with existing businesses and industries to ensure their continued success within the community***. Implementation of the project will be coordinated by the City of Milledgeville. Stakeholders and possible funding sources include Baldwin County, the City of Milledgeville, the Baldwin/Milledgeville Development Authority, Georgia College & State University, Georgia Military College, the Milledgeville-Baldwin County Chamber of Commerce, the Oconee River Greenway Authority, the Georgia Technology Authority, the Knight Foundation, SPLOST revenues, and community businesses.

## **Vital Bibb County Economic Development Projects**

### **Acquisition and Development of Property for Industrial Uses**

Bibb County maintains a stock of marketable land totaling 2,906 acres in various stages of development. The Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority owns seven (7) industrial parks and there are agreements with Norfolk Southern for Sofkee Industrial Park and I-75 Business Park which is a joint venture with the Macon Water Authority. There is, however, still need for further land acquisition and development of existing land.

The overarching goal in regards to development of the aforementioned properties is to develop infrastructure throughout each of the sites. The Fulton Mill Road site is currently targeted for infrastructure development. There are plans to acquire and develop the South Bibb Industrial District. This may lead to the development of a multi-modal center.

This project will seek to ***improve the employment, income, and living standard of district residents*** and to ***expand district infrastructure capacity***. Stakeholders and possible funding sources include Bibb County, the City of Macon, the Macon Economic Development Commission, Macon-Bibb Industrial Authority, Bibb County Development Authority, Downtown Development Authority, Central Georgia Joint Development Authority, Macon Water Authority, Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and property owners.

### **Cultivate Relationships with Existing Business and Industry**

Recognizing that the majority of new job growth stems from existing business and industry, Bibb County seeks to cultivate stronger relationships with existing business and industry. Through concerted efforts, Bibb County desires to ***recruit supplies and end-users for materials processed within the district, increase the local tax base, and attract higher-paying jobs***. The implementation of this project will be coordinated by the Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Bibb County, City of Macon, the Macon Economic Development Commission, Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority, Bibb County Development Authority, Downtown Development Authority, and Central Georgia Joint Development Authority.

## **Develop a South Bibb Industrial District**

The Robins Air Force Base and Middle Georgia Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) addressed actual and potential encroachments and identified incompatible development in South Bibb and North Houston that pose a threat to public health and safety and restrict the ability of Robins Air Force Base to complete its mission and attract new missions. In addition to the issues identified in the JLUS, Bibb County and Houston County have limited inventory of property available for industrial development. Most importantly, land is being acquired throughout the encroachment area by the Middle Georgia Joint Development Authority that may be made available for industrial development. Development on Avondale Mill Road, including the First Quality Facility, provides an insight into the economic development possibilities associated with this area. Bibb County is also pursuing the widening and extension of Sardis Church Road to serve as a connector of I-75 and I-16.

Through the creation of a South Bibb Industrial District, Bibb County intends to address the following goals: **enhance access to economic development activities through aviation facilities, enhance the local transportation network, create jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district, and expand infrastructure capacity.**

This project will be a partnership between Bibb County, Macon Economic Development Commission, Central Georgia Joint Development Authority, Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority, and Bibb County Development Authority.

## **Extend Infrastructure to Available Industrial Sites**

Industrial sites throughout Bibb County are in need of additional infrastructure to ensure that appropriate development can occur within each. According to the Macon Economic Development Commission, the Sofkee Industrial Site, Airport South Industrial Park, Airport East Industrial Park, the I-75 Industrial Park, Ocmulgee East Industrial Park, and the Downtown Industrial District are each in need of infrastructure improvements to meet the needs of prospective industries.

Each location identified above, as well as new industrial property, requires some of the following infrastructure improvements to attract new industries: water, sewer, gas, telecommunications, road improvements, traffic improvements, and/or site development. In order to meet these needs, funding must be identified to support such infrastructure expansion.

This project, through its many components, will seek to ***expand district infrastructure capacity*** and ***provide better access to economic development activities through aviation facilities.*** Stakeholders and possible funding sources include Bibb County, the City of Macon, the Macon Economic Development Commission, Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority, Bibb County Development Authority, Downtown Development Authority, Central Georgia Joint

Development Authority, Macon Water Authority, Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and property owners.

### **Enhance Recreational Facilities**

Since 2000, Bibb County has developed recreational facilities along the Ocmulgee River. The Ocmulgee Heritage Trail is one of the first riverside trail and park systems in Middle Georgia. The Trail is first and foremost a recreational resource providing an exceptional environment for walking, biking, boating, bird watching, and many other activities. The Trail is also a cultural resource that connects people and places to celebrate shared history of life along the Ocmulgee River. Many of the community's historic treasures can be discovered along the Trail: the Ocmulgee National Monument, historic Rose Hill Cemetery, Fort Hawkins, and Macon's original water works. During the planning period, Bibb County intends to pursue the expansion of the Ocmulgee National Monument to include the areas between the main part and the Lamar Mounds and seek designation change to a "National Park." Lastly, Bibb County will support the completion of the Ocmulgee Heritage Trails project, including the Water Works Park.

This project will support the following objectives: **enhance the local transportation network; enhance historic heritage tourism industry; and improve the employment, income, and living standards of district residents.**

Implementation partners include: NewTown Macon, Macon-Bibb County Parks and Recreation Department, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Transportation, Macon Water Authority, Ocmulgee National Monument, and Urban Development Authority.

### **Improvements to the Middle Georgia Regional Airport**

The recently completed update of the Master Plan for the Middle Georgia Regional Airport estimated that enplanements would increase dramatically over the next 20 years. The report recommends \$76.9 million of improvements to the infrastructure on and around the facility during that same timeframe. Improvements in the first five years of the plan include renovations to the terminal, construction of new hangars, extension of runways to accommodate larger planes, and rehabilitation of ramps and taxiways. The Middle Georgia Regional Airport also has significant potential of expanding its maintenance and retrofit facilities as an alternative to larger airports. Larger airports have substantially higher fees and longer landing and takeoff patterns.

This project will address the secondary objective of ***providing better access to economic development activities through aviation facilities.*** The Middle Georgia Regional Airport serves a larger area than a typical county airport. As stated above, access to airport facilities is favorable for certain industrial uses and the delivery of high value products, both in shipping and receiving. The projected growth in the area and the proximity to the larger urban centers and industrial activity will produce a greater demand for expanded facilities. Additionally, if the Middle Georgia Regional Airport can expand its role in passenger service, the quality of life of

the community will be improved as well. There has been successful economic growth on property on and adjacent to the airport facilities, and expanded options will only further future growth. Stakeholders and possible funding sources include Bibb, Houston, and Peach Counties; all the cities located therein; multiple cities and counties outside of the region; the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority; the Middle Georgia Regional Development Authority; the Federal Aviation Administration; and the Georgia DOT.

### **Support Commercial Development**

One segment of the local economy that has seen increased activity over the past several years has been commercial development. This development has created additional infrastructure needs throughout the community. Resulting from these demands, though, have been an increased tax base, additional jobs, and locations generating increased sales tax receipts throughout the community.

Throughout the County, and especially in areas near the Bass Road, New Forsyth Road, and I-75 areas, are needed infrastructure improvements to support sizable projected commercial developments. Certain projects have either been conceptualized or planned and will require additional infrastructure in these areas to support and sustain the growth. There are numerous improvements necessary, but not all funding has been acquired. These infrastructure needs include water, wastewater, stormwater, natural gas, and road improvements.

In addition to infrastructure improvements to support commercial development, Bibb County plans to make use of financial incentives including New Market Tax Credits, Enterprise Zones, and Opportunity Zones, EB5 inducements, and Community Improvement Districts. Specifically, the community wishes to create Opportunity Zones within existing industrial parks.

This project, through its many components, will seek to ***expand district infrastructure capacity and improve the employment, income, and living standard of district residents***. Stakeholders and possible funding sources include Bibb County, the City of Macon, the Macon Economic Development Commission, Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority, Bibb County Development Authority, Downtown Development Authority, Central Georgia Joint Development Authority, Macon Water Authority, Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

### **Redevelop Brownfield Sites in Downtown Industrial District**

Presently, there are 12 properties in Bibb County listed on the Hazardous Site Inventory; several of these are strategically located in the downtown industrial district. Bibb County will work with the owners of these properties to encourage them to redevelop the properties and return them to a productive use, generating jobs and revitalizing the community. It is imperative in moving forward that a lead agency is identified to effectively and efficiently deal with community brownfield sites. The goal of this activity is to **create jobs suitable for Middle Georgia, enhance infrastructure capacity, and increase the local tax base.**

Implementing agencies include Bibb County, the City of Macon, the Macon Economic Development Commission, Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority, Bibb County Development Authority, Downtown Development Authority, Urban Development Authority, Central Georgia Joint Development Authority, Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

### **Public Infrastructure Improvements**

Bibb County has identified several key items related to public infrastructure that are needed in the planning period. First, the levy located along the Ocmulgee River to prevent downtown flooding was built in 1949. City and County officials have requested the services of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to conduct a feasibility study to examine the current condition and short- and long-term needs. However, local match dollars are needed for the feasibility study and for the local match for any implementation costs if determined that the levy may need to be altered in size. Second, a recent Superior Court ruling requires that Bibb County construct a new courthouse and parking garage. Third, the City of Macon and Bibb County have agreed to establish a “One Stop Shop” for permit processing in order to streamline and make more efficient, the permitting process in Macon and Bibb County.

