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James A. Epps, Jr., Chairman

Laura M. Mathis, Executive Director

November 26, 2024

Mr. Jonathan Corso
Economic Development Administration
401 West Peachtree Street, NW
Suite 1820
Atlanta, GA 30308-3510

Dear Mr. Corso:

The Middle Georgia Regional Commission Council adopted the 2024 Annual Update to the 2022-2027 CEDS for the Middle Georgia Economic Development District. The adoption resolution is included at the end of the attached document, and the complete 2024 Annual Update can be viewed on our website at the following page: <https://middlegeorgiarc.org/ceds>.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (478) 751-6160.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Laura M. Mathis'.

Laura M. Mathis
Executive Director

Attachment



Prepared for: U. S. Economic Development Administration

Living
+
Innovating
+
Thriving

Middle Georgia

CEDS

2024 Annual Report



Report Overview

The 2022-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Middle Georgia Economic Development District was approved in September 2022, setting forth a new path for economic and community development across the 11-county region. While the previous years had been marked by turmoil amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the planning process for the 2022 CEDS was focused on a more optimistic future of growth opportunities that would only be held back by the region's infrastructure, in both its built environment as well as human capital.

Statewide, the past year has seen major growth as major manufacturers are expanding and calling Georgia their home. Middle Georgia is at a crossroads, ready for its turn in the spotlight, which may happen quite soon if the statewide economic growth trends persist. However, the challenges noted from the 2022-2027 CEDS remain present, requiring continued preparation from regional leaders and economic developers. As the staffing agency for the EDD, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC) is ready to continue its partnership with the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to promote this economic growth in the region.

From the progress of 2024 and looking ahead to 2025, Middle Georgia remains committed to the economic and community development goals and objectives laid out in the 2022-2027 CEDS to provide effective guidance for the region and the activities of MGRC. As such, no changes are proposed to the goals. These are recapped from the 2022-2027 CEDS in the sections below. The vision statement below has been slightly modified in the context of the 2024 Middle Georgia Regional Plan which was adopted earlier this year. However, the same themes of the previous vision statement remain unchanged.

Vision Statement

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

Goals

Community Development and Blight

GOAL: Middle Georgia is widely recognized as a community that is clean, beautiful, and safe. People want to live in Middle Georgia and young people choose to stay in Middle Georgia or return to Middle Georgia for the region's quality of life.

Education, Employment, and Workforce Development

GOAL: Middle Georgia becomes a sought-after community in which to live due to the quality of educational opportunities throughout the region. Prospective workers are successful in obtaining the specialized skills needed in the workplace, and employers can maintain robust employment in quality jobs.

Emerging Industries and Economic Diversification

GOAL: The economy of Middle Georgia continues to become more diverse as new industries are attracted to growing sectors of the economy. As a result, more Middle Georgians have high-quality jobs and employment prospects.

Natural Resources, Cultural Resources, and Tourism

GOAL: The region is recognized throughout the state and nation for the uniqueness of its natural and cultural resources. As a result, Middle Georgia becomes a greater draw for tourists who recognize the uniqueness of the region.

Regionalism

GOAL: Middle Georgia leaders share a “Center-Georgia United” mindset that prioritizes strong regional collaboration in support of a diversified regional economy.

Transportation

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

Utility Services

GOAL: All Middle Georgians have access to quality and affordable utility services to ensure a basic quality standard of living regardless of one’s neighborhood or zip code.



