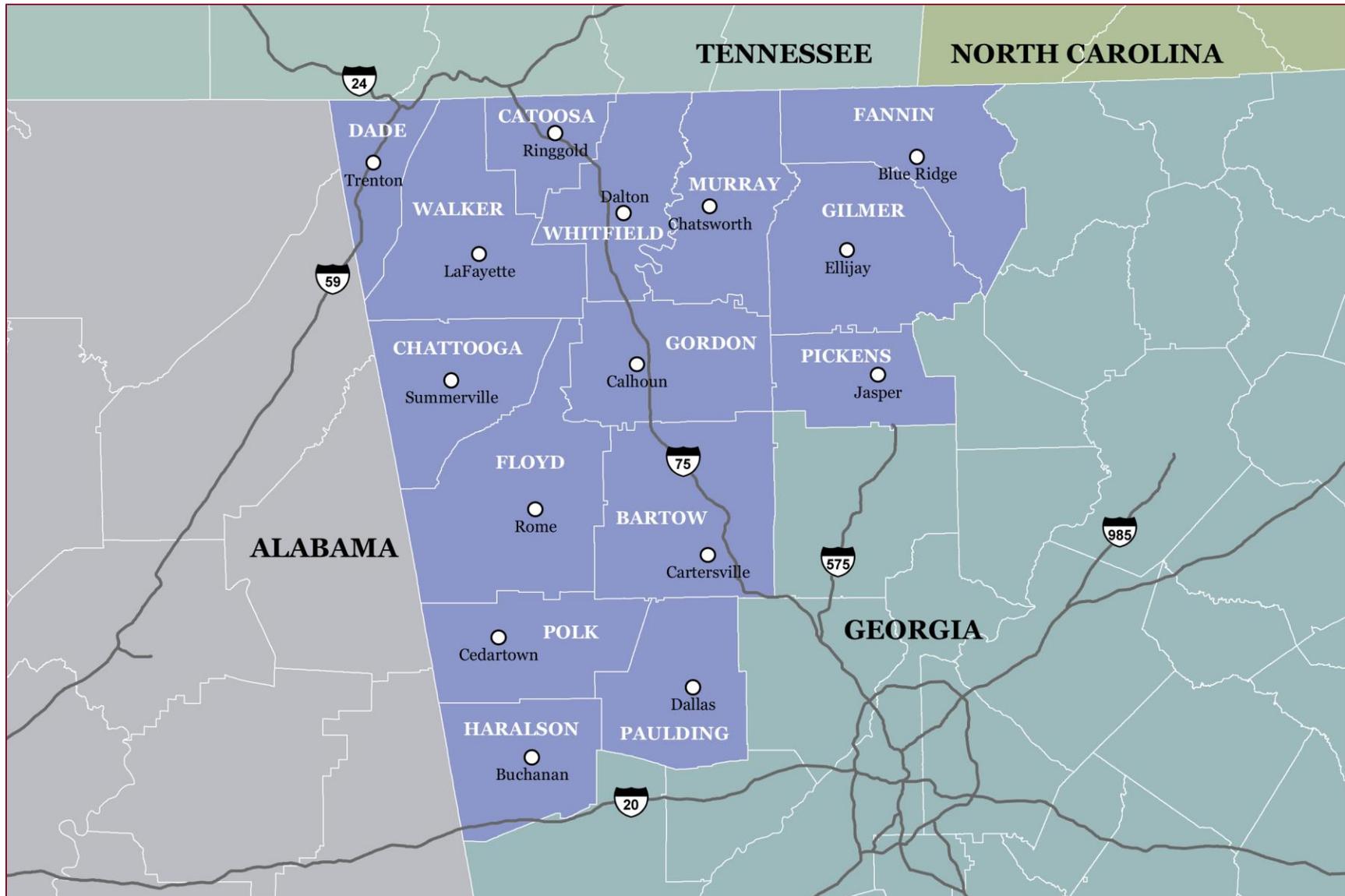


Northwest Georgia's Economic Development Strategy

2017-2022 REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDDS)

Northwest Georgia Regional Commission
NWGRC COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
1 JACKSON HILL -- ROME, GEORGIA 30161

Map of Northwest Georgia



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CEDS Steering Committee Membership

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Jim Henry
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Steve Taylor
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Larry Johnson
Chris Musser
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Sector Represented

Business Owner
Public Official
Public Official
Public Official
Public Official
Public Official
Utilities
Manufacturing
Manufacturing
Economic Development
Economic Development
Tourism
Labor Representative
Economic Development
Education
Labor Representative
Education
Labor Representative
Vocational Rehabilitation
Manufacturing
Economic Development
Education
Business / Technology
Business

Introduction

The Northwest Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission (as the local Economic Development District) develops, implements, and revises the CEDS with assistance from the CEDS Strategy Committee. The Regional Commission receives Planning Investment Funds from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) to complete this document.

The governing Council of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission is designated as the CEDS Strategy Committee. This body includes both local elected officials and private sector representatives from each of northwest Georgia's counties, as well as several statewide appointees. The Strategy Committee elected to appoint a CEDS Steering Committee to assist with development of the 2017 CEDS update. The CEDS Steering Committee consists of the Regional Commission's Economic Development Committee with additional private sector stakeholders added. Membership of the steering committee is listed on the previous page. Members of the Regional Commission Council, at the time of adoption of the CEDS update, is listed in the Appendix.

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission is a multi-county organization consisting of 15 Northwest Georgia counties and 49 municipalities. Major responsibilities of the regional commission include: (1) implementation of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; (2) administration of the Area Agency on Aging; (3) administration of the Workforce Investment Act; and (4) providing planning and development assistance to member governments in areas they could not otherwise afford.



Northwest Georgia Regional Overview

Overview

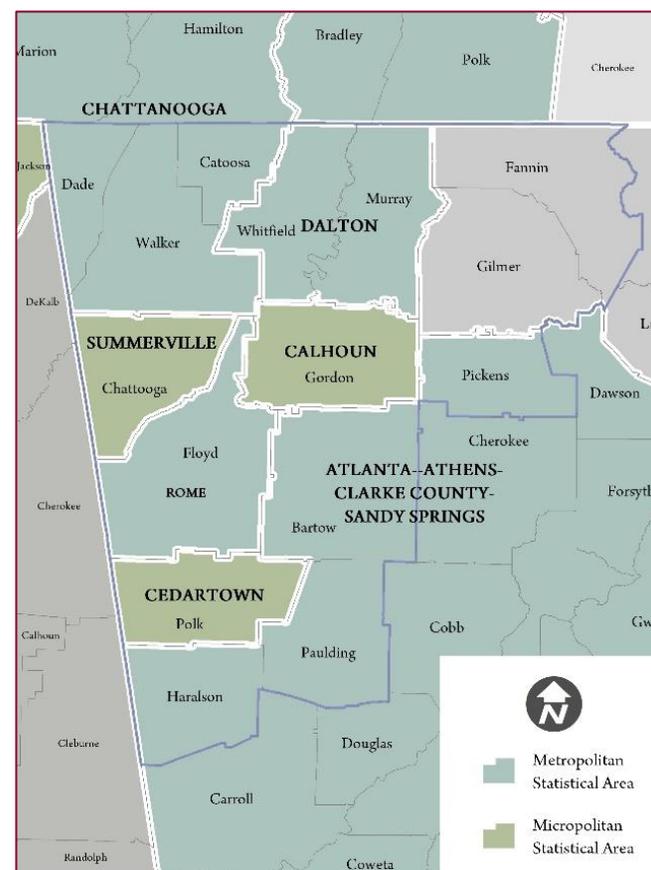
The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission's district consists of 15 counties (Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Fannin, Floyd, Gilmer, Gordon, Haralson, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Walker, and Whitfield) and the forty-nine cities located within these counties. The region is predominantly rural but continues to see substantial growth due to its proximity to Atlanta and Chattanooga. The Interstate 75 corridor runs north-south through the eastern part of the Region connecting these two metropolitan areas.

Geography

Northwest Georgia is located in the southern foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in Georgia's Ridge and Valley, Blue Ridge Mountains, and Piedmont geographical regions. The region consists primarily of rolling hills with valleys and tall hills, ridges, and mountains running primarily north-south. This geography makes east-west connectivity and regional development somewhat challenging. However, the geography of the area also creates some of the most scenic views in the state.

Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSA)

A Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA) is a geographic area defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that consists of one or more counties anchored by an urban center of at least 10,000 people plus adjacent counties that are socioeconomically tied to the urban center by commuting. CGSAs include both metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas (MSA). The northwestern most counties of Dade, Walker, and Catoosa are located in the Chattanooga MSA. The southern counties of Haralson, Paulding, and Bartow, as well as Pickens County, are located in the Atlanta area MSA. Whitfield and Murray counties share the Dalton MSA, and Rome is in a metropolitan area by itself. Chattooga, Gordon, and Polk counties are all in single county micropolitan areas, and Fannin and Gilmer are not located in either a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area.



Economy

Traditionally, the region's economic base has depended upon the manufacturing sector (25% of the region's employment in 2011), dominated by floor covering industry. The economic downturn and resulting collapse of the housing industry dramatically reduced demand for floor covering products, causing considerable economic distress in the region as layoffs and plant closures led to thousands of jobs lost. The region, including the floor covering industry, has largely recovered from the recession and resulting economic distress.

Many of the jobs that were lost, however, will not return especially in the flooring industry. Manufacturing is changing its production model. Moving from a highly labor intensive, hands-on production system to an automated system, where skilled technicians guide machines using computer programming or perform manual tasks with robotic assistance. In this changing job market, prospective employees must have or be able to learn the required skill-set including engineering, computer technology, and programming. This automation is allowing industries to increase production while at the same time decreasing their workforce.

Industry Mix

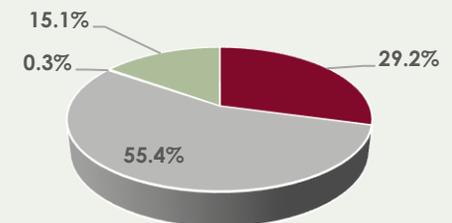
Even with the decreased workforce, the region's economy continues to be largely dominated by the flooring industry with four (Engineered Floors, Mohawk Carpet, Beaulieu Seretean, and Shaw Industries) of the top ten employers in the region representing this economic sector. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, in the past five years the goods producing industry sector has increased its share of northwest Georgia's economy by 0.9%; growing from 28.3% of the workforce in 2011 to 29.2% in 2016. The service providing industry has increased its share of the economy by a similar amount; growing its percentage of the workforce from 54.5% in 2011 to 55.4% in 2016. Of the major industry sectors, only the government sector saw a decrease in its share of the workforce with a loss of 1.9%. This decrease in the share of the workforce represents a loss of 1,782 government sector jobs. These jobs, however, were more than absorbed by the growth in the public sector as the regional economy grew by 18,325 employed residents in the past five years; increasing from 240,747 in 2011 to 259,072 in 2016.

Ten Largest Employers in Northwest Georgia

1. Engineered Floors
2. Floyd Healthcare
3. Mohawk Carpet
4. Mt. Vernon Mills, Inc.
5. O'Reilly Automotive, Inc.
6. Roper Corporation
7. Beaulieu Seretean
8. Shaw Industries Group
9. Toyo Tire North America
10. Walmart

Source: GA Dept. of Labor

Industry Mix



- Goods-Producing
- Service-Providing
- Unclassified
- Government

In the goods producing sector, over the last five years the construction industry saw the highest percentage increase, which grew by 34.5% as the region recovered from the recession and the collapse of the housing industry. Manufacturing grew by only 9.0%; however, this represents an increase of 5,403 jobs. Overall, the service providing sector grew by 12,108 jobs, or 9.2% in the last five years. Driven by an increase in tourism, the accommodation and food services industry saw the largest growth in this sector by both number of jobs and percent growth with 4,627 new jobs for a 23.1% increase. Retail trade also saw a significant increase in employees during this time period growing by 14.2%; however this grow is not expected to continue over the next five years as more customers begin to shop online rather than in traditional retail outlets.

Economic Distress

The Northwest Georgia Economic Development District is performing below the national average in each of the economic distress criteria. This indicates that, although the region has recovered from the Great Recession, northwest Georgia has still not achieved socioeconomic parity with the nation.

Unemployment Rate

The 24 Month Unemployment Rate for Northwest Georgia is 5.56%, which is 0.6% higher than the national rate. Three counties in the region (Catoosa, Paulding, and Pickens) have a 24 month unemployment rate of less than 5%. Five counties have 24 month unemployment rates of over 6%, and the county with the highest 24 month rate is Murray County, which has a rate of approximately 7%.

Per Capita Income

The 2015 Per Capita Personal Income calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) for the region is \$32,409, which is only 67.4% of the national average. None of the fifteen counties in Northwest Georgia has a per capita personal income equal to, or greater than, the national per capita income of \$48,112.

Economic Distress Criteria — Geographic Components			
	24 Month Unemployment	2015 Per Capita Personal Income (BEA)	2015 Per Capita Money Income (5-year ACS)
United States	4.96 %	\$48,112	\$28,930
Northwest Georgia	5.56 %	\$32,409	\$21,768
Bartow County	5.35 %	\$33,856	\$22,592
Catoosa County	4.92 %	\$32,358	\$22,642
Chattooga County	6.05 %	\$28,274	\$16,333
Dade County	5.18 %	\$30,047	\$21,547
Fannin County	5.51 %	\$30,816	\$20,534
Floyd County	6.21 %	\$35,054	\$21,218
Gilmer County	5.70 %	\$30,769	\$21,766
Gordon County	5.68 %	\$31,463	\$19,707
Haralson County	5.97 %	\$31,840	\$20,740
Murray County	6.98 %	\$26,855	\$17,043
Paulding County	4.78 %	\$33,011	\$24,930
Pickens County	4.98 %	\$40,420	\$27,720
Polk County	6.23 %	\$29,216	\$20,293
Walker County	5.61 %	\$29,772	\$21,430
Whitfield County	6.05 %	\$33,317	\$20,353

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Census, Labor Statistics, and Economic Analysis; Calculations generated by StatsAmerica.

Demographics

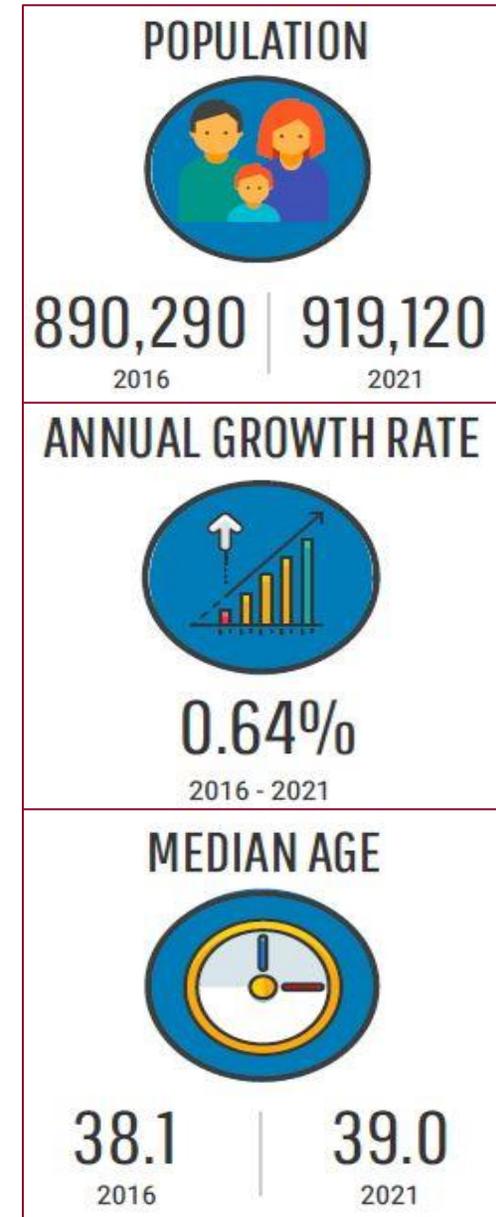
Population

The estimated population of northwest Georgia was 890,290 in 2016. The region's population is expected to grow over the next five years at an annual rate of 0.64% to reach a projected population in 2021 of 919,120. This growth rate, although lower than the historic rate for the region, is only slightly less than the anticipated growth rate of the United States over the next five years.