This project, through its many components, will seek to **expand district infrastructure capacity**. Stakeholders and possible funding sources include Bibb County, the City of Macon, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Macon Water Authority, Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

### **Second Street Corridor**

The City of Macon has initiated a plan for Second Street that will outline the necessary projects, policies and initiatives to transform Second Street from an ill-designed, auto-centric road with vacant lots, empty buildings, and uninspiring vistas into a wide, multi-modal boulevard that embraces the design concepts of sustainability, complete streets, and livable communities. This project will support the following objectives: **enhance the local transportation network; enhance historic heritage tourism industry; and improve the employment, income, and living standards of district residents.**

Implementation partners include: NewTown Macon, Macon-Bibb County Parks and Recreation Department, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Transportation, Macon Water Authority, Ocmulgee National Monument, and Urban Development Authority.

### **Vital Crawford County Economic Development Projects**

## Increase Infrastructure Capacity to Support Economic Development

The City of Roberta recently completed upgrades to the wastewater treatment system in order to increase capacity at the Crawford County Industrial Park. These essential upgrades to the system remove a significant barrier to complete build-out of the Industrial Park. Outside of the Park, the City of Roberta has limited wastewater capacity that may not be sufficient to handle future industrial or commercial growth. The provision of basic utilities is often considered one of the most important factors in locating new industry. To ensure that the future economic growth and development will not be limited in and around the City of Roberta due to the lack of essential infrastructure, the City must continue to increase its wastewater treatment capacity. The City of Roberta has improved the water infrastructure extending from Highway 80 up Lowe Road in order to provide adequate service to the new Elementary and Middle Schools. Crawford County also has planned upgrades to the water system in order to accommodate economic growth.

Implementing infrastructure improvements to support economic development will be the responsibility of the City of Roberta and Crawford County. This will achieve the goal of **expanding district infrastructure capacity** through meeting the objective of **enhancing local infrastructure systems**. Agencies with economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, DCA, and GEFA.

## Develop Additional Industrial Sites

Crawford County needs to acquire and develop additional property for industrial uses to ensure the ability to attract future economic development. Currently, the County has only one industrial park. The Roberta/Crawford County Industrial Park is fully developed offering water, sewer, and gas service; however, it has virtually no more developable land within the Industrial Park. This limited amount of available industrial area greatly reduces the County's chances of recruiting large industrial prospects. Crawford County needs to increase available industrial capacity by expanding the Roberta/Crawford County Industrial Park or developing a new park altogether. It is the goal of the Development Authority of Crawford County to increase marketable land from 50 acres to 250 acres in five (5) years.

Implementation of this activity will be overseen by the City of Roberta, Crawford County, and the Development Authority of Crawford County. More industrial property in Crawford County would serve to advance the general goals of *stimulating economic development in the more rural counties* and *improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents*. These goals will be achieved through meeting the objectives of *creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district, attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district, and increasing the local tax base as a result of economic development*. The benefits of attracting new industry include the creation of jobs and additional capital investment acting to expand the local tax base to provide revenue for additional amenities. The local community has identified three potential locations, which could be improved to be industrial sites. Economic

development programs that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, DCA, and GEFA.

### **Enhance the Viability of Downtown Roberta as an Economic Center of the Community**

There is interest within Crawford County to improve and enhance the look and number of businesses within the City of Roberta. Included in the enhancement of the look of these businesses is the connection of sidewalks through the community. In order to increase the number of businesses will be efforts by the Crawford County Development Authority to attract and retain businesses within the community through normal recruitment measures, as well as the small business incubator. Downtown residential units are needed to promote varied and sustainable economic activity in the downtown area.

The enhancement of the viability of downtown Roberta as an economic center of the community supports the general goals of ***assisting existing business and industries and stimulating economic development in more rural counties***. The accomplishment of these goals will achieve the overall objectives of ***promoting economic development opportunities that strengthen existing economic bases within Middle Georgia communities*** and ***enhancing the historic-heritage tourism industry***. A viable downtown area with sufficient, sustainable businesses makes the community more attractive for other types of economic development efforts, as it has a higher quality of life than before. Project partners include Crawford County, the City of Roberta, the Development Authority of Crawford County, Middle Georgia Regional Commission, and Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

### **Expand Recreational Facilities**

Crawford County and the City of Roberta realize that there are economic development opportunities associated with recreation. New recreational facilities have been completed, and the community would like to attract sports tournaments to the new facilities. In order for sports tournaments to consider the community, there must be adequate hotel/motel space for participants. So the development of hotel/motel units in the community is corollary with leveraging economic development tied to recreation. Success in these endeavors would allow for more investments to be made in the recreational infrastructure of the community. In addition to traditional organized sports, there also exists opportunities to attract water sports to the Flint River.

The expansion of recreational offerings and hotel/motel space in the community and leveraging recreation as economic development tools will be the responsibility of the City of Roberta and Crawford County. This will achieve the goal of ***stimulating economic development in more rural counties*** and will ***promote economic development opportunities that strengthen the existing economic bases within Middle Georgia communities***. Agencies with programs that could provide potential sources of funding include DCA, DNR, NPS, and private organizations.

## Acquire and Develop Publicly-Owned Industrial Sites

Existing industrial sites in Houston County, such as the industrial park formerly known as the Booth Road Park (a successful EDA project), have utilized much of their available land. Therefore, the community has efforts underway to secure additional industrial property that will be used solely for industrial projects, and not for mixed uses. Houston County has successfully acquired the 833 acre Harris Tract in the eastern part of the County for this purpose. The community's desire is to continue developing industrial corridors within the County to diversify the local economy.

Implementation of this project will be the responsibility of the Houston County Development Authority, the City of Centerville, City of Perry, City of Warner Robins, and additional partners deemed relevant to the community. Developing additional industrial space in Houston County will address the general goal of **expanding district infrastructure capacity** while achieving the objectives of **attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district** and **promoting economic development that reduces dependence upon single industries within communities**. The benefits of attracting new industry include the creation of jobs and additional capital investment, and by using land formerly owned by the State and putting it into private use, value is returned to the tax rolls. Project partners and potential sources of funding include Houston County, City of Warner Robins, City of Perry, the Development Authority of Houston County, neighboring counties, EDA, Georgia Department of Economic Development, and Georgia DCA.

## Develop Land at North End of Robins Air Force Base

The City of Warner Robins acquired 533 acres of land at the north end of Robins Air Force Base through a land swap with the State of Georgia. A portion of the land, which is not suitable for development, will be used for a recreational facility. The balance of the land will be developed in a partnership with Robins Air Force Base to provide hangar space for aircraft manufacturing, maintenance, and/or retrofit operations which would be compatible with RAFB current and future missions. The current estimated cost for construction of the hangars is \$75,000,000. No funds have been earmarked for construction of necessary hangars and infrastructure at this time. The land has undergone a necessary environmental assessment which will allow for additional steps to be taken.

Implementing this project will be the City of Warner Robins, Houston County, the Houston County Development Authority, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Partnership. The development of the land at the north end of Robins Air Force Base meets the regional goal to **develop significant economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district** while achieving the objectives of **enhancing access to economic development activities through aviation facilities** and **creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district**. Project partners and stakeholders in these expansions include: Houston County, City of Warner Robins, Houston County Development Authority, Warner Robins Chamber of Commerce, private companies, the United States Department of Defense, and Robins Air Force Base.

## Expand Hospital Facilities

The Houston Healthcare Complex, consisting of Houston Medical Center and Perry Hospital, has applied their master plan in order to expand facilities and increase services. One recent expansion was the development of the Houston Mall facility location. This facility was developed on a 9.3 acre plot of land with a \$5.1 million investment. Additionally, the Perry Hospital has undergone refurbishments to its entrance and patient rooms. This branch has also added a new nurses' station and nine new patient rooms which will be finished in 2012.

Moving forward, the plan is to continue facility expansion. Currently, the Houston Medical Center has acquired 23 acres for development of a 350,000 square foot facility that will include billing offices and doctor's offices. Continued improvements will expand the heart-catheterization lab and develop a building to hold surgery suites, outpatient clinics, and pain clinics.

The entity responsible for implementation of this action item is the Houston County Hospital Authority. The expansion of the Houston Healthcare Complex facilities meets the regional goal of ***improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents*** while achieving the regional objective of ***promoting economic development opportunities that strengthen existing economic bases within Middle Georgia communities***. Project partners and stakeholders in these expansions include: Houston Medical Center, Perry Hospital, the City of Warner Robins, the City of Perry, the City of Centerville, Houston County, and local physicians.

## Complete Infrastructure Improvements to Support Economic Development Activities

Road improvements, natural gas improvements, water system expansions, stormwater collection/treatment/disposal systems, and rail expansions are all needed to support economic development activities identified within the county. In particular, several companies have announced either future location or expansion within Houston County. Specifically, Houston County is seeking to provide significant infrastructure to the previously undeveloped Harris Tract in the eastern portion of the County. In order for some of these projects to come to fruition, infrastructure improvements to support such development must be completed.