Photo 1: MGRC in the Region at Robins Air Force Base

Action Plan Updates

The action plan of the 2022-2027 CEDS highlighted several projects to undertake at both regional and local levels. The Middle Georgia Regional Commission and member governments have focused on many of these projects over the past year. A summary of ongoing activities is provided below:

Regional Activities

Connecting a Skilled Workforce with Quality Jobs

- » Develop fab labs, makerspaces, and small business incubators.
- » Support further growth and enhancement of college and career academies.
- » Identify new apprenticeship, internship, co-op, and work-study opportunities.
- » Support transitioning veterans and the activities of the VECTR Center.
- » Retain talented workers and college graduates in Middle Georgia.
- » Teach soft skills to students and prospective employees.
- » Train for growing career opportunities.
- » Recruit a portfolio of sustainable and high-paying jobs to the region.
- » Equip workers with tools to effectively manage their financial resources.
- » Assist employers with navigating the challenges of new work habits that have developed following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » Grow the overall size of the regional workforce.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025 led by the Middle Georgia Consortium. Staffing remains a challenge for many businesses, including local governments. MGRC continues to support its cities and counties with these efforts. Meanwhile, school systems in the region are continuing to invest in career pathways that are most closely tied to future job opportunities within the region. In Middle Georgia, many of these occupations are in the medical field.

Investing in Infrastructure

- » Expand broadband internet access.
- » Provide adequate water, sewer, electrical, and natural gas capacity for industry.
- » Provide reliable, quality community utility services, especially water and sewer services.
- » Ensure adequate solid waste disposal and recycling capacity.
- » Increase transportation options and connectivity for residents and visitors.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Significant movement has continued around broadband expansion, aided by the work of many electric membership cooperatives (EMCs). With funding soon to be deployed through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, Middle Georgia can expect to see many of the 5,888 unserved or underserved sites addressed in the coming years. MGRC also continues to work extensively on infrastructure needs with cities and counties which can set the region up for greater success related to economic development. Furthermore, the infrastructure improvements also support a higher quality of life. Communities are actively implementing major projects funded by the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority, Community Development Block Grant program, and by state and local funding from the American Rescue Plan Act.

Advancing Our Communities

- » Provide quality, affordable housing for all segments of the population.
- » Remediate blight and invest in rebuilding deteriorating neighborhoods.
- » Redevelop downtown areas to promote vibrant communities.
- » Clean up and redevelop brownfield sites and greyfield areas.
- » Improve community entrances and gateways.
- » Actively market and promote the quality of life in Middle Georgia.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Housing is the greatest community development challenge across the region with lack of supply and affordability remaining major issues. MGRC has supported applications to the Rural Workforce Housing Initiative and is continuing to support communities that plan for housing development and rehabilitation. Crawford County will begin this strategic planning process in FFY 2025. MGRC also received a regional grant application for brownfield assessments with specific target areas in Macon-Bibb County and Baldwin County. These projects will progress over the next twelve months.

Sustaining Robins Air Force Base and the Defense Industry

- » Implement study recommendations from the 2022 Middle Georgia – Robins Air Force Base Sustainability Plan.
- » Continue to address encroachment of non-compatible uses with Robins Air Force Base.
- » Continue work with Georgia Power to enhance the installation's energy resilience through battery storage co-located with the Robins Solar Project.
- » Support investment in STEM education with an eye toward Robins Air Force Base as a center of excellence in software engineering for the Department of Defense.
- » Preserve attainment of regional air quality standards for ozone and PM2.5.
- » Address weaknesses identified in the Middle Georgia Readiness Analysis.
- » Support the mission and activities of 21st Century Partnership.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. MGRC staff are closely monitoring potential impacts from the new air quality standards announced for PM2.5. MGRC is also partnering with Robins AFB on the use of federal REPI (Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration) funding to mitigate land use and environmental risks to the installation as identified in the 2022 Sustainability Plan. Furthermore, the base and community have begun looking at climate risks to the installation and are planning projects to mitigate these impacts. Finally, in partnership with the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority, Georgia Power is working to add battery energy storage capacity to the existing facility north of Robins Air Force Base. That will add greater resilience and sustainability for the base and is reflected by a new action item highlighted above.