Northwest Georgia is a predominately rural region; however, the northern counties are part of the Chattanooga MSA and the southern counties are within parts of the Atlanta metropolitan area. These counties, and those located along the I-75 corridor, continue to experience elevated population growth relative to other counties in the region, which is expected to continue in the near future. Paulding and Bartow counties grew considerably during the past decade due to their location within commuting distance of the Metro Atlanta area. Likewise, Pickens and Gilmer counties have begun to experience elevated growth due to the construction of the four-lane highway 515, which connected these formerly rural counties to jobs in northern Atlanta. Growth also came as retirees and those seeking a higher quality of life moved into these counties.

Age

The median age in northwest Georgia is 38.1 years. This number is projected to increase to 39.0 years by 2021, as the population continues to age. According to Northwest Georgia's Area Agency on Aging (AAA), the over-60 population in northwest Georgia increased from 108,077 in 2000 to 149,130 in 2013, an increase of 37.9%. The aging population in the region has been growing significantly faster in recent years than the state average of 19.9%. The over-85 age group is the fastest growing population segment in the region; increasing by 52% during the last decade and projected to double by 2030. The largest concentration of individuals over the age of 60 is in the mountain counties (Fannin, Gilmer, and Pickens). These counties are more rural; limiting access to aging and long term-care services.



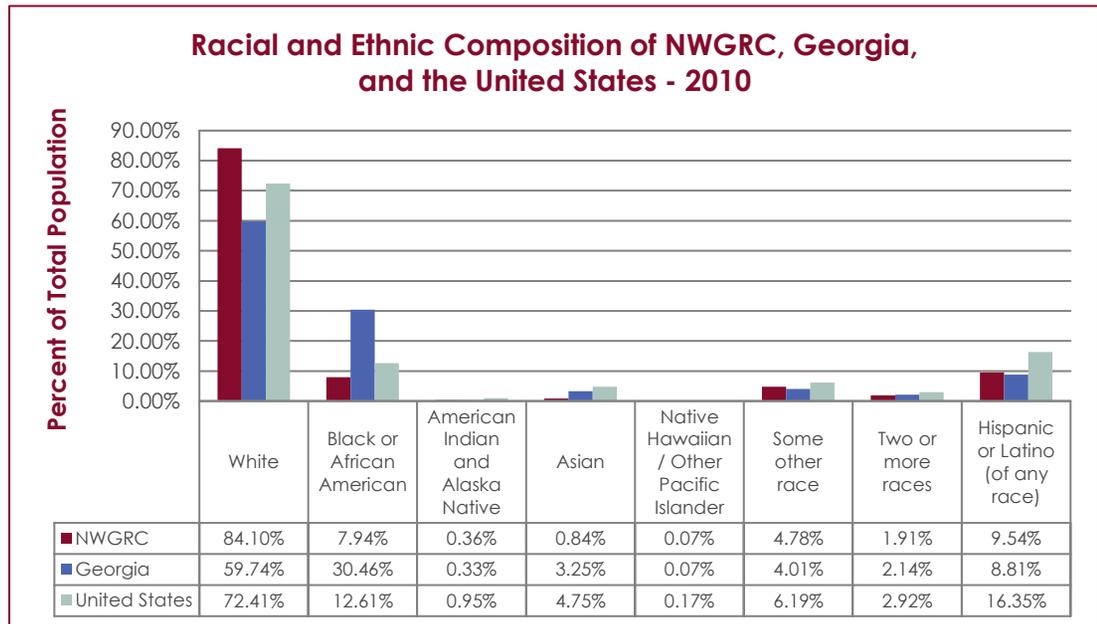
The aging of northwest Georgia's population also poses significant concerns for today's workforce. As an elevated number of retirements are expected in the coming years, many employers are concerned about finding replacements with comparable skills, leadership ability, and management experience.

Although Baby Boomers significantly outnumber the following generation creating a management and experience gap as they retire, the Millennials new to and entering the workforce outnumber the Generation Xers. In fact, Millennials are the largest living generation in the United States. In 2016, there were an estimated 79.8 million Millennials compared with 74.1 million Baby Boomers. The influx of Millennials into the workforce is creating challenges as the younger generation has priorities and desires for employment that may be at odds with the previous generations.

Race

According to U.S. Census Bureau, the white race represented 84.10% of the region's population in 2010, a decline from 88.94% in 2000. The region's 2010 white share was considerably higher than that for the state (59.74%) and nation (72.41%). The region's black or African American share of total population increased from 6.03% in 2000 to 7.94% in 2010. The region's 2010 black or African American share was considerably lower than that for the state (30.46%) and nation (12.61%). As compared to 2000, each non-white racial group had an increased share of the region's total population in 2010.

The census bureau does not include Hispanic as a race. The census accounts for this population under ethnicity. Consequently, persons of Hispanic or Latino origin comprise portions of more than one racial group. The region's Hispanic or Latino population accounted for 9.54% of the total in 2010, up from 5.73% in 2000. The 2010 share was higher than that of the state (8.81%) but lower than that of the nation (16.35%).



Education

A highly educated and skilled workforce is necessary to support economic competitiveness and resiliency. Education is vital when aligning worker skills with the needs of employers, which is critical to increasing productivity and growing the region's economy. Improved high school graduation rates is an important first-step in ensuring the region has a skilled workforce, but it is also essential for the labor force to have an ample number of workers with advanced training, certifications, and degrees.

High School Graduation

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 79.6% of adult residents of northwest Georgia have attained a high school diploma or equivalent. The counties in the region with the highest percentage of high school graduates include Paulding (90%), Catoosa (85%), and Pickens (85%). The Counties with the lowest percentage of high school graduates include Whitfield (70%), Murray (72%), and Chattooga (72%). Each year, over eight thousand students graduate from the region's public high schools. Northwest Georgia's graduation rate was 83.0% in 2016. The public school systems with the highest graduation rates were Trion (98.3%), Chickamauga (98.2%), Calhoun (96.8%) and Bremen (96.3%) city schools and Dade (94.9%), Pickens (94.2%), and Fannin (91.2%) county schools. These graduating seniors represent the future workforce of northwest Georgia and should be encouraged to participate in apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training programs; attend technical college; or enroll in traditional colleges and universities in order to achieve their career goals. (2016 Four-Year Graduation Rates by county are listed in the appendix.)

College and Career Academies

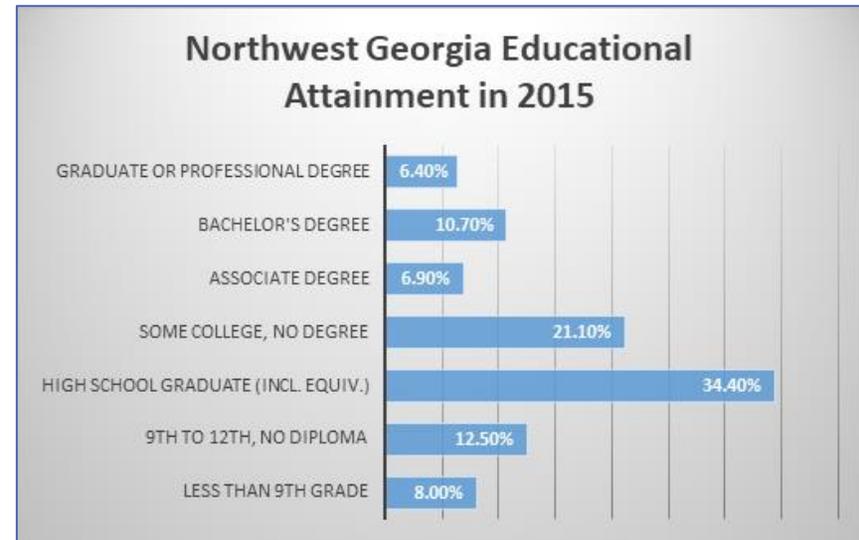
In northwest Georgia, high schools and their post-secondary partners are joining together to create local college and career academies to prepare high school students to meet the needs of employers in advanced manufacturing and other high-skilled professions. College and Career Academies are unique learning environments that provide the best opportunities for school systems to focus educational resources on the needs of their community, local businesses, and area industries. According to Commissioner Gretchen Corbin with the Technical College System of Georgia "the key to Georgia's future economic growth rests squarely on our ability to deliver a highly educated, skilled and motivated work



force. The Georgia Career Academies Network addresses that need by offering high school students exciting opportunities for a 21st Century education through unique partnerships between local school systems, the state technical colleges, and partners in business and industry.” Working closely with local employers, six communities in northwest Georgia have established college and career academies; these include Floyd County College and Career Academy (in Rome), Gordon County College and Career Academy (in Calhoun), Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy (in Dalton), Bartow County College and Career Academy (in Cartersville), Polk County College and Career Academy (in Rockmart), and Calhoun City College and Career Academy (in Calhoun).