Warner Robins is undertaking a redevelopment plan designed to make the City more viable to commercial entities. Included in this plan are calls for streetscape and lighting improvements around the commercial circle area. The City also plans to develop a Tax Allocation District to help redevelop declining property.

Perry is currently undertaking several infrastructure additions. City leadership is planning the construction of a fire station on Commodore Drive that will increase fire safety. The City has also begun an extension of Ball Street that will funnel truck traffic out of downtown. Perry's leadership sees this improvement as necessary to help revitalize the downtown area.

Developing additional infrastructure in Houston County will address the general goal of **building region infrastructure capacity**. Any new customers will aid in retiring the debt for improvements through additional usage. The benefits of attracting new industry include the creation of jobs and additional capital investment acting to expand the local tax bases. Project partners and potential sources of funding include Houston County, City of Perry, City of Warner Robins, Georgia Department of Economic Development, and Georgia DCA.

### **Improvements to and around Perry/Houston County Airport**

The area around the Perry/Houston County Airport has significant growth potential. The community is discussing an industrial park in the area to attract industry and commercial interests that will not only serve Perry and Houston County, but also Peach County, their neighbor to the west. Participation in expansion activities and zoning has been requested from the Peach County Development Authority. The City of Perry is in need of additional infrastructure in the form of wastewater and natural gas service for the Perry airport and surrounding property.

The entities responsible for implementing this activity include the Perry/Houston County Airport Authority, Houston County, Peach County, and the City of Perry. Developing additional industrial space in southern Houston County will address the general goal of **expanding district infrastructure capacity** and the objective of **enhancing access to economic development activities through aviation facilities**. The benefits of attracting new industry include the creation of jobs and additional capital investment acting to expand the local tax bases. Project partners and potential sources of funding include Houston County, City of Perry, Perry/Houston County Airport Authority, Federal Aviation Administration, SPLOST, and DCA. It is unknown at this time the number of jobs associated with this activity.

### **Market Houston County as a Retirement Community**

Efforts have been made to market Houston County as a retirement community. Due to the presence of Robins Air Force Base, a large number of military and civilian retirees have chosen to remain in the area after their service to the Air Force is complete. In light of this and many other quality of life factors, it has been determined by developers and local officials alike that the community is situated in a prime location for attracting retirees. The Houston County Hospital Authority has taken an active role in attracting seniors by beginning the development of a 40-apartment assisted-living complex that will contain amenities attractive to seniors, including a four-hole golf course and green space. Along with retirees must come additional service and retail outlets that will further stimulate the local economy. However, with additional development comes additional cost to the community in order to sustain the infrastructure and other demands placed upon the community by such development.

Implementation of this activity will be completed by private companies and the Perry Chamber of Commerce. This project would accomplish the goal of **improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents** while achieving the objective of **increasing the local**

**tax base as a result of economic development projects.** Providing a balance of housing options for its residents is imperative for retaining residents, while at the same time posing an additional opportunity for a growing market of baby boomers who have chosen to retire in Middle Georgia. Potential project partners and funding sources include the private developers and the City of Perry. It is presently unknown the number of direct jobs associated with this activity; however, a number of unquantifiable service and retail jobs will be required to support increasing numbers of retirees.

### **Develop Warner Robins Conference Center**

The Warner Robins community is pursuing a 500-750 seat conference center. Five organizations in Warner Robins joined together to fund a feasibility study for a hotel/conference center to serve the meeting needs of business generated by Robins Air Force Base and the local community. The study was funded by the Robins Regional Chamber of Commerce, Flint Energies, Houston County, the Houston County Development Authority, and the City of Warner Robins. Finnell Consulting has completed the feasibility study for a hotel, as well as for the Economic Impact Analysis.

Discussions are underway regarding the development of a conference center in Warner Robins. Original discussions involved this being a project overseen by the Warner Robins Chamber of Commerce. At present, the project is waiting for a sponsor, which will likely be from the private sector. Recent discussions have begun with private hoteliers regarding the attachment of a hotel/meeting facility to the existing Civic Center facility. Utilization of the Civic Center would provide capacity for between 500 and 750 individuals, while additional facilities would be constructed to serve as smaller meeting rooms.

Entities responsible for the implementation of this activity include private sector hoteliers, the City of Warner Robins, Houston County, the Warner Robins Chamber of Commerce, and Flint Energies. The core group of interested persons is currently considering ownership options along with the feasibility study. In order for this project to become a reality, funding for construction and ongoing operations must be secured. The hope is to generate new money into the economy through meeting and convention tourism. This project would accomplish the goal of **improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents** while meeting the objective of **creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district**. Potential project partners and funding sources include the Houston County Development Authority, the Robins Regional Chamber of Commerce, Houston County, City of Warner Robins, and private entities.

### **Expansion and Renovation of School System Facilities**

Houston County's population has increased substantially and this trend is expected to continue. In order to accommodate this growth, there are plans to expand the facilities of the school system. Some planned facility construction includes an athletic facility in Warner Robins, an elementary school in Perry, and a middle school in Bonaire. In order to avoid overcrowding

strain on resources, there is little choice but to continue to look for expansion opportunities. Other facilities will undergo renovations that will salvage and increase their utility to the school system. The Watson School Center, Warner Robins Football Stadium, and Rumble Building are all in the process of renovation and repair.

This project would be undertaken primarily through the work of the Houston County Board of Education and would accomplish the **goal of enhancing access to skills training by furthering workforce development activities** and would **improve the employment, income, and living standard of district residents.**

### **Expand, Advertise and Promote Community Events and Cultural Resources**

In each Houston County community, there are events and resources that are undergoing development, improvement and expansion that will draw tourism and help create a lively community. Perry is home to the Georgia National Fairgrounds, which hosts numerous events, competitions, and concerts throughout the year. Warner Robins and Perry conduct festivals and weekly farmers' markets that add to the quality of life for their citizens. The Museum of Aviation and the Elberta Depot Museum are examples of educational opportunities that draw people from surrounding areas. The need for a visitor information center along I-75 has been identified as something that would allow passersby the opportunity to learn more about the opportunities Houston County provides. The community would like to see events and resources like these grow and continue to create a larger economic impact.

This project would accomplish the goal of **improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents** while achieving the objective of **increasing the local tax base as a result of economic development projects.** The Warner Robins Convention and Visitors Bureau, Perry Chamber of Commerce, Robins Regional Chamber, and the Cities of Perry and Warner Robins are seen as the primary project leaders.

### **Vital Jones County Economic Development Projects**

#### **Market Privately/Publicly-Owned Industrial Park/Property**

Jones County has developed 972 acres of land for use as its first publicly-owned industrial property known as the Griswoldville Industrial Park purchased in 2007. In 2011, the County successfully located its first industry, NFI Installation Inc., into the Park. Although this was a great addition, there remains an abundance of space for the County to market to industrial prospects. Another marketing opportunity is found along Highway 22 near Haddock. This property once provided space for a cannery operation. The building itself is not operational but could be demolished and marketed as an industrial property already served by most utilities. A similar opportunity is located in the City of Gray across the street from the Jones County Government Center on Industrial Boulevard. This property was once a mobile home manufacturer but has not been occupied in years. Like the cannery, the site is already served

with utilities and would only require demolition of the existing structure to be ready to market as a privately-owned industrial property.

Property zoned and developed for these areas will serve to advance the goals of ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties*** and ***improving the employment, income, and living standards of district residents***. These activities will also seek to meet the objectives of ***creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district*** and ***attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district***.

Implementation of this activity will be overseen by the Jones County Development Authority, Jones County, Bibb County, and potentially the Macon Water Authority. Programs that could provide potential sources of funding include SPLOST, EDA, USDA, GEFA, and Georgia DCA.

### **Increase the Wastewater Treatment Capacity for Jones County and the City of Gray**

Increasing the capacity of Gray's wastewater system to accommodate current and future needs will allow the City to recruit commercial and industrial prospects. Jones County is also looking to establish sewer lines along Highway 129 as well as replace pumping stations located in the residential neighborhood of River North. The benefits of attracting new commercial and industrial firms include the creation of new jobs, increased investment in the local economy, and revenue for additional amenities by expanding the local tax base. Increasing capacity will also advance the goals of ***expanding district infrastructure capacity*** and ***assisting existing business and industry***. These regional goals will also be achieved through the objective of ***enhancing water, sewer, gas, and rail infrastructure systems***. Upgrading and improving Gray's wastewater system will also have a positive effect on the environment by ensuring wastewater is properly treated before being released into local streams.

Implementation of this activity will be overseen by the City of Gray. Interested partners in this project include the City of Gray, the Development Authority of Jones County, Jones County/Gray Chamber of Commerce, and the region. Programs that could provide potential sources of funding include USDA, Georgia DCA, and GEFA.

### **Jones County/Gray Water System Enhancement**

Over the next five years, Jones County is looking to establish water lines along Highway 129. This will help spur commercial development along this corridor. The County is also looking to establish a Supervisory Control Data Acquisition System to streamline oversight of the water system from one central location.