Implementing the Middle Georgia Innovation Project

- » Nourish the innovation culture of Middle Georgia by leveraging regional strengths.
- » Encourage the adoption of Smart City technologies by local governments and Industry 4.0 technologies more broadly in the business community.
- » Develop innovation hub facilities to facilitate connections across the workforce.
- » Implement mobile learning approaches to STEM careers, particularly for service in underserved communities.
- » Accelerate the growth of the regional workforce, particularly in skills related to the adoption of digital technologies.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. With funding from the Georgia Artificial Intelligence in Manufacturing (GA-AIM) program under an EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant, the 21st Century Partnership is continuing to implement the program. An Executive Director has been hired to manage the Middle Georgia Innovation Corridor and Living in Middle Georgia Campaign. A firm has been hired to manage publicity for the corridor and to develop the Living in Middle Georgia marketing campaign. The project also funds the Middle Georgia STEM Alliance and supports the purchase of two mobile STEM labs to be managed by FVSU and deployed across the Middle Georgia region. MGRC continues to support these efforts as needed upon the request of the 21st Century Partnership.

Attracting Green Jobs and Investments

- » Leverage the location of new Georgia employers like Rivian and Hyundai to attract related businesses in the supply chain for electric vehicles.
- » Build out infrastructure throughout the region to support the charging of electric vehicles—both at the corridor (DC Fast Charge) scale and the community (Level 2) scale.
- » Consider opportunities to use less-productive land for utility-scale solar power developments in partnership with Georgia Power and Oglethorpe Power.
- » Target recruitment of green jobs and investments with a particular focus on communities adversely impacted by the closure or downsizing of coal-fired power plants.
- » Utilize green building technologies to save taxpayer funds at the municipal level and to create more sustainable development more broadly throughout the region.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Green industries are increasing throughout the state with several large investments in counties immediately outside of the Middle Georgia region. Local economic developers are continuing to court these industries with Fort Valley currently projected to land manufacturing work for Imola Automotive in addition to an expansion of the existing production lines at Blue Bird. In August 2024, MGRC received a funding award of \$15 million from the USDOT Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) program to help support the deployment of EV charging infrastructure throughout the region. This funding will allow for the installation of approximately 100 new electric vehicle charging sites throughout Middle Georgia. Most stations will be Level 2 chargers with some Level 3 sites also identified throughout the region.

Enhancing the Regional Aerospace Industry

- » Extend the Middle Georgia Regional Airport runway.
- » Upgrade and enhance other local and regional airports.
- » Expand MRO work done in Middle Georgia, especially commercial aviation work.
- » Implement recommendations of the Middle Georgia Air Strategic Plan.
- » Upgrade facilities for fixed-base operators, including particularly the executive terminal at the Middle Georgia Regional Airport.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. The Baldwin County Airport and Perry-Houston County Airport both recently received funding for apron reconstruction. Macon-Bibb County and the Middle Georgia Regional Airport are working on major expansions to the runway and new fixed base operator facilities on the campus. High Note Aviation has been selected as the new fixed base operator with a facility currently under construction.

Supporting the Freight and Logistics Industry

- » Improve major freight corridors.
- » Create truck bypasses as needed.
- » Develop an intermodal facility under the Network Georgia initiative.
- » Ensure rail accessibility of industrial sites.
- » Improve local roads, as needed, to handle freight traffic.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Major interstate improvements are continuing in the region, particularly at the I-16/I-75 interchange. MGRC continues to support the Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) and Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS) in support of these goals as well. MATS is in the midst of a freight study that will identify more improvements needed to support the industry throughout Middle Georgia. WRATS has also launched updates to its Metropolitan Transportation Plan. MGRC will continue to support these plans however possible and will serve on the steering committee for each effort.