Educational Attainment

Almost 80% of the region's population over 25 years old are high school graduates or higher. Approximately 25% have a college degree; including 6.9% with an associate's degree, 10.7% with a bachelor's degree, and 6.4% with a graduate or professional degree. Unfortunately, this leaves approximately 20% of the adult population with less than a high school degree, and 8% of the adult population has less than a 9th grade education. For the region to attract and retain professional, technology, or advanced manufacturing oriented employers, the workforce needs additional skilled workers with technical training, certifications, and degrees, as well as a college educated and professional workforce component.



Institutions of Higher Education

Post-secondary education in northwest Georgia is provided by the Technical College System of Georgia, the University System of Georgia, and private colleges. Three technical colleges serve the region; including Georgia Northwestern Technical College with campuses in Floyd, Walker, Catoosa, Gordon, Polk, and Whitfield counties; Chattahoochee Technical College with campuses in Pickens, Bartow, and Paulding counties; and West Georgia Technical College with a campus in Haralson County. The technical college system provides a broad range of career opportunities through a variety of certificate, diploma, and associate degree programs; continuing education programs; and economic development programs. Two University System of Georgia colleges also serve northwest Georgia; Georgia Highlands College in Floyd County and Dalton State College in Whitfield County. Berry College, Shorter University, Covenant College are also located in the area.

Workforce

According to the American Community Survey, there were approximately 360,000 workers residing in northwest Georgia in 2016. Of these, approximately 53.6% worked in their county of residents, 36.1% worked in Georgia but outside their county of residents, and 10.3% worked outside the state of Georgia. According to a report provided by Georgia Power, 68,503 workers live outside the region but work in northwest Georgia.

Employment by Industry

The largest number of workers in the region are employed in the services industry which retains 41.5% of the labor force. While the manufacturing industry employs 19.8% of the labor force and the retail trade industry employs 11.3% of the labor force. Each of the other industry sectors employs less than 10% of northwest Georgia's laborers with the agriculture / mining industry employing the fewest number of workers with only 0.9% of the area workforce in this sector.

Employment by Occupation

Just over half of northwest Georgia's workers are occupied in white collar jobs. Blue collar workers account for the next largest group with 32.1% of employees working in blue collar occupations. Professional occupations account for 17.2% of the jobs in the area and service occupations account for 16.3%. Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations account for the lowest number of jobs in the region with less than one percent.

Unemployment

As previously discussed, unemployment in the region has significantly decreased since the Great Recession, with the 24 Month Unemployment Rate for northwest Georgia at 5.56%, which is only 0.6% higher than the national rate.

WORKERS AGE 16+ YEARS BY PLACE OF WORK	ACS Estimate	Percent
Total	359,568	100.0%
Worked in state and in county of residence	192,675	53.6%
Worked in state and outside county of residence	129,835	36.1%
Worked outside state of residence	37,058	10.3%

2017 Employed Population 16+ by Industry	
Total	398,098
Agriculture/Mining	0.9%
Construction	7.8%
Manufacturing	19.8%
Wholesale Trade	2.6%
Retail Trade	11.3%
Transportation/Utilities	5.8%
Information	1.5%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	4.8%
Services	41.5%
Public Administration	3.9%

2017 Employed Population 16+ by Occupation	
Total	398,098
White Collar	51.7%
Management/Business/Financial	10.8%
Professional	17.2%
Sales	10.7%
Administrative Support	12.9%
Services	16.3%
Blue Collar	32.1%
Farming/Forestry/Fishing	0.5%
Construction/Extraction	6.6%
Installation/Maintenance/Repair	5.3%
Production	11.7%
Transportation/Material Moving	8.0%

Long-term Industry Projections

The Georgia Department of Labor published long-term employment projects for the Northwest Georgia Region, in which they project 2022 employment in select industries. According to this study, educational services will see the highest number of jobs added with 7,760 by 2022 with an annual growth rate of 2.71%. The industry sector with the highest project annual growth rate, however, is wholesale electronic markets, agents and brokers which is projected to see an annual growth rate of 7.29% for a total of 740 new jobs in 2022.

INDUSTRY TITLE	2012 BASE YEAR EMPLOYMENT	2022 PROJ. YEAR EMPLOYMENT	TOTAL CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT	PERCENT CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT	PROJ. ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
Educational Services	25,330	33,090	7,760	30.64%	2.71%
Administrative and Support Services	9,980	15,060	5,080	50.92%	4.20%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	8,610	13,520	4,910	56.94%	4.61%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	6,880	9,820	2,940	42.85%	3.63%
Specialty Trade Contractors	5,290	7,280	1,990	37.73%	3.25%
Social Assistance	2,970	4,200	1,230	41.41%	3.53%
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	3,840	4,960	1,120	29.23%	2.60%
General Merchandise Stores	8,460	9,570	1,110	13.13%	1.24%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	4,500	5,600	1,100	24.37%	2.20%
Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	11,510	12,560	1,050	9.12%	0.88%
Hospitals	9,130	10,140	1,010	11.06%	1.06%
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	7,030	7,860	830	11.88%	1.13%
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	4,530	5,340	810	17.79%	1.65%
Wholesale Electronic Markets and Agents and Brokers	720	1,460	740	102.07%	7.29%
Food and Beverage Stores	5,160	5,840	680	13.21%	1.25%
Construction of Buildings	1,050	1,600	550	51.57%	4.25%
Repair and Maintenance	2,070	2,620	550	26.58%	2.39%
Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	1,700	2,240	540	31.70%	2.79%
Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	1,960	2,480	520	26.91%	2.41%
Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations	3,980	4,500	520	13.14%	1.24%

Source: Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics and Economic Research

Transportation

An adequate, safe, and reliable transportation network with access to both urban and rural areas is vital to the economic growth and resiliency of the Northwest Georgia Region. Without access to a well-maintained, multi-modal transportation network, goods and raw materials could not efficiently move into or out of the region resulting in low economic productivity. Reliable transportation, including transit and bike/pedestrian facilities, is also necessary to ensure employees can arrive at work safely and on time. The Region's transportation network includes interstates I-75, I-20, and I-59 as well as several US and state highways, railways, airports and public transit.

Roadway

Northwest Georgia is served by an extensive roadway network (consisting of local roads, several state and federal highways, and three interstates) that spider webs throughout the region. The primary transportation corridor in northwest Georgia is Interstate 75, which runs north-south through the eastern part of the Region connecting Atlanta and Chattanooga. Interstate 59 runs through Dade County in the extreme northwest corner of the region, and Interstate 20 runs through Haralson County in the extreme southwest. Additionally, Interstate 24 dips into northern Dade County for approximately four miles and Interstate 575 extends into Pickens County for less than one mile. Major US and state highways in the region primarily run north-south parallel to I-75, making east-west transportation of goods somewhat problematic.

In Georgia, trucking is the dominant mode for carrying freight. Therefore, the performance of the highway network is critical for the transportation of freight into, out of, through, and within the northwest Georgia region. By 2035, the share of freight carried by trucking is projected to be 79.3% by weight and 86.4% by value. The interstate highways carry the highest volumes of freight at present and are expected to remain the principal facilities for transporting truck freight well into the future, with volumes projected to increase by as much as 177% by 2035. Some rural highways connecting urban areas to the interstates, such as US 411/SR 20 connecting Rome and Cartersville/I-75, are also expected to carry significant freight volumes in the future.



Additionally, freight traffic on US 411 is projected to significantly increase with the completion of the Appalachian Inland Port in Murray County.