Increasing the capacity of water systems will achieve the goals of ***expanding district infrastructure capacity*** and ***stimulating economic development in more rural counties***. This will meet the objective of ***enhancing water, sewer, gas, and rail infrastructure systems***. The benefits of attracting new commercial and industrial firms include the creation of new jobs,

increased investment in the local economy, and revenue for additional amenities by expanding the local tax base.

Implementation of this activity will be achieved by Jones County and the City of Gray. Interested partners in this project include the City of Gray, Jones County, the Development Authority of Jones County, Jones County/Gray Chamber of Commerce, and the region. Programs that could provide potential sources of funding include USDA, Georgia DCA, and GEFA.

### **Improve Downtown Business Corridor**

Many strides have been made in the past several years to give Gray and Jones County business corridor a facelift. One recent effort has been the formulation of a downtown Master Plan. One of the major components of this Plan is to move the historic train depot currently situated at the intersection of Highway 129 and Highway 18 and move it to another location in order to better utilize the asset. Over the next several years, local officials plan to work with the Board of Education to potentially utilize its property along Highway 129.

This goal will help the community improve the *income and living standard of district residents* by providing identity to the City/County through downtown development.

### **Vital Monroe County Economic Development Projects**

#### **Expand Water/Wastewater Systems**

Monroe County is in need of expanding and improving upon water and wastewater capabilities to encourage development. While some improvements have been made, there are many sections of the County that either need to have extended service or need to have their infrastructure upgraded. Water and wastewater service availability and adequacy are major considerations in economic development projects.

The community needs to improve its infrastructure in order to *stimulate economic development in a rural county* and *expand district infrastructure capacity*.

Stakeholders include Monroe County, the City of Forsyth, the Development Authority of Monroe County, the Forsyth/Monroe County Chamber of Commerce, the Macon Water Authority, and the region. Economic opportunities that could be utilized as potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, SPLOST, Monroe County, the City of Forsyth, the City of Culloden, Georgia DCA, and GEFA.

#### **Pursue Public Safety Businesses and Industries**

Monroe County is home to the Georgia Public Safety Training Center. At this facility, law enforcement and fire personnel from across the State receive periodic trainings to meet state

and federal mandates. Also newly located in Monroe County at the former Tift College site is the Georgia Department of Corrections headquarters. The presence of these facilities within the community makes Forsyth and Monroe County an attractive area for public safety businesses and industries. Already, ancillary businesses, including restaurants and public safety supply operations, have been developed in the community. These developments have led to Monroe County being the “Public Safety Capital of Georgia” and together should help attract further public safety-related development.

The community is poised to seek and attract jobs in the public safety arena. With new leadership within the community, this project will be overseen by the Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority of Monroe County. One particular location of interest for such businesses is along Indian Springs Road (near the Georgia Public Safety Training Center) where commercial zoning is provided.

Potential stakeholders include the City of Forsyth, Monroe County, the Development Authority of Monroe County, and the Forsyth/Monroe County Chamber of Commerce. Economic opportunities that could be utilized as potential sources of funding include SPLOST, the City of Forsyth, Monroe County, the Development Authority of Monroe County, and the State of Georgia.

### **Address Health Care Needs in the Community**

The Monroe County Hospital administration has indicated that the existing hospital within the community is in need of expanding service offerings in order to remain competitive in its pursuit of patients. At the present time, a number of services are not offered within Monroe County. A feasibility study outlined a conceptual design for a new 25-bed facility with a medical complex attached. The new hospital’s estimated cost is projected to be \$33,500,000 including state-of-the-art equipment and new services. They anticipate doubling the number of the doctors in five years, and many of the Macon specialists have expressed interest in Monroe County. At this time, the Hospital administration is looking at a construction site and financing options.

Potential stakeholders include the Monroe County Hospital, City of Forsyth, Monroe County, and the Forsyth/Monroe County Chamber of Commerce. Economic opportunities that could be utilized as potential sources of funding include Monroe County Hospital, SPLOST, Monroe County, and the City of Forsyth.

### **Market Meridian 75 Logistics Center**

The Meridian 75 Logistics Center, formerly known as the Rumble Road Industrial Park, is located along I-75, south of the City of Forsyth and north of the I-475 interchange. Working with Industrial Developments International (IDI), the Development Authority of Monroe County has been actively marketing this development. The infrastructure is in place to market and attract potential industries, and the County is pursuing Opportunity Zone designation for the Park and

other areas throughout Monroe County. This project will ***stimulate economic development in the more rural counties*** and result in the ***enhancement of the local workforce***.

Potential stakeholders include the City of Forsyth, Monroe County, the Development Authority of Monroe County, and the Forsyth/Monroe County Chamber of Commerce. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Economic opportunities that could be utilized as potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, SPLOST, the City of Forsyth, Monroe County, the Development Authority of Monroe County, and Georgia DCA.

### **Acquire Properties for Industrial Development**

The County recognizes the need to identify additional properties for industrial acquisition for long-term investment.

Potential stakeholders include the City of Forsyth, Monroe County, and the Development Authority of Monroe County. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Economic opportunities that could be utilized as potential sources of funding include SPLOST, the City of Forsyth, Monroe County, the Development Authority of Monroe County, Forsyth/Monroe County Chamber of Commerce, and Georgia DCA.

### **Emerge Community as Wireless Hot Spot**

With technology infrastructure being a driving force for surrounding economic development, the Monroe County community desires to initiate a wireless hot spot initiative that will allow for Internet access from a variety of locations in the community. With the old Tift College campus situated within the City of Forsyth and along the I-75 corridor, the community has determined that this location would be an ideal origination point of this service.

The Wireless Hot Spot emergence along the I-75 corridor would be of great benefit to the community as it seeks to ***expand district infrastructure capacity*** for economic development. With the Georgia Public Safety Training Center and available industrial properties situated at I-75, this technology could be installed throughout the community to provide for maximum benefit to existing and potential businesses and industries. Furthermore, this could be expanded to include each of the schools within the community to provide for a prepared and educated workforce.

Potential stakeholders include the City of Forsyth, Monroe County, the Development Authority of Monroe County, the Forsyth/Monroe County Chamber of Commerce, the Monroe County Board of Education, and Monroe Academy. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Economic opportunities that could be utilized as potential sources of funding include SPLOST, the City of Forsyth, Monroe County, the Development Authority of Monroe County, Forsyth/Monroe County Chamber of Commerce, USDA, and Georgia DCA.

## Vital Peach County Economic Development Projects

### Enhance Water and Wastewater Infrastructure to Support Economic Development

Peach County was recently awarded a 2012 Community Development Block Grant to address wastewater concerns in residential areas near Fort Valley State University (FVSU). A force main will run from FVSU Drive to Ira Hicks Road and tie into Highway 341. This is expected to boost development along these corridors over the next five years. In general, increasing the capacity of the joint wastewater system to accommodate current and future needs will allow the area to recruit commercial and industrial prospects. The benefits of attracting new commercial and industrial firms include the creation of new jobs, increased investment in the local economy, and revenue for additional amenities by expanding the local tax base.

Increasing capacity will also advance the goal of *assisting existing business and industry* by allowing these businesses to expand if needed. The regional goal of *expanding district infrastructure capacity* will also be addressed.

Interested parties include Peach County, the cities of Fort Valley and Byron, the Peach County Industrial Development Authority, the Peach County Water Authority, Georgia DNR, and Georgia EPD. Possible sources of funding include GEFA, USDA, Georgia DCA, as well as additional SPLOST funds.

### Downtown Revitalization

One of the major projects slated for completion by 2013 is the Fort Valley State University corridor improvement initiative. This project consists of developing a comprehensive streetscape and widening of University Drive from Railroad Street to Ira Hicks. Funds were secured from the Federal Highway Administration. The Woolfolk Site, the Railroad Depot, and other downtown structures will greatly benefit from these enhancements. Similarly, downtown Fort Valley plans to implement loft apartments catering to an increasing demand for in-town living. Similar initiatives to complete and start new streetscape projects in Byron dominate the next five-year agenda for the community.

Responsible for implementing these activities will be Peach County, the City of Byron, the City of Fort Valley, the Byron Downtown Development Authority, the Fort Valley Downtown Development Authority, Byron Better Home Town Program, Fort Valley Main Street Program, Fort Valley State University, and private developers. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. These projects will serve to protect and preserve downtown areas while meeting the regional goal of *stimulating economic development in more rural counties* while achieving the objective of *promoting partnerships with existing businesses and industries to ensure their continued success* within the community.

## **Construct a Workforce Development Center in Coordination with Middle Georgia Technical College**

There are currently limited facilities in Peach County that can provide technical training and certification or adult literacy training. SPLOST funds in concert with a pending OneGeorgia grant application is planned to help fill this educational gap. A partnership with Peach County, Peach County Development Authority, and Middle Georgia Tech has resulted in the selection of property (South Peach Industrial Park) and preliminary engineering. It is estimated that the facility will cost \$3.1 million to construct. It is likely that the facility will go to construction in early 2013 and be completed within a year. Once completed, marketing efforts will become the paramount to making the school successful. Also, the facility will improve the marketability of the workforce for the area with a curriculum focused on traditional technical college coursework, CDL training, RV Maintenance, and early childhood development.