Capitalizing on our Natural and Cultural Resources

- » Support the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Initiative.
- » Attract the growing number of RV and outdoor recreation enthusiasts post COVID-19 and in support of the National Park and Preserve
- » Expand trails and greenways throughout the region.
- » Effectively support and market all cultural assets and tourist draws of the region.
- » Capture tax revenue appropriately from the short-term rental market.
- » Leverage Camera Ready and Georgia Grown programs.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. MGRC continues to assist many communities with local projects to set aside greenspace and trails for recreational purposes and to further develop those facilities. At the regional level, efforts continue to support the designation of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park as Georgia's first National Park and Preserve. Legislation to this effect was introduced in the House and Senate on May 1, 2024, with the legislation already receiving committee hearings. The Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Initiative is continuing to support these efforts and has received a grant of \$1 million from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to undertake strategic planning around the proposed park and preserve corridor. MGRC is serving as a contracted project manager for these efforts and will be an active member of the plan advisory committees. In addition, current legislation calls for an MGRC representative to serve on an Advisory Council which will make recommendations regarding the park's governance model, including co-management with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation.

Baldwin County Activities*Countywide Projects:*

- » Develop and enhance Fall Line Industrial Park with Wilkinson County.
- » Undertake buildout of the Sibley-Smith Megasite.
- » Continue enhancement of the Milledgeville-Baldwin County Industrial Park and consider a Spec Building on Daniels Site.
- » Develop and construct a convention/conference center.
- » Redevelop Central State Hospital property.

- » Partner with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government's PROPEL Program to support workforce development in the county.

City of Milledgeville Projects:

- » Continue downtown improvement through the Main Street/ DDA program.
- » Development of a downtown hotel.
- » Continue work with Georgia Power CREATE (Cultivating Rural Entrepreneurs and Transforming Economics) Program to create a strategic and implementation plan for the local entrepreneur/small businesses.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Community implementation partners are also unchanged. The Development Authority of the City of Milledgeville and Baldwin County has made progress with the Sibley-Smith tract by demolishing a structure on the property and starting to undertake wetlands permitting. The county has secured SPLOST funding and a federal earmark to assist with infrastructure improvements and has applied to DCA for rural site development funding. An active prospect is currently considering the site. Baldwin County also continues to work with the PROPEL program with implementation efforts shifting from marketing into workforce development. Finally, in Milledgeville, there is an active project to develop a hotel with conference space for the business community, and the community is in contact with another proposed hotel conference center space downtown.

Crawford County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- » Expand industrial land inventory and explore the development of a second industrial park.
- » Maintain a small business incubator and support new business development.
- » Establish a downtown development authority and/or Main Street program.
- » Undertake renovations of Old Courthouse and Historic Knoxville to promote tourism.
- » Partner with the Flint River Water Trail and expand access to and use of the Flint River for recreational and tourism purposes.
- » Undertake planning for improved housing stock and the development of affordable housing in the county.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025, with one project added (as highlighted above). Community implementation partners are also unchanged, but partnerships will be enhanced through the county's acceptance into the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing which will support planning efforts for workforce housing. The development authority continues to support its incubator and continues to support both tourism and industrial development. This includes the development of a new Bitcoin data center in the industrial park which is contributing to the county's tax digest.

Houston County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- » Continue the development of publicly owned industrial sites.
- » Support economic development efforts to diversify the local economy.
- » Support and coordinate efforts to identify, purchase, and develop future industrial sites.
- » Expand public transportation opportunities countywide.

- » Continue widening Hwy 96 to Interstate 16.
- » Support development and marketing of I-75 Corridor.
- » Develop an Innovation Center to support the Middle Georgia Innovation Project and Middle Georgia Innovation Corridor.
- » Explore opportunities to support the growing missions at RAFB, such as Project Synergy.
- » Expand Smart Community efforts across Houston County and throughout the region.
- » Expand access to the Digital Twin for Public Safety to the rest of Houston County and throughout the region.

City of Centerville Projects:

- » Continue to develop Center Park, including Phase II elements of the plan.
- » Market opportunities for private development of the Town Center district.
- » Continue participation in the GICH (Georgia Initiative for Community Housing) program as a certified alumni community.
- » Work with private developers to bring more housing options, of varying types and price points, to market.

City of Perry Projects:

- » Develop and market smaller commercial buildings (~10,000 sf).
- » Enhance downtown as a viable commercial center with additional public infrastructure.
- » Enhance downtown with quality infill development and redevelopment projects.
- » Ensure adequate water, sewer, and natural gas capacity for customers.
- » Expand wastewater and natural gas infrastructure for the airport and surrounding area.
- » Enhance Perry-Houston County Airport and support its continued growth.
- » Market the city's State Opportunity Zone.
- » Work with Houston County Development Authority to enhance and expand industrial inventory.
- » Continue the recruitment of retail and commercial projects.
- » Support technology-related development, particularly in the ag-tech space.

City of Warner Robins Projects:

- » ~~Construct the Warner Robins Welcome Center.~~
- » Implement a Commercial Circle Redevelopment strategy with a mixed-use approach.
- » Implement EPA Brownfields grant to aid in Commercial Circle redevelopment activities.
- » Market and enhance The Village at Town Center.
- » Increase workforce and affordable housing to support the needs of both RAFB and the broader community.
- » Expand water and sewer capacities and upgrade lift stations.
- » Enhance community entrances and gateways through beautification efforts.
- » Partner with VECTR Center to support mixed-use development in the surrounding area.
- » Increase capital for business growth among small and medium business enterprises, as well as women-owned, minority-owned, and veteran-owned businesses.
- » Work with Houston County to develop encroachment property on the north end of RAFB for industrial use.
- » Coordinate with RAFB and DoD to develop city-owned land on the north end of RAFB.
- » Support industrial opportunities with the Joint Development Authority in Peach County including support of Robins International Industrial Park.
- » Construct a Vietnam Veterans Memorial for the city.

»» ~~Install EV chargers on S Armed Forces Blvd to support small businesses there.~~

Most of above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025 with the exception of some modifications to the City of Warner Robins project list. Removed projects are struck through with new projects highlighted. Community implementation partners are unchanged. Houston County has continued to see strong economic growth. The Development Authority of Houston County continues to lead in the regional implementation of the Middle Georgia Innovation Project, serving as a key partner of the GA-AIM initiative and supporting smart city projects. Meanwhile, the community continues to work on infrastructure improvements that will support new growth. The community has also continued to focus on developing its workforce with STEM skills while also eyeing the growing healthcare sector.

In the City of Perry, construction continues for the new Jack Link's facility with an investment of \$450 million. It is expected to open in 2025. Perry also participated in the UGA-Grand Farm partnership, which is a new research and agricultural innovation farm at the National Fairgrounds. These efforts will hopefully support additional efforts to promote agriculture.

Communities in Houston County are also focused extensively on downtown redevelopment. The City of Perry has continued to focus its downtown with a thriving community with downtown regularly attracting new businesses. Centerville is also continuing to work on the development of their downtown area around Center Park. Warner Robins has also continued a variety of economic development activities. In the downtown area, Warner Robins previously invested \$3 million in acquisition and assemblage in the area and is currently working to demolish blighted structures in the area. This work will be aided by a new EPA Brownfield Grant to address sites that may have a history of site contamination. The city also utilized its Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) funding to install new EV chargers in the downtown area that will serve tourists passing through the area.

The City of Warner Robins also continued its focus on improving the community through its Community Development Block Grant funding. This work included a focus on owner-occupied housing rehabilitation. The city also received \$1.5 million in CHIP funding to provide for the new construction of 10 affordable housing units. The city is not currently moving forward with a welcome center but will continue to pursue development of a Vietnam Veterans Memorial near I-75 in the city limits.

Jones County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- »» Complete improvements to Griswoldville Industrial Park, including rail spur and sewer.
- »» Increase industrial site advertising.
- »» Continue improvements in the downtown business corridor.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Implementation partners are also unchanged. Jones County and the Development Authority are primarily focused on improvements at the Griswoldville Industrial Park. An 8-inch force main has been designed and bid out with construction expected to begin within the next few months. The county continues to promote the site in all major listings. Meanwhile, the Gray Downtown Development Authority has done landscaping along the downtown business corridor and is currently working to install decorative street lighting in the downtown area.

Macon-Bibb County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- » Implement a comprehensive workforce development program.
- » Continue development of the South Bibb industrial district.
- » Make improvements at Middle Georgia Regional Airport.
- » Assess and redevelop brownfield sites in and around downtown.
- » Actively promote and market key industrial sites throughout the county.
- ~~» Undertake redevelopment of Macon Mall property, including a new amphitheater.~~
- ~~» Enhance redevelopment of Second Street Corridor.~~
- » Continue redevelopment of the Macon Mall property and along the Eisenhower Parkway corridor more broadly.
- » Redevelop the Ocmulgee Crossings TAD area.
- » Transportation improvements in Ocmulgee East Industrial Park.
- » Support efforts of the I-75 Central Corridor Coalition.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Community implementation partners are also unchanged. In terms of the county's industry, the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority continues to market a variety of industrial sites for development with over \$1 billion in private investment over the past year. Among the biggest investments is a \$418 million expansion of First Quality's baby products facility, which will add 600 new jobs. Also recently announced to start FFY2025 was an additional \$600 million to support the Phase III expansion of Irving Consumer Products, adding 100 additional jobs. Both of these projects add industry to southern Macon-Bibb County along with the BrightFarms greenhouse facility nearing completion. To support new jobs such as these, the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority is continuing to work with the board of education and the Hutchings College and Career Academy on an advanced manufacturing track for high school students.

Regarding downtown and urban development activities, the county continues to support strategic planning efforts in traditionally underserved areas. Pleasant Hill has received a Reconnecting Communities grant and has been more broadly incorporated into the third iteration of the Macon Action Plan. The city is also continuing work to revitalize the Macon Mall. The new Atrium Health Amphitheater opened in early 2024 and the relocation of government offices was substantially completed when the Middle Georgia Regional Commission relocated in June 2024. However, additional space, both inside the mall and on surrounding properties, remains available for further redevelopment.

Downtown and East Macon are also continuing to see new investments. Work was completed at the Central City Apartments and Macon-Bibb County is working to demolish the old Ramada Inn hotel on First Street. The Renaissance on the River development has seen renewed interest as of late 2024 and significant strides are being made on redesigning the old Bibb Mill site into the East Bank development, which will serve as a gateway into the proposed Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve. All these projects are occurring within or directly adjacent to the Ocmulgee Crossings TAD, which indicates potential for reinvestment into those areas of the community once additional tax revenues are collected. With these areas of focus being highlighted, the Second Street Corridor is now largely completed pending some opportunities for additional development in the downtown south area. In recognition of downtown's renaissance, Macon was recognized with the Great American Main Street Award in 2024.

Monroe County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- » Target light manufacturing and high-tech industries to locate in Monroe County
- » Pursue public safety businesses and industries to complement existing employers
- » Ensure adequate utility infrastructure, water, and sewer for potential industries
- » Market Meridian 75 Logistics Center
- » Support entrepreneurial business opportunities
- » Improve the electrical, water, and sewer capacity at industrial sites.
- » Support efforts of the I-75 Central Corridor Coalition to improve accessibility and smart growth planning from Macon-Bibb County to Henry County

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Community implementation partners are also unchanged. Monroe County was selected to participate in the Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities (BRECC) program in early 2024. This has allowed the county to undertake strategic planning around new industry growth, particularly in response to the closure of a unit at Plant Scherer. Oglethorpe Power is now working on a new natural gas fired generation facility leaving utility capacity as the greatest current need for the community. This will be particularly notable at the Meridian 75 Logistics Center and elsewhere along Rumble Road. Several new developments have been proposed in the Rumble Road area which may require transportation improvements as well.

Peach County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- » Support industrial opportunities with the Joint Development Authority in Warner Robins, including support of Robins International Industrial Park and marketing of the park's GRAD certification.
- » Market the Middle Georgia Mega Site and enhance its value with infrastructure improvements to increase water and sewer capacity.
- » Promote the newly acquired Highway 49 Tech Park.
- » Actively pursue recruitment of professional, managerial, and high-tech jobs.

City of Byron Projects:

- » Undertake water infrastructure improvements to increase capacity at the Benjamin Hawkins Industrial Park.
- » Implement proposed Main Street and Moseley Road improvements to add parking spaces downtown and facilitate the movement of visitors and pedestrians.
- » Address needed stormwater improvements throughout the city, especially downtown.
- » ~~Address substandard housing concentrations~~

City of Fort Valley Projects:

- » Improve lodging options and recruit a conference center to Fort Valley.
- » Revitalize downtown areas and capitalize on public parks and plazas
- » Address substandard housing concentrations

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025, with one project being marked as complete in Byron. With recent grant funding received, Byron has mostly addressed its greatest housing deficiencies. Community implementation partners are also unchanged. At a countywide level, the joint development authority with Warner Robins recently celebrated a groundbreaking for KIHOMAC, an aerospace manufacturing firm. The park has also received a new water tower and new access road: Robins International Blvd. Flint Energies has also built a new facility on this property and the development authority continues to market this site as well as the Middle Georgia Megasite on State Route 96. Peach County's efforts have landed new manufacturing and aerospace industry jobs. The authority is encouraged by the county's growth and will continue pursuing recruitment of professional, managerial, and high-tech jobs

The City of Byron continues to work on EDA-funded water infrastructure improvements to increase capacity at the Benjamin Hawkins Industrial Park. The city is also pursuing pedestrian improvements to provide more safe access to downtown. Meanwhile, the City of Fort Valley is focused extensively on plans to address substandard housing conditions and continuing to revitalize its downtown. The city has engaged a strategic planning firm to assist in this process.

Pulaski County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- » Focus on retention of young adults in the community.
- » Work to build a strong relationship with the education system and activate youth leadership initiatives.
- » Continue to implement the community's coordinated marketing/branding campaign.
- » Revitalize downtown Hawkinsville and clean up abandoned sites and brownfields.
- » Develop a plan of action to create tourism and recreation attractions for the City of Hawkinsville.
- » Complete a long-term economic development plan through the PROPEL initiative.
- » Attract micro-industry to Hawkinsville.
- » Expand and improve Hawkinsville-Pulaski County Airport.
- » Support the development of workforce housing stock within the community

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025, and one new project was added. Community implementation partners are also unchanged. The city continues to promote new opportunities for growth. The city is currently undertaking natural gas system improvements and is actively marketing industrial opportunities, especially at the Hawkinsville Industrial Park. The city applied for funding to assist in the development of a new subdivision and local stakeholders remain focused on downtown—investing over \$5 million in private funds over the past year.

Putnam County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- » Implement CIDs, BIDs, or TADs to aid development efforts.
- » Promote a support network for retirees.
- » Increase the presence of the retail industry.
- » Continue development of the downtown Eatonton City Center Stage to attract new tourism and entertainment opportunities.
- » Prep the Rock Eagle Technology Park for growth with a new 15-acre pad-ready site.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Community implementation partners are unchanged. Putnam County continues to support a variety of industrial and retail businesses with a large share of tourists. The Len Resort & Residences recently broke ground on the shores of Lake Oconee in September 2024 and is expected to be complete by May 2026. The Eatonton City Center State project also continued to progress with grant funding being fully secured for the project.