Rail

Rail is an increasing alternative for moving goods while relieving congestion and avoiding congested routes. Two major rail routes through northwest Georgia are rated for 50-74 tons and from 75-99 tons; there are smaller connector routes throughout the region as well. When completed, construction of the Appalachian Inland Port will greatly enhance northwest Georgia's access to global markets. However, trucking will remain important to regional industries, as goods moving via other modes often use trucks for the first and last mile of the trip. Rail service is primarily provided by CSX and Norfolk Southern Railroads, although two short-line (Class III) railroads also operate in the region. Overall, existing rail service throughout the region is adequate with short-line operators moving into areas that might have otherwise been abandoned. While there is currently no high speed commuter rail service in the region, state commuter rail studies are underway.

Transit

Mass transit services are provided in Rome, Georgia with fixed bus route services inside the city boundaries. The Region is also served by 10 Section 5311 Rural Public Transportation Programs, which provide a variety of services to each local community. Recent studies transit systems in the region indicate a need for connectivity between counties, as well as increased access within county systems. While each county currently provides its own transit service, a coordinated approach to the delivery of these transportation services could be cost efficient and equally effective for all participants.

Aviation

No commercial service airports are located within the Northwest Georgia Region. However, three main Air Carrier Commuter Airports serve residents of the region; Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta, Lovell Field Airport in Chattanooga, Tennessee and Birmingham Airport in Birmingham, Alabama. Additionally, nine general aviation airports are located within northwest Georgia. Several improvements to airports in the region have been identified in the Statewide Aviation Plan including increased runway length and other upgrades.

NWGRC Transportation Planning

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission participates in planning activities with Georgia DOT District 6 in Cartersville, with the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Rome Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Dalton Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Cartersville-Bartow Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Metro Atlanta Metropolitan Planning Organization and other agencies including those supporting the disabled, cyclists and pedestrians.

SWOT Analysis and Planning Process

SWOT Analysis

Originated by Albert S. Humphrey in the 1960s, the SWOT Analysis is a useful technique for understanding Northwest Georgia's *Strengths* and *Weaknesses*, and for identifying both the *Opportunities* open to region and the *Threats* that the area may face. Results of the SWOT analysis for northwest Georgia were organized into four broad categories (human capital, community assets, essential infrastructure, and business climate) and are presented on the following pages.

Steering Committee Meetings

On May 17, 2017, the CEDS Steering Committee met to discuss economic trends across the region to update the five-year economic development strategy for the Northwest Georgia Region. From the trends discussion, the Committee listed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relative to the region. These listed results were arranged in four broad categories that include Human Capital, Community Assets, Essential Infrastructure, and Business Climate.

The committee reconvened on June 28, 2017 to review the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats listed and expand the list as needed. During this meeting, the CEDS Steering Committee also created priorities specific to the opportunities and weaknesses, which were used to develop the Regional Goals and Strategies.

Stakeholder Interviews

Regional commission staff followed-up these meetings with one-on-one interviews with stakeholders on the CEDS Steering Committee. Input gathered during the public meetings and interviews is reflected in the SWOT Analysis and regional goals and strategies listed in the next sections.

Economic Resiliency

The U.S. Economic Development Administration requires that each region's CEDS address economic resiliency. As noted by EDA, "establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity." Members of the CEDS committees were encouraged to consider economic resiliency throughout the SWOT analysis and during the process to development of the region's goals and strategies. It should also be noted that each community in northwest Georgia has prepared a *Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan*, which is updated every five years, discussing the threats posed by natural and manmade disasters. These plans focus on preparation for, mitigation of, and response to disasters, including events that could cause severe economic disruptions.

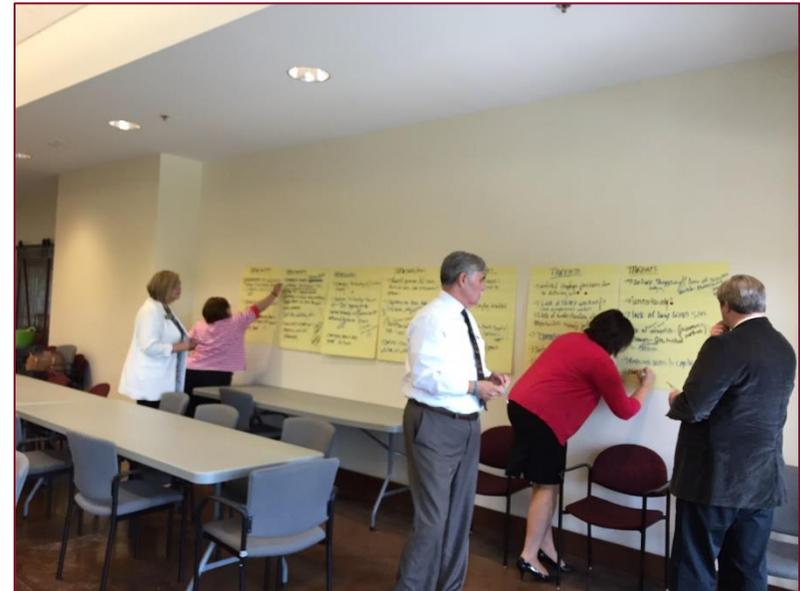
Public and Stakeholder Involvement

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission actively sought input from community leaders and economic development professionals during the development of the 2017 CEDS Update. Input was received during meetings of the CEDS Steering Committee, CEDS Strategy Committee, and stakeholder interviews.

Members of the CEDS Steering Committee were selected to represent broad community participation throughout northwest Georgia. Although not everyone was able to attend each meetings, sectors represented include agriculture, education, labor, workforce boards, utilities, nonprofits, local government, tourism, economic development, and the private sector.

Community participation was encouraged throughout the process with meeting notices sent to local and regional media and placed at the Gordon County Agricultural Service Center, where the meetings were held.

A draft of this plan was distributed and posted on the NWGRC website for public comment and review on August 24, 2017, prior to final plan adoption by the CEDS Strategy Committee in September 2017. Any comments received will be noted in the final plan.



Human Capital

STRENGTHS

- Technical Schools
- Colleges and Universities
- Good connection between workforce/labor and major employers

WEAKNESSES

- College and Career Academies (CCAs)
 - Competition among CCAs and traditional high schools
 - Need FTE funding revisions
 - Need more CCAs
- Lack of individuals in workforce with advanced degrees
- Lack of engagement of secondary education in education/workforce development discussions
- Changing lifestyle demands in workforce
 - Emerging workforce demands work/life balance
 - Jobs must follow available workers
- Forced industry automation resulting in job elimination
- Negative perceptions about manufacturing jobs
- Industry leaders are not as engaged in education discussions in some counties across the region
- Lack of support services for workers (childcare, public transportation)

Human Capital (Continued)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Take advantage of more available workers due to increased automation in industries that need higher skill levels
- Capitalize on growing demand for supply chain workers in the logistic/transportation job growth segments
- Capitalize on the growth of poultry producers across the region to attract food processing industries
- Utilize emerging technologies and distance/learning to educate future workers
- Promote “best practices” to CCAs across region
- Create collaborative K-16 education systems throughout region to build curriculum for future needs, involving local education and employer leaders
- Create programs that pair disabled citizens with employment opportunities
- Continue support for Tri-State Workforce Alliance (Ala., TN., GA)

THREATS

- Aging workforce – unfilled positions due to retiring workforce
- Lack of skilled, experienced workers
- Automation

Community Assets

STRENGTHS

- Tourism
 - World class museums
 - Resorts
 - Destination cities
 - Two state visitor centers
 - I-75; I-20 corridors
 - Natural Resources
 - Culture – Arts – History
 - Heritage Tourism
 - Wineries
- Diversity of people and Thriving Downtown Areas
- Location
- Medical facilities
- Agriculture
- New initiative emerging to support small, local food growers
- Progressing in advancement of Quality of Life amenities

WEAKNESSES

- Housing
 - Lack of affordable housing options for workers
 - Lack of housing opportunities in downtown areas
 - Lack of Planned Urban Developments (PUDs)
- Tourism
 - Represents low paying jobs (perception)
 - Lack of funding at local level
 - Local tourism groups should think collaboratively and regionally to pool resources to promote their areas
- Lack of resources for disabled/mentally-ill population (precipitated by closing of North Georgia Regional Hospital)
- There are few “one size fits all” solutions for the region due to the diversity of the region