The implementation of this activity will be undertaken by Peach County, the Development Authority of Peach County, and Middle Georgia Technical College. A potential Middle Georgia satellite facility located at the Peach County Development Center will serve local and neighboring County students with a place closer to home and support the general goal of **developing significant economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district** through the objective of **enhancing access to skills training by furthering workforce development activities**. The location of a satellite facility in this community may enable more citizens the opportunity at an education. There are collaborative efforts that will be undertaken with the Peach County Board of Education and Fort Valley State University. The job creation as a result of this activity is unknown at this time.

### **Address Substandard Housing**

Most economic development ventures must take place within an environment that contains sufficient, affordable workforce housing within close proximity to the project. In hopes of ensuring adequate workforce housing, the City of Fort Valley established a Mayor's Housing Task Force that has been active for several years. Additionally, grant funding for housing rehabilitation within the City of Fort Valley continues to be sought to address blighted housing conditions. Further, housing conditions along the State University Drive corridor is one component of the Urban Redevelopment Plan that has been produced jointly by the City of Fort Valley and Peach County.

This project will serve to meet the regional goal of **improving the employment, income and living standard of district residents**. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Interested parties and potential funding sources include Peach County, the City of Fort Valley, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and USDA – Rural Development.

## Acquire and Develop Industrial Property

Peach County needs to acquire and develop industrial property. At present, there is limited availability of land in the South Peach Industrial Park, and there are no available sites within the North Peach Industrial Park. In addition, another spec building has been constructed in the South Peach Industrial Park, and when this building is occupied, another building will be constructed.

Implementation of this activity will be overseen by the Development Authority of Peach County and the Byron Development Authority. This project will serve to meet the regional goal of **expanding district infrastructure capacity** through the objective of **attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district**. Potential sources of funding for this project include Peach County, the City of Fort Valley, the City of Byron, the Peach County Development Authority, EDA, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, USDA – Rural Development, and SPLOST.

## North Peach Industrial Park Transportation Access

The North Peach Industrial Park is in need of traffic improvements to the interchange of Interstate 75 and is also in need of a new entrance into the industrial park via White Road, an overpass with no interstate access. The industrial park is in a prime location; however, industrial transporters would have problems accessing the site as it is today. Current road layouts include deficiencies in turning radii. Distances between maneuvers are inadequate to queue up a length of vehicles. The City of Byron desires improved interstate access including a Frontage Road from the S.R. 247-C to S.R. 49, as well as a four-point interchange along White Road. This project has not been identified by the Georgia Department of Transportation for completion in the short-term, but is a priority within the City of Byron nevertheless.

Enhancing these interchanges will help serve the general goal of assisting existing business and industry and helping **stimulate economic development in the more rural counties** by creating an environment for efficient business operations and the movement of goods and services. Having an improved direct connection to I-75 will aid in attracting additional development in the North Peach Industrial Park.

Interested stakeholders include Peach County, the cities of Warner Robins and Byron, and the Peach County Development Authority. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Potential funding sources will most likely originate from the Georgia Department of Transportation and SPLOST.

## **Complete Stormwater Drainage Improvements in Fort Valley, Byron, and Peach County**

Within Peach County, significant runoff problems are occurring within the community. All areas of the community are suffering as more impervious surfaces are being constructed within each of the cities and the unincorporated portions of the County. Rainwater must be diverted in appropriate manners to ensure that flooding does not cripple the Peach County community. Over the next five-year period, the County plans to commission a study to prioritize the most severe stormwater runoff and, subsequently, address those issues. SPLOST funds are expected to be available over the next five years to address these issues. This project supports the regional goal of **expanding district infrastructure capacity** and serves to meet the objective of **enhancing district infrastructure systems**.

Implementation of this activity will be overseen by Peach County, the City of Byron, the City of Fort Valley, and the Georgia Department of Transportation. At this time, job creation opportunities have not been identified with these projects.

### **Capitalize on Newly Revitalized Parks**

Peach County and the Cities of Byron and Fort Valley have great resources found within their publically-owned parks. The strategically located greenspaces, parks, and recreation areas present a wonderful opportunity to market to corporate functions and outside groups. Everett Square Park in downtown Fort Valley is a current park location with walking trails. Also, both North and South Peach park have ample space to host large-scale events for the community and surrounding counties. The community realizes the quality of life benefits that enhancing these park areas brings to Peach County and the cities of Byron and Fort Valley.

The number of jobs created from this activity is unknown at this time. This project will serve to provide recreational opportunities within the community while meeting the goal of **improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents** through the objective of **enhancing the historic-heritage tourism industry** within the County.

## **Vital Pulaski County Economic Development Projects**

### **Redevelopment of Pillowtex Mill**

In 2001, the Pillowtex Mill in downtown Hawkinsville closed its doors and ceased operation. This textile mill, located along the Ocmulgee River, rests on seven acres of land. The City of Hawkinsville has partnered with a development team from North Carolina to undertake a venture to redevelop this facility. With an estimated cost of between \$8 and \$10 million, the development is nearing completion and will boast 26 residential units with varying floor plans. Included in the development is a community market with commercial stalls and a public meeting space with a stage.

Involved in the implementation of this project is the City of Hawkinsville, the Hawkinsville Downtown Development Authority, the Middle Georgia Regional Development Authority, and a private developer. The redevelopment of the Pillowtex Mill accomplishes the regional goal of ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties*** through the objective of ***creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district***. Potential sources of funding include Georgia DCA, City funds, and private investment.

### **Clean-up of Downtown and Abandoned Buildings**

The City of Hawkinsville, through the Chamber of Commerce, has created a “Community Image Committee” with the goal of beautification of the City. This will target not only dilapidated buildings but improve the appearance of the downtown area’s abandoned cars and tires/debris/litter that are unsightly to the streetscape. This group will also have various entities willing to adopt a segment of the community for beautification, as well as offering some educational programs in the schools to teach children about public pride and discouraging littering.

The cleanup of downtown and abandoned buildings accomplishes the regional goal of ***improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents*** through the objective of ***promoting economic development opportunities that strengthen existing economic bases within Middle Georgia communities***. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Potential sources of funding include Georgia DCA, Georgia Land Conservation Fund, City funds, and private investment.

### **Site Preparation for Additional Speculative Industrial Sites**

Currently, the City of Hawkinsville has one spec building located within Technology Park. When this facility becomes occupied, the community will seek to develop additional speculative properties to attract prospective businesses and industries to the community. At that time, Hawkinsville will need assistance with identification of a specific site within the Park, securing funding for the site preparation, the site preparation phase, and marketing the facility. This project will result in the ***stimulation of economic development in the more rural counties***.

Stakeholders include the Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Power, Georgia EMCs, the City of Hawkinsville, Pulaski County, the Middle Georgia Joint Development Authority, and the region. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Economic development partners that could provide potential sources of funding include the Georgia DCA and SPLOST.

### **Development of Additional Property for Economic Development**

At present time, the City of Hawkinsville and Pulaski County have one publicly-owned industrial park within the County. There is sufficient land available for industrial recruitment and

development, but at some point, this land will be exhausted and the community will require additional land for development, creation of jobs, and increasing the tax base. To meet this need, community leaders have identified the development of additional industrial property as a necessity for continuing local economic development efforts. Pulaski County is also interested in pursuing a joint industrial park with adjoining counties.

The implementing entities for this endeavor include United Pulaski, the City of Hawkinsville, neighboring communities, and private developers. The development of additional industrial property, with satisfactory infrastructure to support such development, enhances the general goals of ***diversifying local economic bases*** and ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties***. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Potential sources of funding include Pulaski County, the City of Hawkinsville, the United Pulaski Development Authority, the Hawkinsville/Pulaski County Development Authority, EDA, USDA, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, GEFA, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, neighboring counties, and private developers.

### **Expansion and Improvement of Water and Wastewater System**

There is a need to expand and improve upon existing water and wastewater facilities and infrastructure. There is significant infiltration into the existing system, which presents health and safety issues. Further, reliable water supply wastewater service coupled with consistent water pressure are critical issues in regards to economic development. There has been considerable improvement within the Technology Park, but these improvements are necessary throughout the community.

Increasing the capacity of the water and wastewater systems to accommodate current and future needs will allow the area to recruit commercial and industrial prospects. The benefits of attracting new commercial and industrial firms include the creation of new jobs, increased investment in the local economy, and providing revenue for additional amenities by expanding the local tax base. Increasing capacity will also advance the goal of ***assisting existing business and industry*** by allowing these businesses to expand if needed. The regional goal of ***expanding district infrastructure capacity*** will also be addressed.

Interested parties include Pulaski County, the City of Hawkinsville, the Pulaski County Development Authority, the Middle Georgia Regional Development Authority, Georgia DNR, and Georgia EPD. Possible sources of funding include GEFA, USDA, Georgia DCA, as well as local funds.

### **Expansion of Network of Fire Stations**

Adequate public safety infrastructure is necessary in attracting commercial and industrial development to a community. Fire protection, in particular, represents a critical consideration for many types of development. Access and appropriateness of fire protection service can have significant impact on a business's insurance costs. In addition, certain types of production or

the use/storage of certain production materials can necessitate a specific level of fire protection.