Twiggs County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- » Further develop publicly owned industrial parks and sites, especially the 257-acre tract located on Hill and Dale Road.
- » Acquire additional industrial property as funds are available.
- » Continue improvements to Jeffersonville and Twiggs County water and sewer systems.
- » Pursue quality of life enhancements, especially related to housing, healthcare, and retail.
- ~~» Expand health care and education space for the Community Health Care Systems facility located on Watson Road and owned by the Development Authority of the City of Jeffersonville and Twiggs County.~~
- » Support downtown development and revitalization in Jeffersonville, including a focus on attracting mixed-use development.
- » Further workforce development activities in collaboration with the Twiggs County Board of Education.
- » Support business recruitment and retention.
- » Pursue the construction of a natural gas line from the existing sub-station in Jeffersonville to the Industrial Park.
- » Work with the Georgia Department of Transportation to support the widening of SR96, now under construction.
- ~~» Work with Retail Strategies to develop our retail areas in the city and at Exit 24.~~
- » Prepare for recruitment of Tier 1-2-3 suppliers for the Hyundai facility in Bryan County.
- » Improved fire protection with lower ISO ratings.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025, except for two completed projects. Community implementation partners are also unchanged. The Development Authority of the City of Jeffersonville and Twiggs County completed construction on an expanded health education facility in September 2024. This space, combined with a new facility constructed by the Twiggs County Board of Education, has expanded access to quality care for Twiggs County families. Meanwhile, the authority also continues to market its potential industrial sites and explore additional opportunities as they present themselves. The Hill and Dale Road tract is one of these prime opportunities for growth, and if sold, would heighten the importance of acquiring additional industrial property. Infrastructure also remains a challenge in the community, as does the goal of reducing county ISO ratings. All-day staffing has been introduced at several fire stations with ISO ratings gradually improving. However, additional fire stations are needed. Beyond this, the development authority continues to support long-term planning for additional growth and development. This will include promoting investments in critical infrastructure as potential projects become available.

Wilkinson County Activities

Countywide Projects:

- » Develop and enhance Fall Line Industrial Park, partnering with Baldwin County.
- » Support the development of Balls Ferry State Park.
- » Ensure adequate utility infrastructure for potential industries.
- » Market publicly owned industrial sites.
- » Develop additional entertainment and recreational options.
- » Enhance and upgrade the beautification of gateways (roundabouts) in the county.
- » Work on beautification and redevelopment of municipal downtowns.

The above projects remain priorities for FFY 2025. Community implementation partners are also unchanged. The Development Authority of Wilkinson County is currently in the process of hiring a full-time economic developer to assist in these efforts. The county continues to focus on building a partnership with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to promote development at Balls Ferry. The cities also continue to actively work on improving their water and sewer systems. Construction is currently continuing for the City of McIntyre's sewer system, and the various cities are exploring opportunities to partner on more efficient service delivery. The City of Gordon also completed a strategic planning effort and has begun to see some modest momentum behind downtown redevelopment, which has been primarily driven by private capital.



Photo 2: MGRC Staff Facilitating Community Planning Efforts

Annual Update Adoption Resolution

RESOLUTION TO SUBMIT THE COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

WHEREAS, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission has been a designated Economic Development District under the requirements and regulations of the Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) since 1978; and

WHEREAS, the member governments and citizens of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission have benefited through the resources and assistance available to designated districts and numerous successful projects throughout the district; and

WHEREAS, EDA requires qualifying districts to prepare a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to guide the region's economic development programs and to remain eligible for EDA assistance and financial awards; and

WHEREAS, a Five-Year Plan for economic development was developed for the period of 2022 through 2027; and

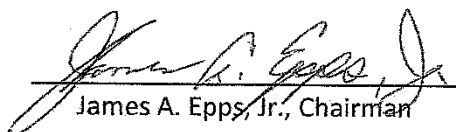
WHEREAS, EDA requires an annual performance update to be submitted by December 1 each year during the planning period; and

WHEREAS, the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Council has determined that the current CEDS update reasonably reflects general and specific goals, projects, and desired outcomes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Middle Georgia Regional Commission Council does hereby adopt the 2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Performance Update as the general guide for economic development activities and approves the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Performance Update for submission to the Economic Development Administration in compliance with the requirements.

Certificate of Passage

I hereby certify that the above and foregoing resolution was duly adopted by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission in a regular session assembled on the 14th day of November 2024 and recorded in the official minutes of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission.


James A. Epps, Jr., Chairman