Community Assets (Continued)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Enhance quality of life opportunities (more recreation, trails, restaurants, housing)
- Promote partnerships opportunities across county lines
- Promote utilization of agro-tourism resources by hosting seminars with the Georgia Department of Economic Development and other state organizations
- Capitalize on film and movie industry
- Provide Desirable Housing - housing options for all income levels, home sizes, and costs

THREATS

- Lack of funding for recreation and quality of life.
- "Status Quo" thinking – being change resistant (Baby Boomer vs. Millennial perceptions)
- Potential loss of millennials living in region
- Lack of engagement of millennials

Essential Infrastructure

STRENGTHS

- Strong transportation network; great interstate systems
- Abundance of water
- Ahead of other regions in broadband capabilities
- Good mix of rural/semi-urban with “fair” infrastructure
- New Appalachian Region Port (Chatsworth)

WEAKNESSES

- Water/Wastewater Treatment
 - Lack of water/sewer lines to industrial sites
 - Aging infrastructure
 - Lack of sewer treatment capacity
- Lack of Wi-Fi/internet in rural areas
- Lack of methods to finance public infrastructure to foster community development projects
- Transportation
 - Limited east/west connector routes (state highways)
 - Current east/west routes are unequipped
 - Lack of public transit networks in rural areas

Essential Infrastructure (Continued)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Access to additional permitted water capacity
- Potential for growth in areas with excess waste water treatment capacity

THREATS

- Lack of large Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) sites
- Annexation and jurisdiction laws an issue for water and waste water expansion

Business Climate

STRENGTHS

- Collaboration
- Manufacturing (representative of 25% of workforce)
- State incentives
- Safe region
- Low cost of living
- Sound business climate; low taxes
- Strong support for entrepreneurs

WEAKNESSES

- Disengagement of other Advanced Manufacturing entities in the economic development process due to current emphasis on the Floor Covering Industry

Business Climate (Continued)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Build on momentum of IMCP Consortium and Floor 360; expand current partnership to include other employer types/regional leaders to implement goals of existing Work Groups
- Build on existing, solid framework of local community and economic development professionals, and elected officials, to foster further collaboration
- Build on strong state/federal partnerships, utility organizations, and non-profits that currently exist across NW GA Region
- Continue support of Highway 27 Association and other multi-county/state partnership initiatives
- Analyze results of NWGRC North Georgia Local Food Assessment Study and develop implementation goals

THREATS

- Fear of change – NIMBYs
- Loss of sales tax and hotel/motel tax revenue (online shopping, Air BB, non-traditional lodging opportunities)
- “Uncertainty” of what future holds
- Restricted access to capital
- Changing mainline rail regulations
- Lack of resources to foster innovation (processes, methods); need Accelerator Program; sparse quality of life opportunities (in some areas of region) is unattractive to “innovators”
- Lack of understanding of opportunities “manufacturing” provides

Regional Vision, Goals, and Strategies

Regional Vision

Northwest Georgia strives to become a region where economic opportunities are available for all citizens; where our natural resources are used wisely and conserved for future generations; where community facilities and services support the needs of everyone; where cooperation among the public, private, and non-profit sectors is common-place, and where citizens have opportunities to enjoy a healthy and productive life.

Regional Goals & Strategies

Matching the themes identified in the SWOT Analysis, the regional goals in Norwest Georgia's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy are organized into four broad categories:

1. human capital,
2. community assets,
3. essential infrastructure, and
4. business climate.

These categories are associated with regional goals and appropriate strategies in the following section of the document.

Regional Goals at a Glance

Human Capital

- **Workforce Skills:** Increase the number of residents skilled in advanced manufacturing (and other middle-skill, living wage occupations) in order to meet current and changing needs of northwest Georgia employers.
- **Educational Attainment:** Expand the number of students in the region that are prepared for future employment in skilled and professional positions through enhanced educational opportunities and active career counseling.
- **Human Services:** Ensure appropriate human services are available to meet the needs of the region's current and future workforce.

Community Assets

- **Tourism and Film Industry:** Increase tourism, visitor spending, and revenue earned from the film industry in northwest Georgia.
- **Quality of Life:** Enhance quality of life amenities in the region to retain talent and gain a competitive advantage when recruiting new businesses and industry.
- **Housing:** Ensure adequate housing is available to meet the needs of the northwest Georgia workforce, which is affordable, decent, and safe.

Essential Infrastructure

- **Industrial Properties:** Ensure northwest Georgia has sufficient, ready to develop industrial properties available to meet the region's current and future needs.
- **Transportation:** Advocate for transportation projects that are critical for regional economic development.
- **High Speed Internet:** Increase coverage and accessibility of high-speed internet for residential, commercial, and industrial areas, with a focus on rural areas.
- **Traditional Infrastructure:** Ensure communities in the region have adequate basic infrastructure to implement their community and economic development objectives.

Business Climate

- **Improved Business Climate:** Increase entrepreneurship and innovation by supporting business development in existing and emerging sectors.

Human Capital

Attracting, developing, and retaining talent is critical in sustaining and growing the economy of northwest Georgia. The region should pursue a workforce strategy that ensures the labor force possesses the skills and education necessary to meet current and future needs of employers. Strengthening workforce skills will improve economic vitality that has benefits for both workers and companies. A healthy, skilled, and ready workforce will improve the overall resiliency and adaptability of the region's communities.

I. Workforce Skills

Goal: Increase the number of residents skilled in advanced manufacturing (and other middle-skill, living wage occupations) in order to meet current and changing needs of northwest Georgia employers.

Strategies:

1. Introduce robotic and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) programs into middle schools that make connections with real world applications. Support the expansion of STEAM programs and STEAM labs at the secondary school level.
2. Ensure workforce curriculum in middle and secondary schools are targeted to appropriate students.
3. Support efforts to expand apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training programs.
4. Develop education campaigns that change parental and educational staff mindset and perception of the manufacturing industry.
5. Foster industry led partnerships that collaborate with middle, secondary, and post-secondary education institutions to ensure curriculum being offered meets the needs of local industries.
6. Support programs that assist residents with completing apprenticeships, on-the-job training programs, certifications, technical degrees, and post-secondary education in high demand areas.

7. Ensure the current and future workforce, of all age groups, are prepared for jobs of the future by obtaining necessary education and training.

II. Educational Attainment

Goal: Expand the number of students in the region that are prepared for future employment in skilled and professional positions through enhanced educational opportunities and active career counseling.

Strategies:

1. Support programs that increase high school graduation rates, attendance at technical colleges, and enrollment in traditional colleges and universities.
2. Encourage students planning to attend colleges and universities to acquire advance degrees in academic areas in which a knowledge gap is anticipated due to northwest Georgia's aging population.
3. Establish new College and Career Academies (CCA) in areas that are currently underserved.
4. Foster greater cooperation between College and Career Academies and traditional high schools. Encourage school jurisdictions within the same county to cooperate in developing a single college and career academy where appropriate. Advocate for full-time-equivalent (FTE) funding revisions that would help facilitate greater levels of cooperation.
5. Assist students at the secondary school level with matching their individual aptitudes and interests to appropriate career pathways that prepare them for jobs of the future.



*Workforce Event at North Georgia
Technical College*

III. Human Services

Goal: Ensure appropriate human services are available to meet the needs of the region's current and future workforce.

Strategies:

1. Support programs that remove barriers to participation in the workforce (such as childcare, affordable healthcare, and public transportation).
2. Support programs aimed at attracting, engaging, and retaining millennials in northwest Georgia's communities and workforce (millennials bring a new paradigm for live, work, and play in downtown areas that focuses on connectivity and "quality of life issues" that needs to be understood and addressed by our communities).
3. Assess and address needs unique to the region's mentally ill population; this initiative should:
 - a. Ensure appropriate housing options are available
 - b. Work with local employers to create positions to provide a source of income for those able to work
 - c. Address transportation needs of this segment of our population.



Primary Health Center located in Mack Gaston Community Center in Dalton, Georgia.