The entities responsible for implementing this activity are the City of Hawkinsville, Pulaski County, and the Pulaski County Fire Department. Further development of fire protection services and infrastructure will address the regional goal of ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties***. Programs and organizations that could provide potential sources of funding include USDA, Georgia DCA, FEMA, and GEMA.

## **Vital Putnam County Economic Development Projects**

### **Access Source Water and Create Distribution System**

Baldwin and Putnam Counties have joined efforts for the Sinclair Water Authority to enhance the availability of water throughout the two counties. As a local vital project, Putnam County identified the internal distribution system that is necessary to transport water from the treatment facility to the end user. The ultimate goal of Putnam County is to run the water system from the County line to the City limits, tie into the City system, and serve industrial and commercial interests in the City as well as being able to serve expansion efforts in the unincorporated area through multiple-phased construction of this infrastructure.

The entities responsible for implementing this activity are the Eatonton-Putnam Water Authority and the Sinclair Water Authority. A water system in southern Putnam County will address the regional goals of ***expanding district infrastructure capacity*** and ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties***. These goals will further the objectives of ***enhancing local infrastructure systems*** and ***increasing the tax base as a result of economic development programs***. Furthermore, this system will tie into the City of Eatonton's water system and ultimately be extended to serve the northern portion of the county to enable expansion of commercial, residential, and industrial development.

The benefits of this activity are numerous – economic development will foster job creation and the further expansion of the tax base. Additional benefits transcend economic development and address health issues and fire safety concerns. Interested players involve the cities of Milledgeville and Eatonton, Baldwin and Putnam Counties, the Lake Sinclair Water Authority, and the region. Potential economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include USDA, Georgia DCA, EDA, and GEFA.

### **Expand Infrastructure to Meet the Needs of Existing or Potential Businesses and Industries**

In 2008 Putnam County and the City of Eatonton developed a joint wastewater treatment facility with a capacity of 6 million gallons. This new facility addresses the community's former challenges concerning wastewater treatment service, however, other infrastructure networks,

most notably communications, natural gas, and roadways, must be expanded in order to attract development.

Cellular service “dead zones” exist throughout the County and there is a lack of highspeed internet availability as well. These issues present challenges in attracting development and discussions are underway with private service providers to remedy these service shortfalls. There are plans to extend public natural gas utility services the north end of the County at a cost of \$1.65 million, serving residents and businesses. There are also various roadways in the County that require paving.

Implementation of this activity is the responsibility of the City of Eatonton and the Sinclair Water Authority. The rehabilitation and replacement of essential water and wastewater infrastructure supports the general goals of **expanding district infrastructure capacity** and **stimulating economic development activities in more rural counties**. These goals will accomplish the objectives of **enhancing the local infrastructure system** and **increasing the local tax base as a result of economic development projects**. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Economic development partners that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, Georgia DCA, and GEFA.

### **Complete Necessary Downtown Improvements**

Putnam County is in need of improvements to the downtown area to ensure that it remains a viable economic center of the community. As growth in Putnam County continues, it is essential that this historic economic center of the community remains. In order to accomplish this task, the community is and will be undertaking several projects in order to maximize the potential for downtown Eatonton. Among these projects are a nearly \$1 million streetscape project and an additional parking lot. These activities will both **assist existing business and industry** and **seek to stimulate economic development in the more rural counties**. These goals will be achieved through meeting the objectives of **promoting partnerships with existing businesses and industries to ensure their continued success within the community** and **promoting economic development opportunities that strengthen existing economic bases within Middle Georgia communities**.

Implementation of this activity is the responsibility of the Eatonton-Putnam County Development Authority, the Eatonton Better Hometown Program, and the private sector. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Project partners and potential sources of funding include Putnam County, City of Eatonton, Eatonton-Putnam County Development Authority, the Eatonton-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce, Georgia DOT, Georgia DCA, and private sector funds.

## **Enhance Tourism Efforts in Northern Part of County**

Putnam County intends to capitalize on water and sewer infrastructure expansions and allow for enhanced tourism to the community. Being the hometown of Joel Chandler Harris and Alice Walker, Putnam County can take advantage of tourist attractions afforded by these two famous Georgians, as well as Lake Sinclair and Lake Oconee. “Rock Hawk”, a long-existing but lesser known Native American heritage site, is mostly undeveloped but should be harnessed as an important community asset.

Implementation of this activity is the responsibility of the Eatonton-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce, the Eatonton Better Hometown Program, and private enterprise. This will result in achieving the goal of ***stimulating economic development in more rural counties*** through the objective of ***enhancing the historic-heritage tourism industry***. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Potential sources of funding include Putnam County, City of Eatonton, Eatonton/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce, Georgia DCA, and private sources.

## **Acquire Additional Acreage for Economic Development**

Including the recently developed 140 Technology Park, the community maintains 325 acres of marketable land. However, plans have been developed to acquire additional marketable land to be used in economic development attraction. These efforts will focus mainly on the northern portion of the County, leveraging the newly expanded Highway 441 and water improvements as existing assets. There also is a unique opportunity available to explore possible redevelopment initiatives associated with the abandoned, in-town prison facility.

The Eatonton-Putnam County Development Authority will be the entity responsible for project implementation. In order to accomplish the goal of ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties***, the community must meet the objectives of ***creating jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district*** and ***attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district***. Project partners include Putnam County, the City of Eatonton, and the Putnam County Development Authority. Potential sources of funding include Putnam County, the City of Eatonton, the Putnam County Development Authority, EDA, USDA, the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and SPLOST.

## **Improve Availability of Workforce Housing**

Although Putnam County has experienced growth in the number of housing units, there is a need for affordable starter homes, affordable retirement housing, and housing alternatives for low-to-moderate income individuals. In particular, the community requires housing options for young professionals like teachers. The clearing of Aluminum Hill may present opportunities for in-town housing development and the recently started GICH initiative should help to improve available housing stock.

The entities responsible for implementing this activity include the City of Eatonton, Putnam County, and the private sector. This activity meets the CEDS objective of ***improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents***. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Project partners and potential sources of funding include Putnam County, City of Eatonton, GICH, local lending institutions, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, USDA – Rural Development, and private funds.

### **Expand the CGTC Satellite Facility in Putnam County**

The Central Georgia Technical College has constructed a career development training satellite facility to provide workforce training in Putnam County. This facility has been completed and is operating, providing dual enrollment opportunities for high school students in the area. However, since the facility has been opened, college administrators have realized the need for additional space at the facility for more course offerings. Expansion on the current site is possible for the future. A facility adjacent to the college could be determined to be feasible to accommodate programming that is needed to fulfill the college's mission within the Eatonton/Putnam County community.

The expansion of the courses offered at this satellite campus of the Central Georgia Technical College in Putnam County supports the general goal of ***improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents***. This goal achieves the objective of ***enhancing access to skill training by furthering workforce development activities***. A ready and skilled workforce makes the community more attractive for industrial and commercial recruitment. Other associated benefits include shoring up basic educational skills in a county that is well below the state average in residents with advanced degrees. Additionally, as technology evolves and creates more specialized machinery, additional skills are needed to remain competitive and employed.

Entities responsible for implementing this project are the Eatonton-Putnam Development Authority and Central Georgia Technical College. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Project partners and potential sources of funding included Putnam County, City of Eatonton, Eatonton/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce, Central Georgia Technical College, Georgia Department of Education, the local Board of Education, as well as private enterprise.

### **Make Quality of Life Improvements**

Putnam County hopes to encourage economic development and economic opportunities by enhancing the quality of life within the community. Putnam County and the City of Eatonton realize that quality of life issues impact those that currently live within the community as well. The Plaza Arts Center and soon-to-be-developed multi-use trail off Madison Highway are recent developments that show the communities dedication and support of quality of life endeavors.

Activities identified by the community include additional playground, greenspace and picnic areas for persons of all ages. For younger individuals, or those young at heart, improvements to existing ball fields are desirable. Additionally, a harness track is present within the community, which has the potential to be expanded to enhance the facility and its usefulness. Furthermore, there is a privately-owned facility that conducts barrel racing qualifying events that can be used to further tourism efforts within the community.

Entities responsible for implementing these activities include Putnam County, the City of Eatonton, the Eatonton Early Childhood Center, and the State of Georgia. By undertaking quality of life improvements, the community hopes of **improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents**, which may result in the creation of additional jobs and interest in the community. The achievement of these goals will be through the objectives of enhancing the historic-heritage tourism industry and promoting economic development opportunities that strengthen existing economic bases within Middle Georgia communities. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Project partners and potential sources of funding include Putnam County, City of Eatonton, Eatonton/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce, Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Land & Water Conservation Fund, Georgia DCA – Quality Growth Grant, the Georgia General Assembly – Local Assistance Grant, and private resources.

### **Promote Support Network for Retirees**

Putnam County is rapidly becoming a haven for retirees within the Middle Georgia community. The influx of retirees from other portions of the State and nation have created a shift in the need for a support network for the retirees locating in this area. The City of Eatonton and Putnam County realize that the community will ultimately change in order to meet the demands by this segment of the community. In order to promote a support network for retirees, the community will accomplish the objective of **stimulating economic development in the more rural counties** through the increase of retail and support services within the community. This will be accomplished through promoting economic development opportunities that strengthen existing economic bases within Middle Georgia communities.

The implementing agencies associated with this project are Putnam County and private enterprise. Project partners and potential sources of funding include Putnam County, City of Eatonton, Eatonton/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce, local lending institutions, and private enterprise.

### **Promote Alternative Transportation Measures to Enhance Tourism**

Putnam County is in the process of developing and promoting alternative transportation measures to enhance tourist activities within the community. First, a bike trail from Reynolds Plantation located on the Greene County side of Lake Oconee into the City of Eatonton is in progress. The community is still working with the Bike Ride Across Georgia. One obstacle is

that the community does not have adequate accommodations for significant numbers of overnight travelers.

By utilizing these efforts by ***developing significant economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district*** and ***stimulating economic development in more rural counties***, the community is seeking to create additional jobs and interest in the community. Putnam County is working to attract tourism-related projects that will support and enhance the overall community. Project partners and potential sources of funding include Putnam County, City of Eatonton, Eatonton/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce, Georgia DOT, Georgia DCA, and the.

### **Enhance Viability of Dairy Industry in Putnam County**

Putnam County is the self-proclaimed Dairy Capital of the country due to the historical economic impact of the dairy industry on the community. Putnam County has a long-standing history of dairy farming that formed the backbone of the community's economic well-being for many years. In recent years, as the farming industry has taken substantial financial losses, Putnam County has not been spared from the economic trials associated with farming. Family farms have been going out-of-business as land prices discourage continued farming. Selling of the farms to developers produce a higher return on investment.

Implementing entities for this activity include farmers, cooperative extension agents, and the community as a whole. As a result, the community is in need of ***improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents*** by achieving the objective of ***promoting economic development opportunities that strengthen existing economic bases within communities***. The number of jobs associated with this activity is unknown at this time. Project partners and potential sources of funding include Putnam County, City of Eatonton, Eatonton/Putnam County Chamber of Commerce, as well as existing industry.

### **Vital Twiggs County Economic Development Projects**

#### **Further Develop Publicly-Owned Industrial Park(s)**

Twiggs County has recently developed a publicly-owned industrial park to attract industry to this rural county whose tax base continues to erode due to the deterioration of the kaolin industry. Currently, Academy Sports and Outdoors has located a distribution warehouse within the park, and the County is actively recruiting additional tenants. A publicly-owned industrial park in Twiggs County helps address the regional goal of stimulating economic development in the more rural counties. The benefits of attracting new industry include the creation of jobs and additional capital investment acting to expand the local tax base to produce a positive cycle of change. The existence of such a park will serve to enhance the industrial base in the face of its major economic engine's (kaolin) decline. An industrial park at this site enhances the county's four interchange accesses to Interstate 16, which to date has experienced very limited

development due to lack of infrastructure. Also a priority for the County is the implementation of natural gas infrastructure, as a pipeline is in close proximity to the park but does not connect to it.

Twiggs County is responsible for implementing this economic development activity. All activities mentioned above seek to meet the goal of *expanding district infrastructure capacity* through the objectives of *stimulating economic development in the more rural counties*, *enhancing local infrastructure systems*, and *increasing the local tax base as a result of economic development projects*. Economic development partners that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, Georgia DCA, GEFA, and local funds.

### **Expand County Water System**

Twiggs County has implemented Phase I of a county water treatment and distribution system to serve economic development interests as well as County residents. The County formerly lacked the ability to provide infrastructure outside of the City of Jeffersonville. One of the first steps taken was to identify those areas of the County where sufficient densities exist to make the project economically feasible. Twiggs County will initially run water lines to portions of the County where population densities are sufficient to fund and operate a water system, as well as to the industrial park. Twiggs County was awarded a grant/loan from USDA to implement the first phase of its water system. A water tower was constructed and lines installed to service the I-16 Industrial Park and the immediate area around the park. Phase II is the next step and will involve the installation of water lines in the Dry Branch community, located in north Twiggs County.

Twiggs County is the entity responsible for implementing this activity. A county water system in Twiggs County addresses the regional goals of *expanding district infrastructure capacity* through the objective of *enhancing local infrastructure systems* by making basic infrastructure available to capture economic activity. This effort will also support another general goal of expanding region infrastructure. Additional benefits transcend economic development and address health issues and fire safety concerns. Interested players involve the City of Jeffersonville, Twiggs County, and the region. Economic development partners that could provide potential sources of funding include USDA, Georgia DCA, and the GEFA.

### **Acquisition of Additional Industrial Property**

Twiggs County is considering future purchase of additional acreage in other portions of the County for industrial development. The potential exists for an additional 100-200 acres to be acquired for development by Twiggs County within the planning period; however, it is not guaranteed that Twiggs County will pursue this alternative. The potential exists for coordination with other jurisdictions for acquiring additional industrial property outside of the planning period for the present CEDS.

Twiggs County is the entity responsible for implementing this activity. Additional industrial property in Twiggs County would address the regional goals of **expanding district infrastructure capacity** through the objective of **attracting higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district** by making basic infrastructure available to capture economic activity. This effort will also support another general goal of expanding region infrastructure. Additional benefits transcend economic development and address health issues and fire safety concerns. Interested players involve the City of Jeffersonville, Twiggs County, and the region. Economic development partners that could provide potential sources of funding include USDA, Georgia DCA, and the GEFA.

### **Continue Improvement and Expansion of City of Jeffersonville’s Water and Wastewater Infrastructure**

While Twiggs County begins implementing a county-wide water system, the City of Jeffersonville remains the only service provider of the basic economic development necessities in the County for areas outside of the industrial park, water and wastewater. Using the City’s existing system to spur economic growth near the city limits addresses the general goal of **stimulating economic development in the more rural counties**. In addition, enhancing service mechanisms also assists existing business and industry as well. Additional benefits of an improved water and wastewater system boost quality of life aspects of the community. The County and City of Jeffersonville would like to see connectivity between the two entity’s wastewater systems in efforts to provide back-up in case of emergencies, to not duplicate services and to save money. The City of Jeffersonville has received partial funding to enhance its current systems and run infrastructure to the industrial park identified above. Interested players involve the City of Jeffersonville, Twiggs County, USDA, and the region. Economic programs that could provide potential sources of funding include Georgia DCA and GEFA.

### **Quality of Life Enhancements**

Twiggs County continues to implement new strategies focused at enhancing the quality of life for its residents. These efforts address the region-wide goal of **improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents**. Improving the quality of life not only benefits current residents, but also aids in the recruitment of industry and new jobs to Twiggs County. Current efforts include a streetscape project in downtown Jeffersonville, the rebuilding of the Twiggs County library after it was destroyed by a fire, and the development of a blueway trail along the Ocmulgee River. Future goals include improvements to City and County parks, creating annual festivals, attracting new housing development, and reinvestment in downtown Jeffersonville. The City of Jeffersonville has received a grant from DOT through its Transportation Enhancement program to aid in funding the streetscape project. The County, along with Twiggs County Family Connections, is currently partnering with Lowe’s to make improvements to a park in the City of Jeffersonville. Additional partners and potential funding sources to assist with Twiggs’ quality of life enhancements include USDA, Georgia DCA, the University of Georgia, Georgia DNR, the Twiggs County Chamber of Commerce, and the Jeffersonville Downtown Development Authority.

## **Downtown Development**

The City of Jeffersonville, along with its Downtown Development Authority, is in the process of revitalizing downtown Jeffersonville. One of the first steps in doing so is through a streetscape project. The project is being partially funded through DOT's Transportation Enhancement program as a high priority project. Sidewalks will be installed for those wishing to walk downtown, as well as the installation of trees to provide shade and to serve as a traffic-calming measure. Downtown Jeffersonville contains a number of vacant, historic storefronts that could be utilized for new, mixed use projects with retail on the first floor and loft apartments on the second. Reinvesting in downtown will attract new businesses, and in return, new jobs for Twiggs County while helping to reach the overall economic development goals for Middle Georgia including ***improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents*** and ***stimulating economic development in more rural counties***. Potential funding sources and partners include USDA, Georgia DCA, Georgia DNR, and the Jeffersonville Downtown Development Authority.

## **Further Workforce Development Activities**

Twiggs County is a designated Work Ready Community. This certification provides Twiggs County an edge when recruiting because it allows businesses and industries to know there is a skilled workforce within the community and that Twiggs is actively pursuing increased graduation rates in high school and in post-secondary education. Twiggs County wishes to build upon this designation and to further workforce development activities within the community. This objective helps the Middle Georgia Region achieve its goals of ***developing significant economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district***, as well as ***improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents***. A future effort in furthering workforce development in Twiggs includes a greater partnership with local technical colleges, such as Central Georgia Tech, to help residents learn the necessary skills needed to perform on the job and to assist in hosting local job fairs. Additionally, the Twiggs County Board of Education would like to partner with area colleges to further allow high school students to take college classes for course credit and to offer nightly GED courses for those non-traditional students wishing to get their high school education. Potential partnerships include the Twiggs County Board of Education, Central Georgia Technical College, other colleges and universities in the area, Georgia DCA, Georgia Governor's Office of Workforce Development, Twiggs County Family Connections, and the Development Authority of Twiggs County and the City of Jeffersonville.

## **Business Recruitment and Retention**

The Development Authority of Twiggs County and the City of Jeffersonville is responsible for business recruitment and retention within the County. The Development Authority actively recruits and seeks out new businesses and industries that would benefit Twiggs County. With the recent development of a critically located industrial park, Twiggs County wishes to add additional companies to this location and, therefore, bring more jobs to the Middle Georgia

Region. It is the desire of the County to not only attract large businesses, but help to grow and foster small businesses as well, particularly at interchanges along I-16 and in downtown Jeffersonville. The Bureau of Business Research and Economic Development conducted a study in 2004 to help Twiggs County understand which type of industries would best serve the County. The Development Authority has plans to update this study as it is now outdated, and since its development, the Industrial Park has been created.

The Development Authority understands the importance of not only attracting new businesses, but in retaining the ones that have already chosen to locate within Twiggs County. The Development Authority wishes to partner with local businesses and undertake activities that would allow the County to better support the businesses needs. In recruiting new businesses and retaining current ones, Twiggs County will be aiding in the Middle Georgia Region's goal to ***develop significant economic opportunities and job creation affecting a large part of the district, assist existing businesses and industries, and to stimulate economic development in more rural counties.*** Partners and potential funding opportunities will be sought from the Georgia DCA, USDA, Development Authority of Twiggs County and the City of Jeffersonville, and the Jeffersonville Downtown Development Authority.

### **Vital Wilkinson County Economic Development Projects**

#### **Provide Public Water, Wastewater, Natural Gas, and Road Infrastructure to Existing and Potential Industries**

At present, Wilkinson County does not have water and sewer infrastructure on a county-wide basis. Each of the seven cities provide water to their municipalities and several of the service areas extend into the unincorporated areas of the County. This limits the availability of land for industrial development where water and sewer are provided. Wilkinson County has a strong railroad network, state highway network, and adequate natural gas services.

One of the major strides in the past few years has been the City of McIntyre's development of a wastewater system. Over the next five years, the City will seek funds to run lines to Highway 441 to support commercial and industrial prospects.

These activities achieve the overall goal of ***expanding district infrastructure capacity and stimulating economic development in the more rural counties.*** The number of jobs created by this activity is unknown at this time. The objectives to be met are to ***promote economic development that reduces dependence upon single industries within communities, create jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district, and attract higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district.*** Implementation of this activity will be achieved by the cities of Allentown, Danville, Gordon, Irwinton, Ivey, McIntyre, and Toombsboro; Wilkinson County; Atlanta Gas Light; the City of Dublin Gas; and the Georgia Department of Transportation. Stakeholders include Wilkinson County; the cities of McIntyre, Irwinton, and Toombsboro; the Wilkinson County Development Authority; and the region. Economic partners that could provide potential sources of funding include EDA, USDA, Georgia DCA, and GEFA.

## Market Publically-Owned Industrial Sites

Recently the County purchased land along GA Highway 243 and Gordon-McIntyre Road. Referred to as the Defore Site, this property is the future location of the Development Authority's speculative building. Within the next year, the County hopes to break ground on this facility and begin marketing efforts statewide shortly thereafter. In addition, the County has plans, to market the site locations of Avery, Beasley, Hartford South Industrial Park, and Pine Street.

The project will help advance the general goal of ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties*** and ***diversifying the local economic bases***. These goals will be met through the fulfillment of the objectives to create jobs suitable for the Middle Georgia district, attract higher-paying jobs within the Middle Georgia district, and promote economic development that reduces dependence upon single industries within communities.

Implementation activities will be coordinated by the Wilkinson County Development Authority and the Gordon Development Authority. The number of jobs created by this activity is unknown at this time. Project partners and sources of funding could include Wilkinson County; the cities of Allentown, Danville, Gordon, Irwinton, Ivey, McIntyre, and Toombsboro; the Wilkinson County Development Authority; the Gordon Development Authority; EDA; Georgia DOT; Georgia DCA; and the Middle Georgia district.

## Market Wilkinson County

In 2011, the Wilkinson County Development Authority and Chamber of Commerce signed a deal with Cal Duke to produce an all-encompassing magazine to promote and market Wilkinson County. The annual publication will now be produced in house by Development Authority staff and will serve as a product guide for visitors, prospects, chamber members, and new citizens. The publication will also be marketed to groups likely interested in the Highway 112 Scenic Byway, such as eco tourist, cyclists, and preservationists. Once completed, Balls Ferry State Park will also provide a wonderful resource to market to eco tourists and related groups looking for recreational opportunities in the region and state.

Additionally, Wilkinson County has two development authorities within its geographic boundaries – the Wilkinson County Development Authority and the Gordon Development Authority. These entities have worked to promote the community to prospective industries, but have worked without a concerted marketing plan. In concert, these entities plan to work together to devise a plan and concerted effort. The project meets the general goal of ***stimulating economic development in the more rural counties*** as well the objectives of ***improving heritage tourism opportunities*** and ***promoting economic development opportunities that strengthen existing economic bases within Middle Georgia communities***. Implementation will be coordinated by the Wilkinson County Chamber of Commerce. Project

partners and sources of funding include the Chamber of Commerce; Georgia DCA; and the Middle Georgia region, Wilkinson County, and the seven cities found therein.

### **Make Quality of Life Improvements in the Community**

Wilkinson County has identified several opportunities to improve “quality of life” factors for the community. First, improving the overall health and well being of the community is a priority. Currently, the County ranks 148 of 159 in overall health according *County Health Rankings*. *To this end, the County wishes to initiate programs that improve the overall health, safety and welfare of its residents--the idea being that a healthier community translates into a more competitive workforce and a higher standard of living. Another goal identified by local stakeholders is to improve the literacy rate in the County. Over the next five years, the community plans to devise a strategy to address this goal.*

The regional goal to improve community health meets the overarching goal of **improving the employment, income, and living standard of district residents**. Implementation of these activities will be the responsibility of Wilkinson County and the Georgia Department of Transportation. Interested partners and implementing agencies in this project include Wilkinson County, Georgia Department of Health, Area Agency on Aging, Wilkinson County Board of Education, and the Wilkinson County Health Department.

### **CEDS PLAN OF ACTION**

#### **Implementation of CEDS**

Parties responsible for implementation of CEDS activities were identified with each individual activity. The Middle Georgia Regional Commission will coordinate activities and support and assist the responsible parties. Staff of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission will utilize EDA Planning Grant funds to assist and guide the respective communities within the district toward implementation of the CEDS activities described herein.

In addition, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission will review progress on the activities with the CEDS Strategy Committee. The goal of the CEDS Strategy Committee in this process is to monitor progress on how the CEDS activities:

- Promote economic development and opportunity;
- Foster effective transportation access;
- Enhance and protect the environment;
- Maximize effective development and use of the workforce consistent with any applicable State or local workforce investment strategy;
- Promote the use of technology in economic development, including access to high-speed telecommunications;
- Balance resources through sound management of physical development; and
- Obtain and utilize adequate funds and other resources.

### **Integration of CEDS with State of Georgia Economic Development Goals**

In order to ensure compliance with all CEDS regulations, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission has worked with the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) to ensure that the components identified within the CEDS are consistent and not in conflict with economic priorities pursued by the State of Georgia. The Georgia Department of Economic Development has issued a letter to the Middle Georgia Regional Commission indicating the goals from the Department of Economic Development. In addition, each of the eleven counties have provided concurrence with this CEDS document in lieu of separate documents. It has been determined by Middle Georgia Regional Commission staff, CEDS Committee and the Board of Directors that this 2012-2017 CEDS is consistent with the State of Georgia's economic priorities.

### **Disaster Preparedness**

The entire Middle Georgia district is covered by Emergency Operations Plans as well as Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans. These important documents outlined critical infrastructure systems, and identify potential hazards. In addition, regular training activities are conducted to ensure that emergency personnel are skilled in response that would allow a community or region to recovery quickly in the event of a disaster.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

### **Documentation of Performance Measures for Evaluation**

Performance measures used to evaluate the implementation of the CEDS within the district consists of the following:

- Number of jobs created after implementation of the CEDS;
- Number and types of investments undertaken in the region;
- Number of jobs retained in the region;
- Amount of private sector investment in the region after implementation of the CEDS; and
- Changes in the economic environment of the region.

Each year during the annual update to the CEDS, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission will estimate activity to be measured during the coming year based upon information provided by the CEDS committee, knowledge of projects that are likely to occur during the coming performance period, and contact with economic development officials within the district.

The performance measures will be evaluated against statistics compiled at CEDS committee meetings the following year and other data obtained through the course of the performance period (one year). A table to measure the successfulness of the district in achieving the goals set forth in the CEDS implementation activities has been generated for use by Middle Georgia Regional Commission staff in determining the overall effectiveness of the previous year's economic development activities.

The performance measure tables will be generated with each annual update of the CEDS. The tables to be used are attached to this document in indicating the performance measures to be used by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission. Additional performance measures may be added, if deemed appropriate.