Community Assets

Cultural and natural resources, quality of life improvements, diverse populations, thriving downtowns, quality medical facilities, and abundant agricultural lands are assets that northwest Georgia's communities should leverage for greater economic development potential. Building, improving and promoting regional and community assets will lead to a competitive advantage and provide a foundation of community resiliency.

Northwest Georgia has rich cultural heritage and abundant natural treasures. The region's natural and cultural resources contribute to the area's sense of identity and can provide a basis for sustainable, place-based economic development. The development and promotion of these natural and cultural assets has the potential to become a critical economic driver for northwest Georgia, especially in the tourism and film industries. By working together regionally, resources and opportunities can be maximized and regional economic success can be achieved.

I. Tourism and Film Industry

Goal: Increase tourism, visitor spending, and revenue earned from the film industry in northwest Georgia.

Strategies:

1. Support tourism initiatives by educating the public on the positive impact tourism brings to the region, increase funding for tourism, and market the region's tourism assets to further strengthen Georgia's economy.
2. Encourage collaborative marketing among the various communities and tourism destinations to create synergy to attract greater visitation.
3. Compile an exhaustive list of tourism resources available by county and market for promotion utilizing currently available resources (ex: ExploreGA.com).
4. Encourage and assist communities in participation in Georgia's Camera Ready Communities program, which connects film and TV productions with skilled county liaisons across the state to provide local expertise and support.

II. Quality of Life

Goal: Enhance quality of life amenities in the region to retain talent and gain a competitive advantage when recruiting new businesses and industry.

Strategies:

1. Enhance and expand community parks, trails, and recreation programs to retain talent and attract investment in the area.
2. Implement public art programs to improve downtowns and public spaces. Support concerts, festivals, and special events in city- and town-centers that attract all sectors of the population to the region's downtown areas.
3. Host “real life” retreats and learning/listening sessions with all population segments, especially millennials, to aid in cross-understanding of needs, mind-sets, etc.
4. Utilize public schools and libraries to host adult education and training events.
5. Develop, implement and enforce land use policies that balance economic competitiveness and resiliency with cultural and natural resource preservation.

III. Housing

Goal: Ensure adequate housing is available to meet the needs of the northwest Georgia workforce, which is affordable, decent, and safe.

Strategies:

1. Create an Affordable Housing Taskforce with members from each county to assess housing issues and create a regional housing implementation plan.
2. Support local efforts to improve workforce housing.

- 3. Encourage private developers to construct new workforce and affordable housing in underserved areas. Promote the housing tax credit and other state and federal housing programs that encourage private investment in workforce housing.
- 4. To foster growth and job creation/retention across the region, ensure that housing availability is readily available for all income levels.



Appalachian Regional Commission representatives toured tourism destination Howard Finster's Paradise Gardens



Historic Downtown Calhoun

Essential Infrastructure

To remain competitive in the global economy, northwest Georgia communities must continue to maintain, improve, and expand infrastructure necessary for economic growth. Essential infrastructure for economic development includes both above-ground and below-ground facilities, such as transportation, utilities, and broadband. Ready to develop properties are also vital for continued industrial growth.

Reliable transportation networks are critical to economic growth and resiliency. Without access to a well-maintained transportation network, raw materials and produced goods cannot be efficiently moved into or out of the region leading to low productivity. Reliable transportation is also necessary to ensure employees can arrive at work safely and on time. When completed, construction of the Appalachian Inland Port in Murray County will greatly enhance northwest Georgia's access to global markets. However, trucking will remain important to regional industries, as goods moving via other modes often use trucks for the first and last mile of the trip.

Access to affordable high-speed internet is essential to remain competitive in today's global economy. High-speed internet is not only critical for attracting high-paying, advanced manufacturing jobs to the region, but is also vital to sustaining the upward trend in entrepreneurship and innovation stimulated by growth of virtual and home-based businesses. As a rural region, northwest Georgia is at a competitive disadvantage due to the digital divide in America. According to a recent report only 75% of rural Americans have access to fixed internet connection speeds of at least 10 mbps, compared to 98% of urban residents. This divide is even greater when comparing speeds that meet the FAA's standards for the minimum broadband service of 25 mbps down and 3 mbps up. Only 61% of rural residents meet the current standards for broadband service, compared to 94% of their urban counterparts. Lack of broadband in rural areas not only affects the region's economic competitiveness, but has adverse impacts on many aspects of rural resident's lives, including education, entertainment, and telemedicine.

Communities need adequate water and wastewater systems to attract businesses, generate jobs, and sustain a basic standard of living for residents. Lack of basic infrastructure can impede the region's ability to pursue community and economic development goals and delay recovery from economic downturns and natural disasters. Investing in basic infrastructure is essential for maintaining northwest Georgia's economic resiliency and competitiveness.

I. Industrial Properties

Goal: Ensure northwest Georgia has sufficient, ready to develop industrial properties available to meet the region's current and future needs.

Strategies:

1. Identify funding mechanisms to provide utilities (such as water, sewer, gas, and fiber) along East-West corridors for future industrial development.
2. Identify properties that are appropriate for development or redevelopment as industrial sites or as industrial parks.
3. Develop a campaign, through the local development authorities, that can be utilized in each county to educate the public and elected officials on Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) sites to include:
 - a. What is GRAD
 - b. The benefits of GRAD certification
 - c. Funding options to certify GRAD property



Appalachian Regional Commission Program Managers visiting the Fannin County Spec Building.

II. Transportation

Goal: Advocate for transportation projects that are critical for regional economic development.

Strategies:

1. Form and participate in a regional transportation coalition to advocate for vital projects in northwest Georgia.
 - a. Focus advocacy on appropriate transportation networks leading to and from the Appalachian Inland Port.
 - b. Continue to advocate for the development of safe, efficient, and reliable East-West transportation corridors.
2. Encourage state and local governments to support and pursue options that increase the availability of transportation funding (including consideration of Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST) referendums).
3. Support investments in multi-modal transportation systems that strengthen connections to regional, national, and global markets.
4. Encourage local transit providers to focus on efficiently connecting people to jobs and services.



III. High Speed Internet

Goal: Increase coverage and accessibility of high-speed internet for residential, commercial, and industrial areas, with a focus on rural areas.

Strategies:

1. Identify resources to support the expansion of high speed internet and other telecommunication infrastructure to all communities in the Northwest Georgia Region.
2. Prepare a regional broadband assessment to accurately identify underserved areas.
3. Identify existing assets and service providers in order to foster public/private partnerships to pursue expansion opportunities.
4. Support efforts of local governments and school districts to ensure all students have access to high speed internet service to enable students to complete assignments at home and advance their educational attainment.

IV. Traditional Infrastructure

Goal: Ensure communities in the region have adequate basic infrastructure to implement their community and economic development objectives.

Strategies:

1. Identify areas with aging infrastructure and assist communities with developing a plan and identifying funding mechanisms for replacement.
2. Ensure each community has adequate water and wastewater treatment capacity to allow for anticipated commercial growth and industrial development.

3. Extend water and sewer infrastructure to areas in northwest Georgia where commercial and industrial development are appropriate and anticipated.
4. Inter-connect water systems of the various jurisdictions to ensure resiliency in times of drought and other emergencies.

Business Climate

Fostering an attractive environment for economic growth is essential to creating jobs, improving living standards, and financing necessary public services. Northwest Georgia communities should promote a strong business climate that supports entrepreneurial and business development in existing and emerging sectors. A business climate that supports small-scale, as well as large, enterprises is critical for economic growth, innovation, and resiliency.

I. Improved Business Climate

Goal: Increase entrepreneurship and innovation by supporting business development in existing and emerging sectors.

Strategies:

1. Ensure the Northwest Georgia Region's ability to compete globally by supporting sound regulatory practices and a favorable tax environment that enables further economic development growth in manufacturing, tourism, entrepreneurs, and small business start-ups.
2. Develop Business Centers to act as incubators and accelerators providing business development services and space for entrepreneurs in the region to aid with entrepreneurship and innovation. Consider merits of the "Georgia Southern" model which provides an innovation network with physical locations that foster innovation in small communities.
3. Improve access to capital for entrepreneurs, start-up companies, and innovative expansions that focus on emerging markets.
4. Broaden focus of the Floor 360 Initiative to clearly include all advance manufacturers, not just the floor covering industry.

Plan of Action

The Northwest Georgia Regional Commission, the NWGRC CEDS Committee, Northwest Georgia counties and cities, local/regional/state economic development individuals/groups are all responsible for implementation of the CEDS goals/objectives and work program. The NWGRC, utilizing Economic Development Administration Planning Investment funds, will assist and guide responsible parties in the implementation of the CEDS.

In addition to EDA grant funds the NWGRC will employ the following implementation tools in meeting the CEDS goals and projects: Georgia Department of Community Affairs Business Development Funds, Appalachian Regional Commission Grant Funds, US Department of Agriculture-Rural Development Economic Development Programs, OneGeorgia Authority, Georgia Recreational Trails Program, U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund, and local and statewide initiatives such as Freeport Exemption, Job Tax Credits, Enterprise Zones and job training programs.

Performance Measures

Northwest Georgia Regional Commission's report of accomplishments to EDA will be used to evaluate the successful development and implementation of the CEDS. Primary evaluation criteria will include private sector jobs created/retained, private investment, number and types of businesses/industries assisted, and the economic environment of the region. As annual CEDS updates are prepared, NWGRC staff will measure the success of meeting identified CEDS goals and report the same to the NWGRC CEDS Committee and NWGRC Council. Specific performance measures that may be used to measure success for identified goals include the following.

Human Capital

- **Workforce Skills:** Increased number of students in career and technical education programs, including apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training programs.
- **Educational Attainment:** Increased number of residents that have high school diplomas, have graduated from College and Career Academies, and have received post-secondary certificates or degrees.
- **Human Services:** Increased number of programs that remove barriers to participation in the workforce (such as childcare, affordable healthcare, and public transportation).

Community Assets

- **Tourism and Film Industry:** Increase in tourism and visitor spending in the region; increased participation in Georgia's Camera Ready Communities program.
- **Quality of Life:** Number of projects completed aimed at improving quality of life amenities in the region, such as trail, parks, recreation programs, community centers, and public safety programs.
- **Housing:** Number of projects completed that increases or improves availability of workforce housing, which is affordable, decent, and safe.

Essential Infrastructure

- Industrial Properties: Increase in ready to develop industrial parks, spec buildings, and Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) sites.
- Transportation: Number of projects completed that are critical for regional economic development.
- High Speed Internet: Increase coverage and accessibility of high-speed internet in northwest Georgia.
- Traditional Infrastructure: Number of projects completed that provide or improve basic infrastructure that allow communities to implement their community and economic development objectives.

Business Climate

- Improved Business Climate: Increase number programs supporting business development in existing and emerging sectors; enhanced access to capital; and number of new or improved business centers that act as incubators and accelerators providing business development services and space.

Appendix

- Resolution Authorizing Transmittal of CEDS
- CEDS Strategy Committee
- Four-Year Graduation Rate
- Industry Mix

Resolution Authorizing Transmittal of CEDS

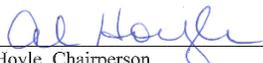
A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Committee has prepared a **2017-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** for the Northwest Georgia Region, in compliance with the Economic Development Administration's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies Summary of Requirements and 13 CFR § 303.7.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the **2017-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** is hereby authorized to be transmitted to the Economic Development Administration for review, pending changes and comments received through September 25, 2017.

SO RESOLVED this 21st day of September, 2017.




Al Hoyle, Chairperson
Northwest Georgia Regional Commission


Lloyd Frasier, Executive Director
Northwest Georgia Regional Commission

CEDS Strategy Committee

The governing Council of the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission is designated as the CEDS Strategy Committee. This body includes both local elected officials and private sector representatives from each of northwest Georgia’s counties, as well as several statewide appointees. The members of the Regional Commission Council, at the time of adoption of this plan, are listed below:

Northwest Georgia Regional Commission Council			
Bartow County	Mr. Steve Taylor	Rev. Louis Tonsmeire, Sr.	Mr. Clarence Brown
Catoosa County	Mr. Jim Cutler	Vacant	Vacant
Chattooga County	Mr. Jason R. Winters	Honorable Harry Harvey	Mr. James H. Henry
Dade County	Mr. Ted M. Rumley	Honorable Alex Case	Mr. Peter Cervelli
Fannin County	Mr. Stan Helton	Honorable Donna Whitener	Mr. Bill Simonds
Floyd County	Ms. Rhonda Wallace	Mr. Craig McDaniel	Mr. Ronnie Kilgo
Gilmer County	Mr. Charlie Paris	Honorable Al Hoyle	Mr. Hubert B. Parker
Gordon County	Mr. M.L. (Bud) Owens	Mr. David Hammond	Mr. DeWayne Bowen
Haralson County	Mr. H. Allen Poole	Mr. Terry Crawford	Mr. Bob Birky
Murray County	Mr. Greg Hogan	Mr. Tyson Haynes	Mr. Steve Noland
Paulding County	Mr. David Carmichael	Honorable Boyd Austin	Mr. Greg Perry
Pickens County	Mr. Robert P. Jones	Honorable John W. Weaver	Mr. Gary E. Reece
Polk County	Ms. Jennifer Hulse	Mr. Jordan Hubbard	Mr. N. Alan Dean
Walker County	Mr. Shannon Whitfield	Mr. Chip Catlett	Vacant
Whitfield County	Ms. Lynn Laughter	Honorable Ken Gowin	Mr. Mike Babb
Statewide Appointees	Dr. Michele Taylor	Mr. David Guldenschuh	Mr. Don Murray
	Mr. Nicholas Chester		

Four-Year Graduation Rate

Georgia Department of Education 2016 Four-Year Graduation Rate			
System Name	Graduation Class Size	Total Graduated	Graduation Rate
Bartow County	1,057	855	80.9%
Catoosa County	860	735	85.5%
Chattooga County	221	177	80.1%
Dade County	156	148	94.9%
Fannin County	182	166	91.2%
Floyd County	802	618	77.1%
Gilmer County	256	236	92.2%
Haralson County	287	232	80.8%
Murray County	585	500	85.5%
Paulding County	2,218	1,753	79.0%
Pickens County	277	261	94.2%
Polk County	488	397	81.4%
Walker County	630	539	85.6%
Whitfield County	956	709	74.2%
Bremen City	136	131	96.3%
Calhoun City	251	243	96.8%
Cartersville City	296	251	84.8%
Chickamauga City	112	110	98.2%
Dalton City	537	438	81.6%
Rome City	387	359	92.8%
Trion City	116	114	98.3%
Norwest Georgia Region	10,810	8,972	83.0%

Source: Georgia Department of Educations

Industry Mix

Industry Mix – Northwest Georgia 2016					
INDUSTRY		Average Number of Establishments	Average Monthly Employment	Average Monthly Percent	Average Weekly Wages
Goods-Producing		2,886	75,750	29.2	868
	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	109	833	0.3	615
	Mining	20	510	0.2	1,316
	Construction	1,619	9,179	3.5	855
	Manufacturing	1,138	65,229	25.2	869
Service-Providing		11,945	143,423	55.4	680
	Utilities	30	1,335	0.5	1,785
	Wholesale Trade	939	10,081	3.9	1,034
	Retail Trade	2,639	35,370	13.7	495
	Transportation and Warehousing	481	8,463	3.3	823
	Information	137	1,879	0.7	953
	Finance and Insurance	818	4,867	1.9	946
	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	562	2,086	0.8	730
	Professional Scientific & Technical Svc	1,279	6,643	2.6	1,141
	Management of Companies and Enterprises	53	1,006	0.4	1,600
	Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt, Remediation	879	9,878	3.8	565
	Education Services	109	2,118	0.8	785
	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,475	27,778	10.7	893
	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	168	2,014	0.8	385
	Accommodation and Food Services	1,349	24,671	9.5	289
	Other Services (except Public Admin.)	1,027	5,234	2.0	602
Unclassified - industry not assigned		758	741	0.3	787
Total - Private Sector		15,589	219,914	84.9	745
Total - Government		791	39,159	15.1	730
	Federal Government	128	1,393	0.5	1,072
	State Government	267	5,622	2.2	682
	Local Government	396	32,144	12.4	724
ALL INDUSTRIES		16,380	259,072	100.0	743

Northwest Georgia's Economic Development Strategy

2017-2022 REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDs)