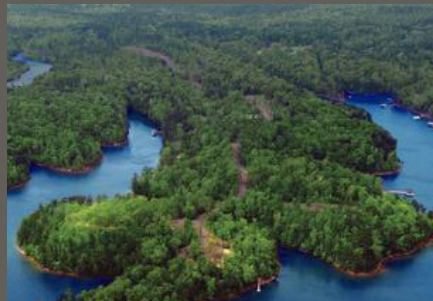


# 5

# FORWARD: 2018-2022

**C**OMPREHENSIVE  
**E**CONOMIC  
**D**EVELOPMENT  
**S**TRATEGY



## 2019 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

## NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA REGION

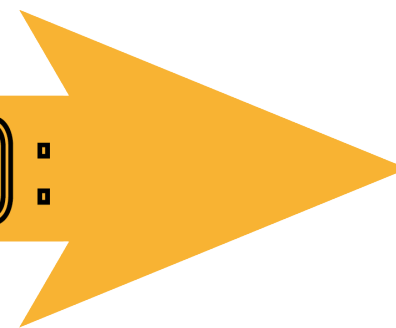




# COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

# 5

# FORWARD: 2018-2022



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 2019 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

<b>1</b> INTRODUCTION	1
<b>2</b> CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE	2
<b>3</b> MISSION, VISION, & GOALS	3
<b>4</b> EVALUATION FRAMEWORK	4
<b>5</b> PERFORMANCE	5
GOALS	6
PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES UPDATE	8
NEW & EXPANDING INDUSTRY	9
SELECTED ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS	10
REGION & COUNTY DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOTS	11

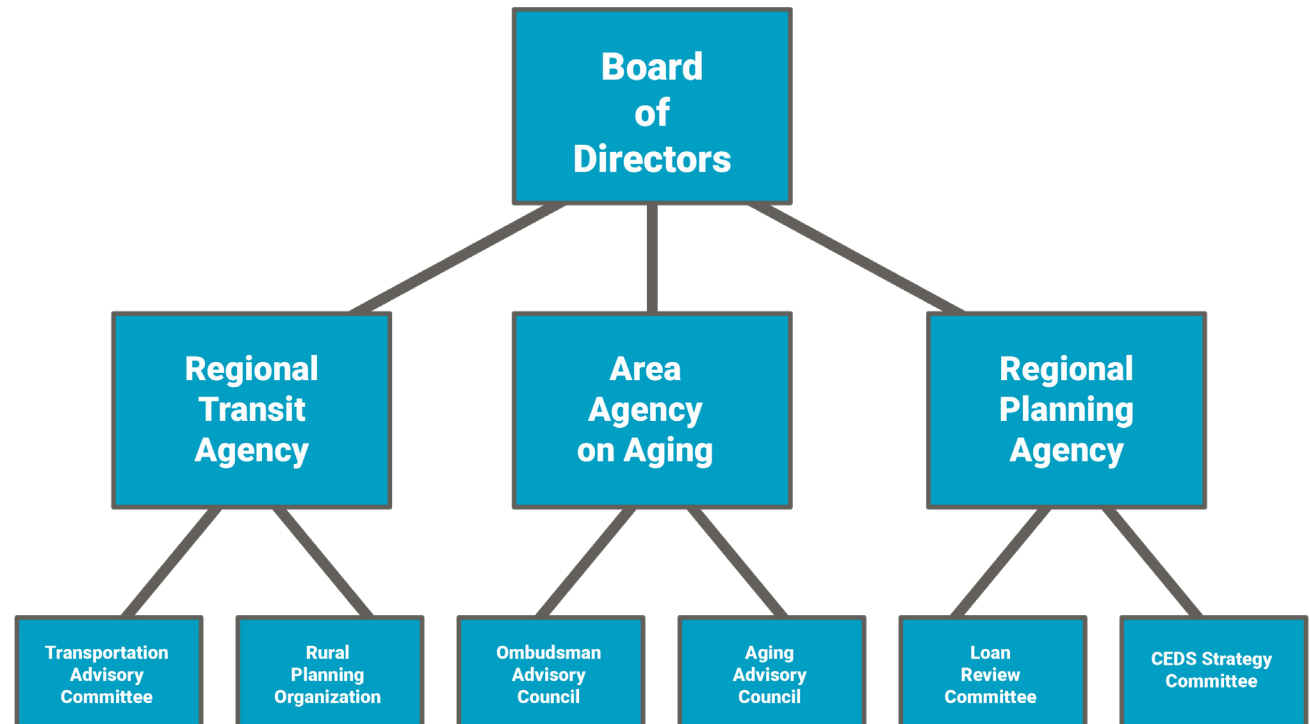
APPENDIX	15
A.) RESOLUTION	15
B.) REFERENCES	16
C.) MAPS & REVISED STRATEGIES	17
MAPS	18
REVISED STRATEGIES	21

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG) was originally created in 1966 as the North Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission. NARCOG was re-established with its new name and subsequently certified by Governor George Wallace on November 1, 1971. NARCOG operates under the authority of Section 3 of Act No. 1126 of the 1969 Regular Session of the Legislature of Alabama. This Act, as amended, can be found in Sections 11-85-50 through 11-85-73 of the 1975 Code of Alabama. It provides for the creation and operation of regional planning and development commissions, which have among their many purposes, to “carry on continuous, comprehensive planning for the Region, assessing needs, resources, and development opportunities and formulating goals, objectives, policies, and standards to guide physical, economic, and human resource development.” NARCOG offers a multitude of services to the people and communities in our Region, as illustrated in the adjacent organizational structure diagram.

The 2019 Annual Performance Report is intended to provide a snapshot of accomplishments achieved over the past year in the implementation of the mission, vision, and goals outlined in the Region's CEDS and found on the following page.

## NARCOG ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



# 2 CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE

During FY2019, several changes occurred to the committee representatives from a couple of the organizations. These changes were due to retirements. The new members are indicated in "red" in the list of committee members located in the table to the right.

The CEDS Strategy Committee met on July 30th at the NARCOG Board Room in Decatur. The purpose of the meeting was for NARCOG staff to provide an update on various initiatives and preliminary performance measures and receive input from the committee for the 2019 Annual Performance Report.

Suzanne Harbin (Kristi Barnett)	Wallace State Community College
Harry Schmidt	Tennessee Valley Authority
Vacant	Hartselle Chamber of Commerce
Ashley Graves	Cullman County Economic Development
Craig Johnston	Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce
John Joseph IV	Decatur–Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center
Dale Greer (Stanley Kennedy)	Cullman Economic Development Agency
Brooks Kracke	North Alabama Industrial Development Association
Tim Lovelace	NARCOG Small Business Fund Loan Committee
Jeremy Nails	Morgan County Economic Development Agency
Dr. Jim Payne	Calhoun Community College
Jesslyn Reeves	Decatur City Schools Foundation
Tami Reist	North Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association
John Seymour	Decatur–Morgan County Chamber of Commerce
Peggy Smith	Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce
Tabitha Pace	Lawrence County Industrial Development Board
Larry Waye	Decatur–Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center & NARCOG Board Member

# 3 MISSION, VISION, & GOALS

## MISSION

**Dedicated to improving the quality of life for the citizens of Cullman County, Lawrence County, and Morgan County.**

## VISION

**Visioneering a diversified, resilient, and sustainable economic future for our Region that is forward thinking, embraces change, and capitalizes on our assets, while building on our traditional successes.**

## GOALS

- 1. Inspire Innovation and Entrepreneurship**
- 2. Foster Sustainable Economic Prosperity**
- 3. Improve Education and Workforce Development**
- 4. Invest in and Modernize Transportation and Infrastructure**
- 5. Leverage Cultural and Natural Assets**
- 6. Advocate Planning and Leadership Development**

# 4 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

An evaluation framework is comprised of performance measures used to gauge progress on the CEDS and its impact on the regional economy, as well as providing information for the CEDS Annual Performance Reports. Therefore, performance measures were selected based upon what is important to our Region and used to evaluate the progress in achieving the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies in our CEDS. Below are our selected performance measures.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Number of jobs created (anticipated)
- Number of jobs retained
- Number of new businesses and/or industries
- Number of expanding businesses and/or industries
- Amount of private sector investment
- Amount of public sector investment
- Number of labor force
- Number of unemployed
- Unemployment rate
- Changes in the economic environment in the Region
- Number of grants submitted and amount
- Number of grants funded and amount
- Number of NARCOG Small Business Fund loans
- Amount of NARCOG Small Business Fund loans
- Local revenue generated
- Net taxable assessed valuation
- Wealth creation such as GDP per capita
- Median household income
- Per capita income
- Total personal income
- Annual wages per employee
- Median home value
- Population with no health insurance coverage
- Educational attainment – high school diploma and bachelor's degree
- New partnerships
- New development regulations
- New plans (downtown plans, comprehensive plans, hazardous mitigation)



# 5 PERFORMANCE

In terms of implementation of the CEDS this past year, the NARCOG EDD and others made significant headway. The following sections: Goals, Programs and Initiatives Updates, New and Expanding Industry, Selected Economic Highlights, and Regional & County Demographics Snapshots represents the various efforts towards implementation, but is not all inclusive of everything accomplished within our region.





# GOAL 1

## INSPIRE INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Create a culture of technological innovation and entrepreneurship in the NARCOG Region by investing in forward-thinking entrepreneurial and business development strategies that embrace change, create disrupters, and strengthen economic opportunities.

### Decatur-Morgan County E-Center:

- *E-C 2.0 Building Tomorrow's Economy* – ARC grant - \$100,000 (\$200,000 Total); *Not Funded*
- *TECNA 3.0* – USDA RBEG grant - \$99,750 (\$110,650 Total); *Funded*

# GOAL 2

## FOSTER SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Foster economic prosperity for the Region that is resilient, diversified, globally responsive, demands quality development, community wellness, and environmental quality through the holistic concept of sustainability.

### NARCOG Small Business Fund:

- 6 loans
- 10 jobs created
- 30 jobs retained
- \$645,000 loaned
- \$1,558,700 private investment leveraged

# GOAL 3

## IMPROVE EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Improve the education, knowledge, skills, and health of all residents for a ready workforce to strengthen community and economic development opportunities.

### NARCOG

- *Eliminating Barriers for Non-Traditional Workers* - ARC grant - \$69,549 (\$139,098); *Pending*
- *Hanceville Senior Center* - CDBG \$250,000; *Pending*

### Lawrence County BOE

- *Foundation for the Future* - ARC grant \$199,296 (\$415,400); *Funded*

### Calhoun Community College

- *Automotive Technology for Dual Enrollment Students* - ARC grant \$199,997 (\$421,284 total); *Funded*

Cook Museum of Natural Science



## GOAL 4

### INVEST IN & MODERNIZE TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Invest in and modernize transportation and critical infrastructure such as broadband, water, sewer, and others to support community and economic development opportunities.

- NARCOG Regional Transis Agency "Ride the River Circulator" - Pilot Initiative
- North Courtland *Drainage Improvements* - CDBG - \$347,300; *Pending*
- Falkville Sewer System Improvements - CDBG - \$350,000 (408,083 Total); *Funded/In-progress*
- Hillsboro Drainage Improvements - CDBG - \$344,542; *Pending*
- Town Creek Sewer Improvements - CDBG \$350,000; *Pending*
- Courtland Water Improvements - CDBG \$350,000; *Pending*
- Garden City Water Improvements - CDBG \$350,000; *Pending*
- Cullman Streets, Drainage, Water, Sewer Improvements - CDBG \$450,000; *Pending*
- West Morgan East Lawrence Water and Sewer Authority - reverse osmosis water treatment process - ADEMDWSRF \$30,000,000; *Loan Funded*
- Cullman Regional-Folsom Field Airport - reconstruction of existing taxiways - FAA \$1,543,500; *Funded*
- Pryor Field Regional Airport - runway improvements - FAA \$585,699 (\$650,777 total); *Funded*
- Cullman - Highway 157 widening - \$14,000,000 (BUILD) & \$14,000,000 (ALDOT); *Funded*

## GOAL 5

### LEVERAGE CULTURAL & NATURAL ASSETS

Leverage the Region's cultural and natural assets to strengthen the community and provide for economic development opportunities.

- Cullman County Parks/Playground - CDBG \$243,000; *Pending*



## GOAL 6

### ADVOCATE PLANNING & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Advocate for community and regional planning and build the capacity and skills of current and future leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate and advance community and economic development opportunities.

- 2020 Census PSAP (Lawrence & Morgan Counties); *Complete*
- 2020 Census CCC's (Lawrence & Morgan Counties); *Underway*
- Hanceville ACE Designation; *Complete*
- Hartselle ACE Re-designation; *Underway*
- Regional Downtown Network Initiative w/Main Street Alabama; *Underway* (Year 3 - Walkability Audits & Reports)
- Hanceville Zoning Map Update; *Complete*
- Cullman County Housing Study
- Good Hope Zoning Ordinance Update; *Adopted*
- Cullman Development Regulations Update; *Adopted*
- Priceville Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations Update; *Contract Approved*
- Hanceville Downtown Improvement Plan; *Adopted*
- Hanceville Strategic Plan; *Adopted*
- Hanceville Comprehensive Plan Update; *Underway*
- Main Street Alabama's Training Conference; *held in Decatur, August 2019*

# PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES UPDATE

- Regional Downtown Network with Main Street Alabama (Year 3)
  - 5 Walkability Audits – Hanceville, Falkville, Hartselle, Courtland, and Moulton
  - Town Creek Walkability Audit - TBD
  - Walkability Audit Projects Implementation - Underway
  - Falkville and Town Creek Community Presentations – Downtown Development (TBD - Fall 2019)
  
- Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE)
  - Hartselle Re-designation
    - NARCOG – Mentor
    - Comprehensive Plan Update (pending)
  - Hanceville - 2017 ACE Class
    - NARCOG – Team Captain
    - Phase 2 - Strategic Plan and Leadership Development

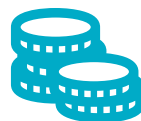
(Completed in March 2019)

- Phase 3 - Comprehensive Plan (Underway)
- Designation – May 4, 2019

- Regional Redevelopment Initiative
  - EPA Brownfields Redevelopment Brownfields Assessment Grant
    - \$300,000 - Not Funded

## Small Business Fund Program

Loan Activity Since October 1, 2018



AMOUNT		PRIVATE FUNDS LEVERAGED	JOBS CREATED	JOBS RETAINED
<b>CLOSED LOANS</b>				
	\$250,000	\$456,000	2	6
	\$150,000	\$220,000	1	5
	\$62,300	207,700	1	7
	\$50,000	\$0	2	2
	\$35,000	\$200,000	2	3
	\$100,000	\$475,000	2	6
<b>TOTAL CLOSED</b>	<b>\$645,000</b>	<b>\$1,558,700</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>APPROVED LOANS</b>				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$645,000</b>	<b>\$1,558,700</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>30</b>

## SMALL BUSINESS FUND

NARCOG operates a Small Business Fund (SBF) Program intended to assist small and medium size business and industries throughout the region with gap financing. The NARCOG SBF Program has been very successful over the years and is partially funded by EDA. Program information was made available at: NARCOG, local Chambers of Commerce, industrial development associations, Decatur-Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center, local banks, all member governments, and online at [www.narcog.org](http://www.narcog.org). For the period October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019, NARCOG SBF has done the following:


- Loan Review Committee Meetings – 3
  - October 26th
  - December 3rd
  - February 29th
  
- Bankers Breakfast- August 28th, Morgan County
  
- Adopted EDA Revolving Loan Fund Administrative Plan - June 2019



# NEW AND EXPANDING INDUSTRY

In terms of patterns and trends, employment continues to be the primary gauge in analyzing or measuring the economy of the NARCOG EDD and its service area. The following table reflects the number of new and expanding industries along with the corresponding amounts of capital investment and jobs created within the NARCOG EDD service area of Cullman, Lawrence, and Morgan Counties from October 1, 2018 to August 2019. Also, these numbers, provided by our local economic development agencies, represent what has been “announced” during this time period, and it may be several years in some cases before the actual private investment and, most importantly, the jobs are actually created.

This section is still under development.

 <b>New &amp; Expanding Industry: FY2019</b>	<b>CULLMAN COUNTY</b>	<b>LAWRENCE COUNTY*</b>	<b>MORGAN COUNTY</b>	<b>NARCOG REGION</b>
Total New Companies:				
Total New Jobs:				
Total New Capital Investment:	\$	\$	\$	\$
Total Expanding Companies:				
Total Expanding Jobs:				
Total Expanding Capital Investment:	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Total New &amp; Expanding Companies:</b>				
<b>Total New &amp; Expanding Jobs:</b>				
<b>Total New &amp; Expanding Investments:</b>	\$	\$	\$	\$

**Sources:** Cullman Economic Development Agency  
 Lawrence County Industrial Development Board  
 Morgan County Economic Development Agency

\* July 2017



# SELECTED ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

## Cullman County

- The city of Cullman received a \$14 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant program to fund the expansion of Alabama Highway 157 from two lanes to four between US. Highway 31 and Alabama Highway 69. This stretch of Hwy 157 provides a direct route to Cullman Regional, which serves more than 175,000 people in a six county area. It is anticipated that construction on this project will began early FY2020 and be completed by September 2025. In the words of Cullman State Senator, Garlan Gudger, "This much needed improvement will address our current safety and transportation concerns, along with providing a boost in economic development and allowing opportunities for expansion of industry. *Source: Cullman Tribune, December 2018*

## Lawrence County

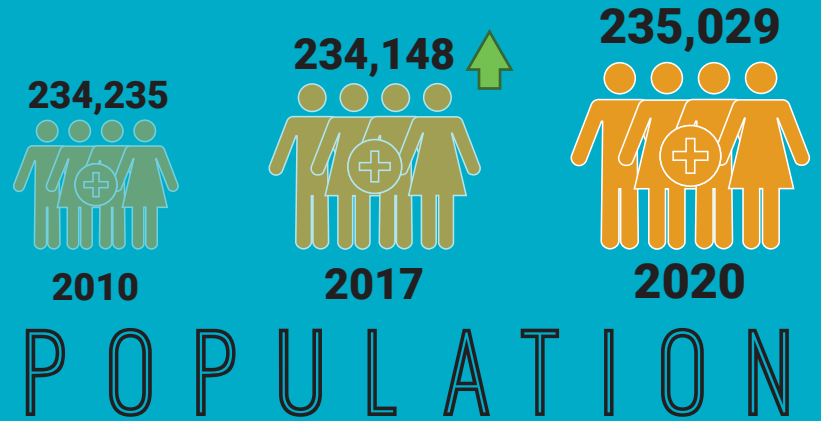
- Nucor Tubular Products is expanding a newly acquired site in the Mallard Fox West Industrial Park. The expansion will provide 35 new jobs that are anticipated to pay \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year. The \$27.2 million expansion includes new production, processing and packaging equipment, finishing, and workforce growth to support new operations. *Source: Moulton Advertiser; April 2019*
- The Lawrence County Industrial Board has selected longtime offic manager Tabitha Pace as the agency's new president and chief executive officer. Pace has worked with the county IDB for th past 20 years. In Pace's own words, "Our No. 1 job is to recruit industry to the county," she said. "It's the entire county components, the school system, the county commission, the health carea system, that have to work togetehr to attract new industry here." According to Board Chairman Kenneth Brackins, Pace "has been an integral part of everything that we have been able to accomplish here in the county and at our mallard Fox West Industrial Complex, including the Advantage Site classification and our two major companies, The Jack Daniel Cooperage and INdependence Tube." Pace replaced Tony Stockton, who retired in October 2018. *Source: Decatur Daily, October 2018*

## Morgan County

- United Launch Alliance of Decatur, Alabama, held a ceremony on May 23, 2019 for the completion of its 107 foot Atlas V core booster and the new 42 foot dual engine Vulcan Centaur upper stage rockets. The two rockets are unique in that they will be used to support ULA's commercial crew mission flying with the Boeing Starliner capsule to send astronauts to the International Space Station from U.S. soil for the first time since 2011. After the ceremony ended, the booster and upper stage rockets were locaded on the Delta Mariner cargo ship to begin their journey to the ULA facility in Cape Canaveral, Florida, for processing for the historical flight. *Source: NAIDA newsletter; May-June 2019*
- In June of 2019, The brand new, \$32.4 million Cook Museum of Natural Science facility opened on Lee Street Northeast and Fourth Avenue in Decatur. The 62,000 square foot musuem in Downtown Decatur will be the successor to the former 5000 square foot "bug museum" founded by the late John Cook Senior in 1980. The museum has a projected annual operating budget of \$5-6 million and is packed with interactive exhibits and facts about nature. The musueum has 29 full-time staff members and a full staff, including part-time employees, of 117. The museum has 11 exhibit galleries, each with numerous interactive displays. The museum will receive an estimated 214,000 visitors in the first year, not including school groups. *Source: Times Daily; June 2019*



# NARCOG REGION



## HOUSING



Housing units	104,649	↑
Vacancy	13.94%	↑
Housing units with no vehicle	4.60%	↑

## EDUCATION

81.7%	Age 25+ with ≥ high school diploma	↑
17.3%	Age 25+ with ≥ bachelor degree	↓

## HEALTH

11.8%	Population with no health insurance	↓
12.6%	Food insecurity rate	↓
20.7%	Child food insecurity rate	↓

### TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

(UNDER DEVELOPMENT)

## EMPLOYMENT

112,530	Total labor force	↑
2,995	Unemployed	↓
2.66%	Unemployment rate	↓

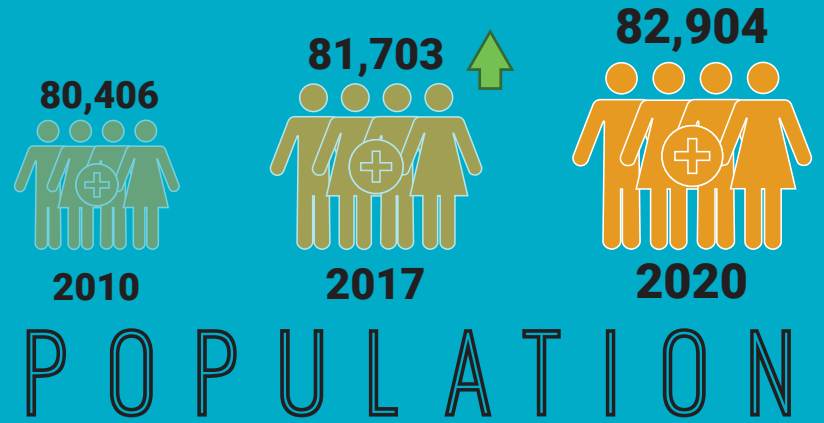
## ECONOMY

\$8,874,729,000	Total personal income	↑
\$2,619,683,660	Net taxable assessed valuation	↑
22.5%	Public assisted households	↑
\$37,826	Per capita income	↑
\$42,300	Annual wages per employee	↑

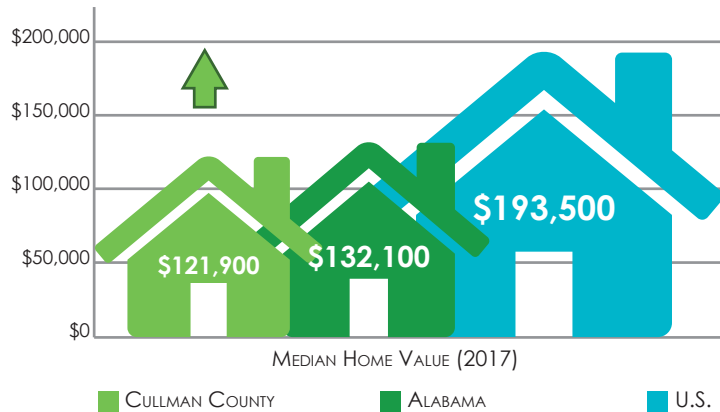




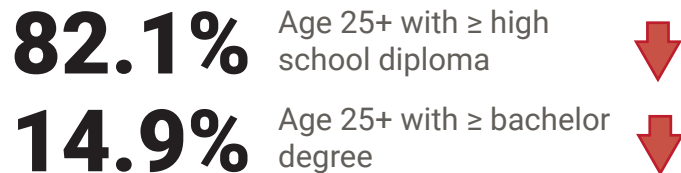
# CULLMAN COUNTY



## HOUSING



## EDUCATION



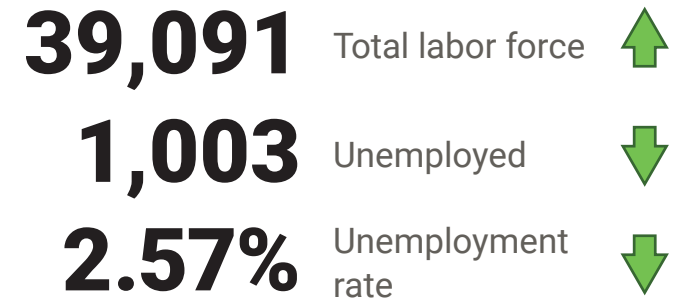
Wallace State Community College  
\_\_\_\_\_ enrolled students

## HEALTH

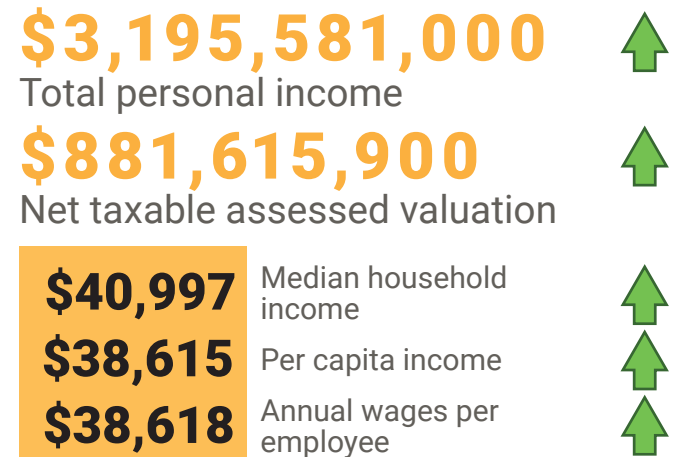


**TOP 10 EMPLOYERS**  
(UNDER DEVELOPMENT)

## EMPLOYMENT

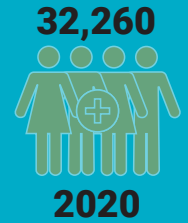


## ECONOMY



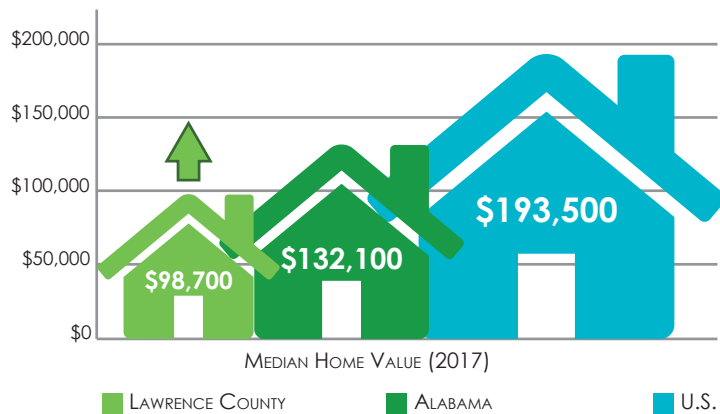


# LAWRENCE COUNTY



## POPULATION

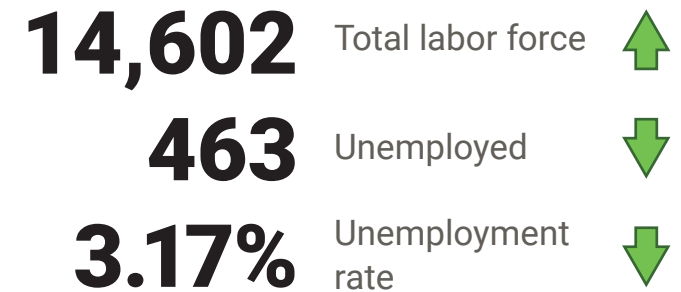
### HOUSING



### HEALTH



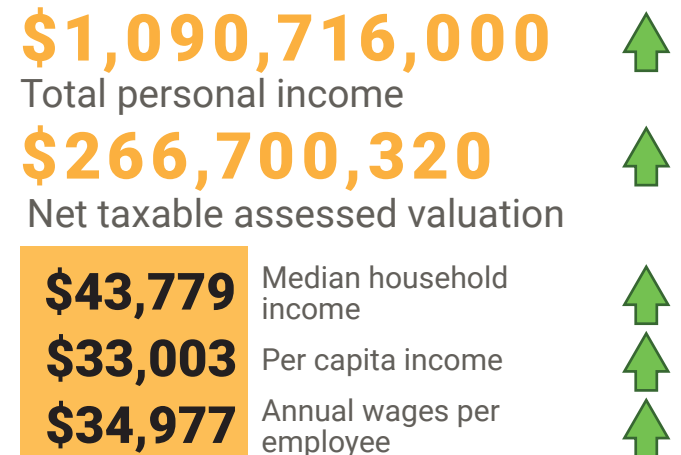
### EMPLOYMENT



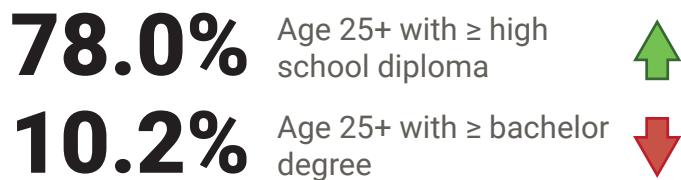
### TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

(UNDER DEVELOPMENT)

### ECONOMY

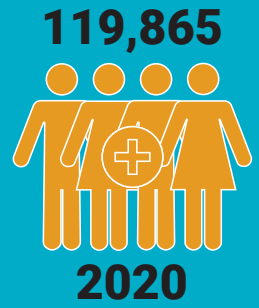
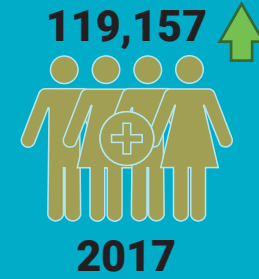
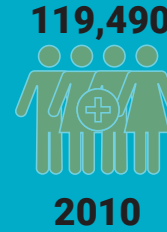


### EDUCATION



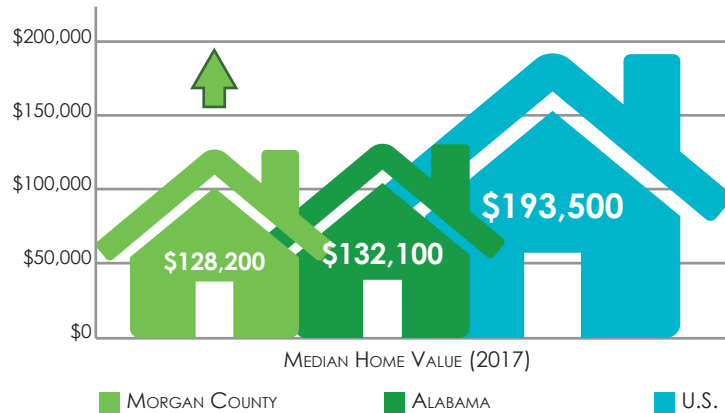


# MORGAN COUNTY

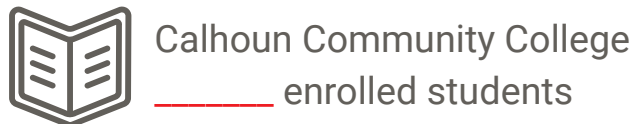
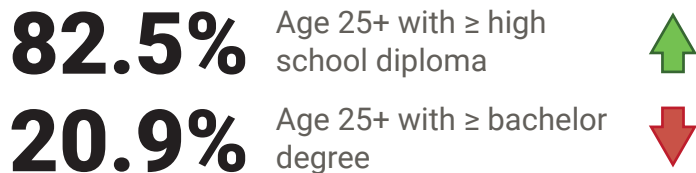


## POPULATION

### HOUSING



### EDUCATION

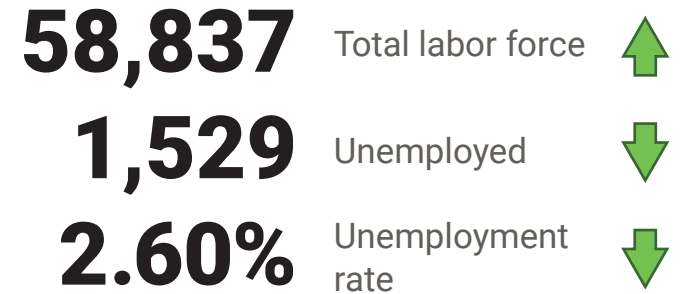


### HEALTH

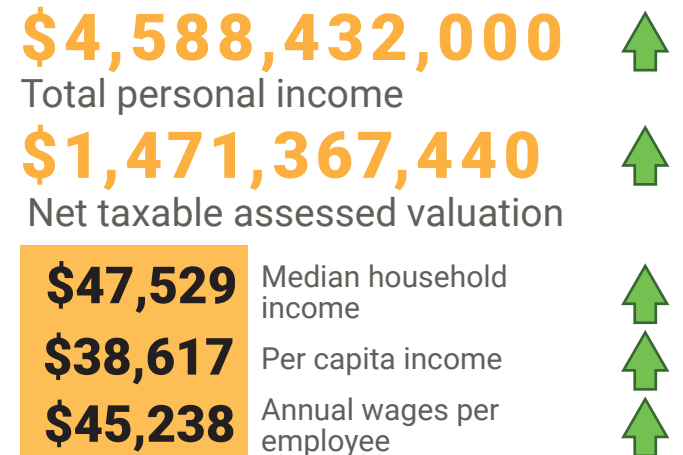


### TOP 10 EMPLOYERS (UNDER DEVELOPMENT)

### EMPLOYMENT

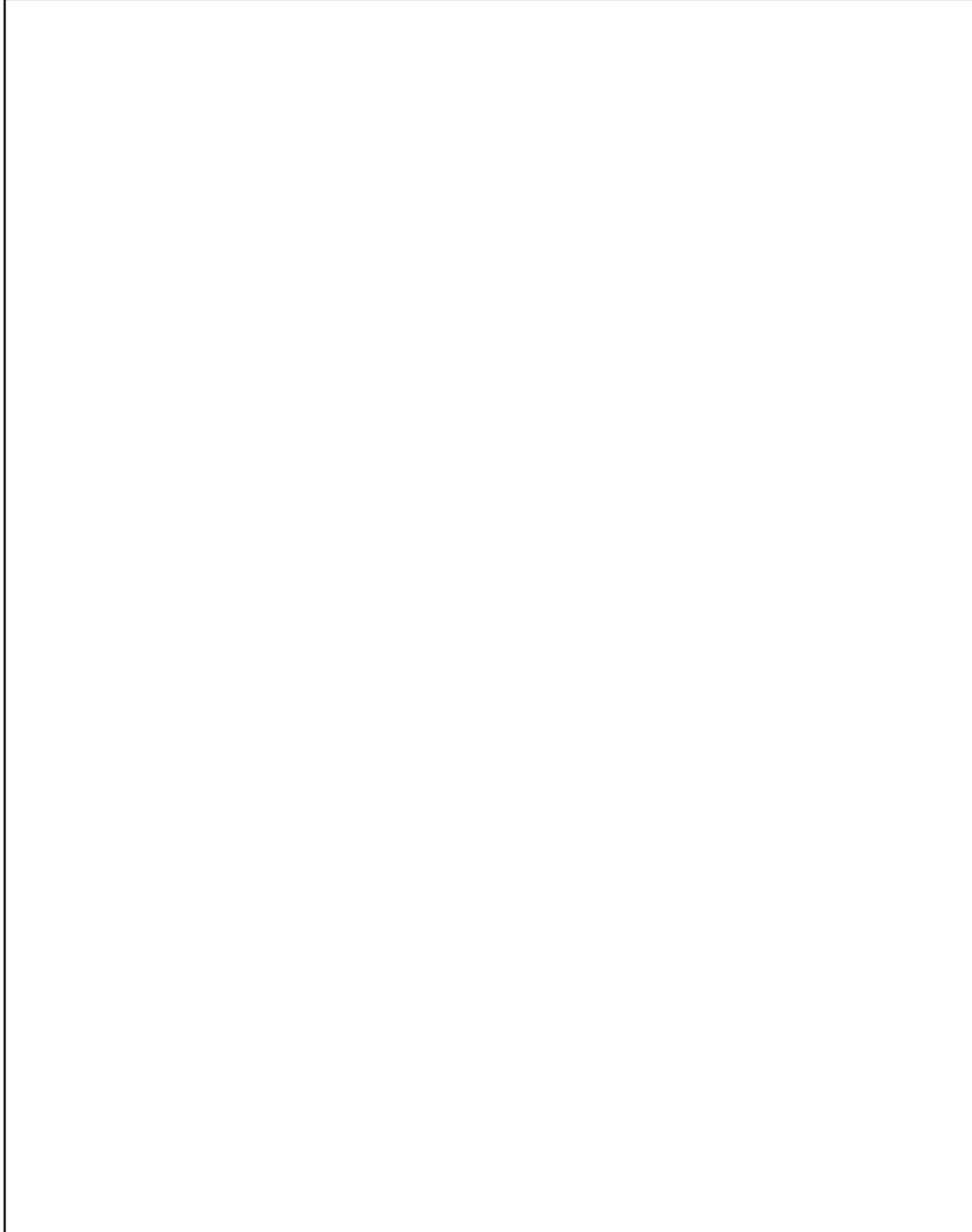


### ECONOMY



# APPENDIX

## A RESOLUTION



## B. REFERENCES

### DATA SOURCES:

- U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates
- U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census
- Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER), The University of Alabama, April 2018
- Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) 2017 CA1 Personal Income Summary: Personal Income, Population, Per Capita Personal Income
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2018 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), County High-Level Annual Averages
- Alabama Department of Revenue (ADOR), 2018 Annual Report (2017 data)
- Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Civilian Labor Force by County, July 2019 Unemployment Data
- Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, 2018 State Data Tables by county for Alabama (2017 data)
- Cullman County Top Employers:
  - Cullman Economic Development Agency (CEDA) – <https://www.cullmaneda.org/workforce/largest-employers>
- Morgan County Top Employers:
  - Morgan County Economic Development Association (MCEDA)
- Lawrence County Top Employers:
  - Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA), Advantage Alabama – <http://advantagealabama.com/county/079/lawrence/edpa-advantage-alabama-county.html>

# C MAPS & REVISED STRATEGIES

## DEFINITIONS:

**Opportunity Zones** - A new community investment tool established by Congress in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 to encourage long-term investments in low-income urban and rural communities nationwide. Opportunity Zones provide a tax incentive for investors to re-invest their unrealized capital gains into dedicated Opportunity Funds. There are 158 Census tracts that are designated Opportunity Zones distributed across all 67 counties in Alabama.

<https://eig.org/opportunityzones>

**New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program incentivizes** business and real estate investment in low-income communities of the United States via a federal tax credit. The program is administered by the US Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund and allocated by local Community Development Entities (CDEs) across the United States. The New Markets Tax Credit Program was established as part of the Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000.

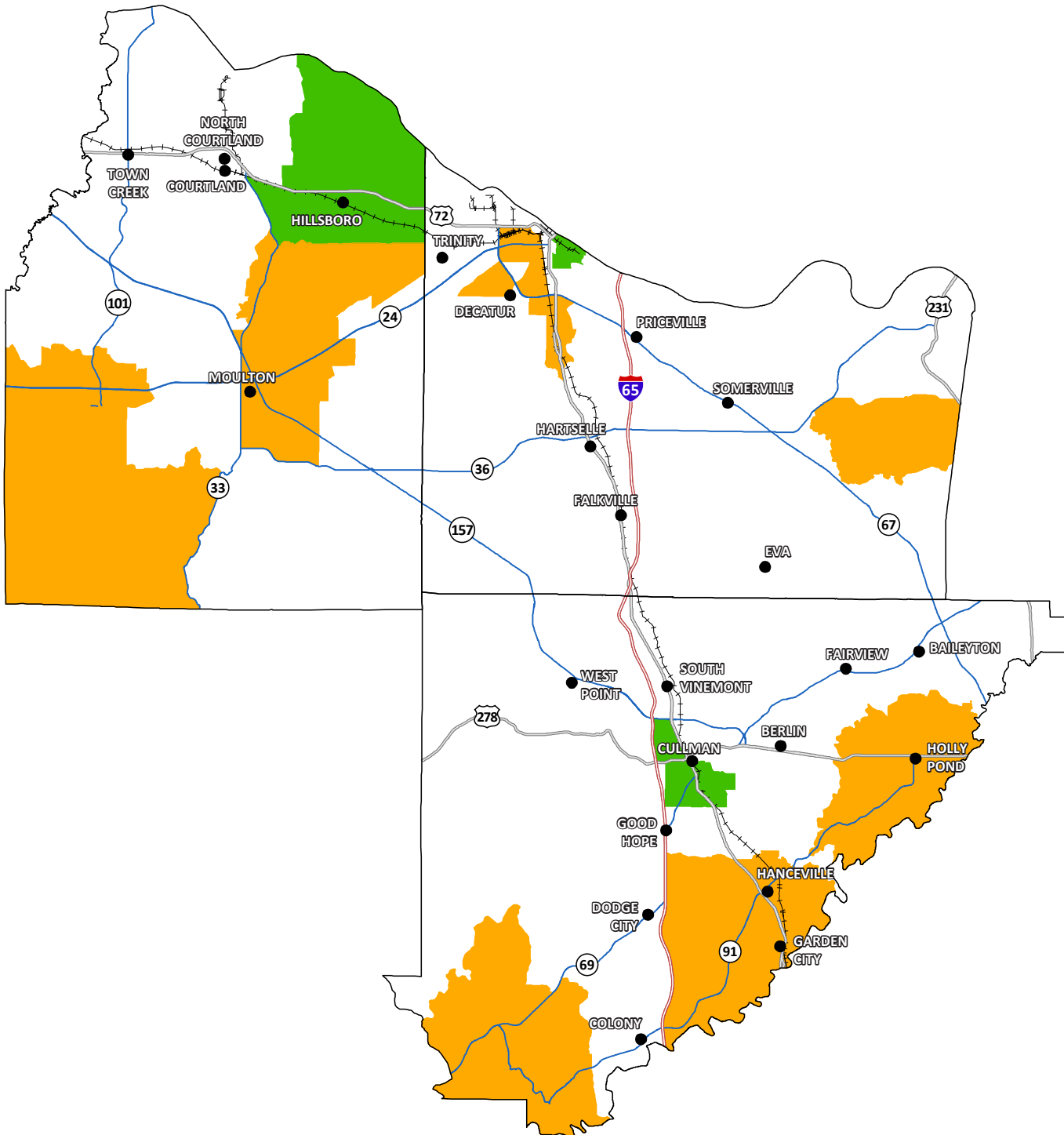
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Markets\\_Tax\\_Credit\\_Program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Markets_Tax_Credit_Program)



### **Revised Strategies to Support the CEDS Goals**

While working the last couple of years to implement the goals established in the 2017 CEDS, some gaps were recognized in the existing supporting strategies. The following is the original six goals with accompanying objectives and strategies from the 2017 CEDS along with newly identified strategies (indicated in Red) to better support the implementation of the NARCOG's CEDS.



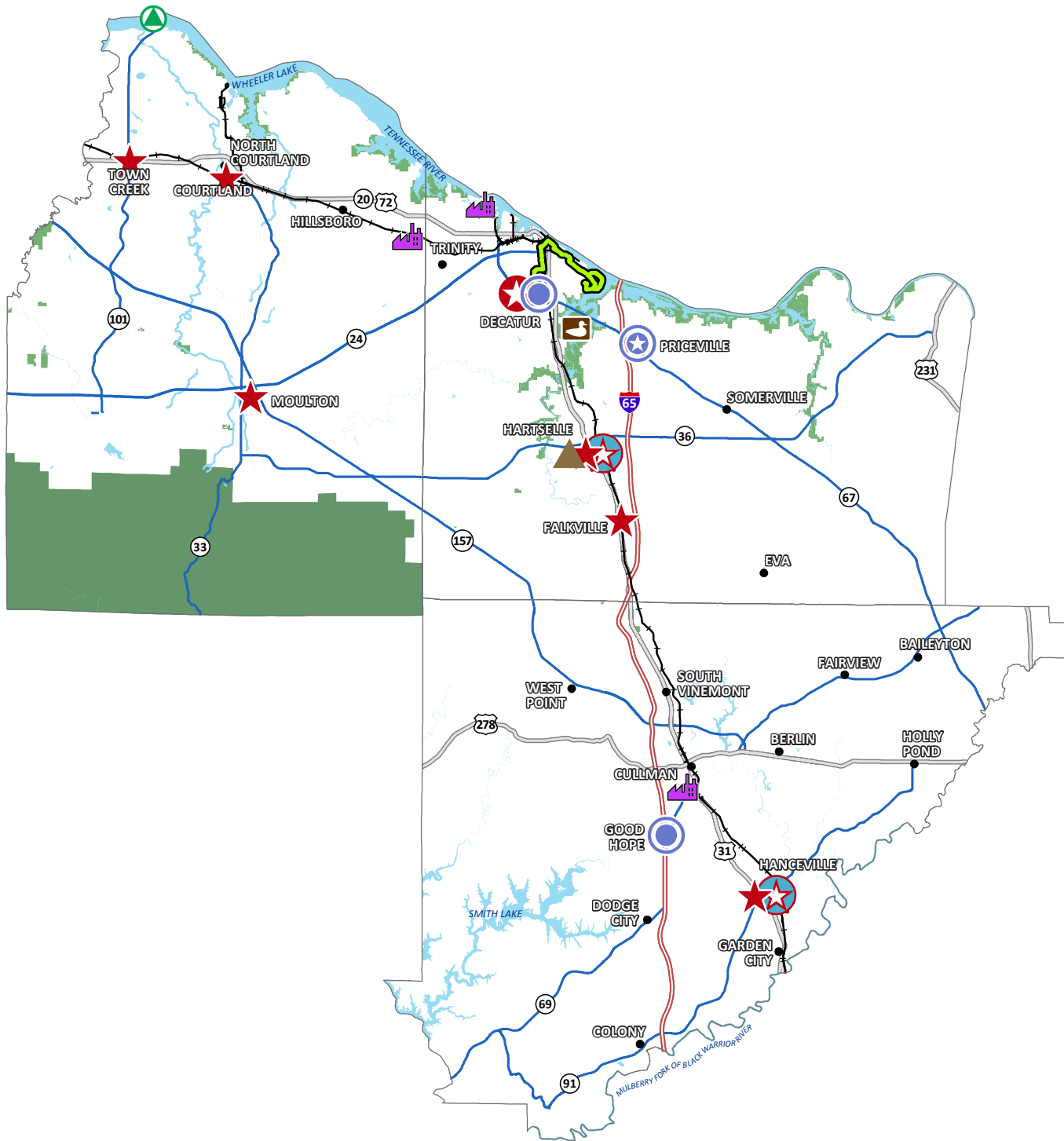
## OPPORTUNITY ZONE AND NEW MARKET TAX CREDIT (NMTC) QUALIFIED TRACTS



-  NMTC QUALIFIED
-  OPPORTUNITY ZONE *AND* NMTC QUALIFIED

# REGIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT MAP - DRAFT

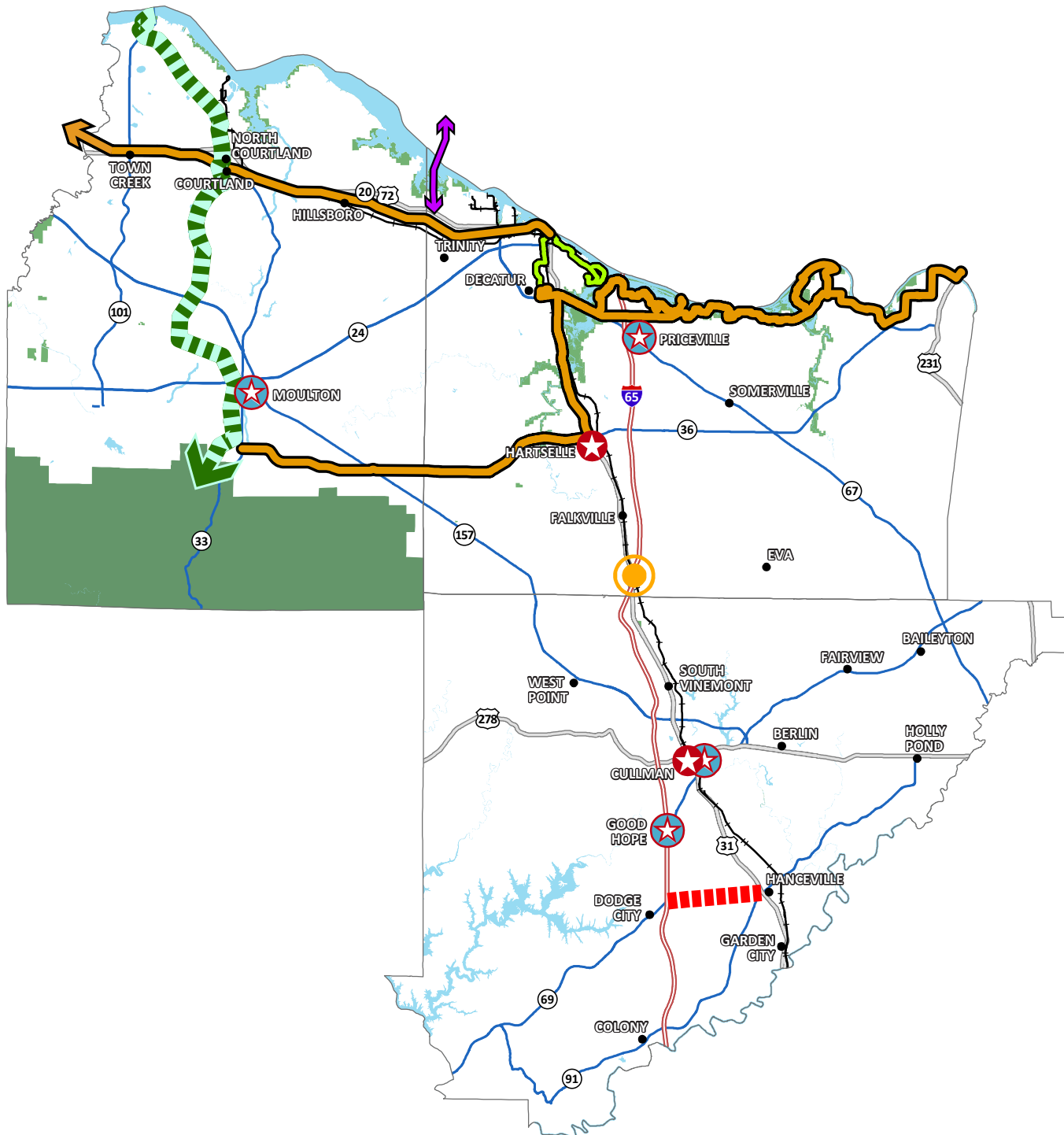
## EXISTING ASSETS



- PLACES
- COUNTIES
- WATER
- BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST
- PROTECTED AREAS
- RAILROAD
- ROAD TYPE**
- INTERSTATE
- STATE
- U.S.
- REGIONAL INITIATIVES & ASSETS**
- EXISTING TRAILS
- DESIGNALABAMA MAYORS DESIGN SUMMIT
- DESIGNALABAMA MAYORS DESIGN SUMMIT & DESIGNPLACE
- DESIGNATED ACE COMMUNITY
- MSAL DESIGNATED COMMUNITY
- MSAL NETWORK COMMUNITY
- ▲ ADEM BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM
- JOE WHEELER STATE PARK CABINS
- WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
- INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS

# REGIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT MAP - DRAFT

PROPOSED



- PLACES
  - COUNTIES
  - WATER
  - BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST
  - PROTECTED AREAS
  - RAILROAD
- ROAD TYPE**
- INTERSTATE
  - STATE
  - U.S.
- PROPOSED**
- ★ DESIGNATED ACE COMMUNITY
  - ★ MSAL DESIGNATED COMMUNITY
  - PROPOSED GREENWAY TRAILS
  - EXISTING TRAILS
  - BIG NANCE CREEK BLUE/GREENWAY TRAIL
  - BRIDGE/ROAD FROM US-72 OVER TENNESSEE RIVER
  - ROAD FROM DODGE CITY TO HANCEVILLE
  - INLAND PORT AT LACON/US-31/I-65

# GOAL 1

## INSPIRE INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**Create a culture of technological innovation and entrepreneurship in the NARCOG Region by investing in forward-thinking entrepreneurial and business development strategies that embrace change, create disrupters, and strengthen economic opportunities.**

### 1.1 Invest in next generation entrepreneurial and business development strategies

**1.1.1** Support the expansion of the E-Center, the development of a tech accelerator, and Business Incubator Centers

**1.1.2** Utilize the NARCOG Small Business Fund, venture capitalists, and angel investors for capital

**1.1.3** Support of small start-up businesses; supply technical assistance with business plans, financial management assistance, and other resources

**1.1.4** Support AgTech opportunities

### 1.2 Continue expansion of technology and innovation programs in public schools

**1.2.1** Support AMSTI and STEAM programs in public schools

**1.2.2** Support efforts to provide Chromebooks, 3D Printers, etc.

### 1.3 Develop the Region as a center for

robotic repair and innovation

**1.3.1** Support robotics programs in the public schools, such as EARLY and FIRST Robotics

**1.3.2** Support Robotics Technology Park training programs

**1.3.3** Help facilitate partnerships between the Region's public schools and the US Space and Rocket Center

# GOAL 2

## FOSTER SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

**Foster economic prosperity for the Region that is resilient, diversified, globally responsive, demands quality development, community wellness, and environmental quality through the holistic concept of sustainability.** (See Appendix C for additional economic resiliency recommendations)

### 2.1 Ensure economic resiliency by preparing and protecting the Region from natural, man-made, and technological economic shocks

**2.1.1** Develop and maintain Pre-Disaster Recovery Plans

**2.1.2** Develop and maintain Post-Disaster Recovery Plans

**2.1.3** Actively participate in hazard mitigation planning and incorporate into local plans

**2.1.4** Seek inspiration by researching local and national best practices in recovery

### 2.2 Create a diversified economic base to compete in the global marketplace

**2.2.1** Continue to attract new businesses and industries to the Region

**2.2.2** Promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and industries in the Region

**2.2.3** Maintain and develop local, regional, national and international partnerships

**2.2.4** Support and market research and development parks in the Region

**2.2.5** Actively seek foreign direct investment in the Region

**2.2.6** Connect startup and existing businesses with external and global markets utilizing export strategies

**2.2.7** Seek AdvantageSite designation for industrial parks through the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

### 2.3 Promote environmental responsibility and stewardship in the Region to protect the Region's economy

**2.3.1** Encourage responsible and environmentally friendly economic development best practices

**2.3.2** Explore opportunities in business growth in tech-based clean energy innovations

**2.3.3** Seek federal and state funds to support our Regional Brownfield Initiative to identify,

assess, clean-up, and reuse contaminated brownfield sites

## 2.4 Enhance the competitiveness of the Region's manufacturers for potential growth

2.4.1 Develop networks and support innovative manufacturing processes

## 2.5 Support redevelopment activities in identified Opportunity Zones in the Region

## 2.6 Support and promote opportunities to capitalize on Toyota-Mazda

# GOAL 3

## IMPROVE EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Improve the education, knowledge, skills, and health of all residents for a ready workforce to strengthen community and economic development opportunities.**

## 3.1 Continue expansion of technology and innovation programs in public schools

3.1.1 Support AMSTI and the STEAM programs (See 1.2.1)

## 3.2 Align existing education and training programs to establish a ready workforce for employers

3.2.1 Expand Dual Enrollment, Fast Track, Fast Track for Industry, and Virtual School to all high schools in the Region

3.2.2 Utilize Calhoun Community College and Wallace State Community College

3.2.3 Utilize the Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) programs and North Alabama Works workforce regional councils

3.2.4 Support programs that offer basic knowledge and soft-skills training to prepare workers for employment

3.2.5 Continue to support our AAA's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), a program providing job training opportunities

## 3.3 Improve access to healthcare and address chronic health conditions for workers and their families

3.3.1 Invest in access to quality and affordable healthcare, including professionals and facilities, for a healthy workforce

3.3.2 Promote NARCOG's Health and Wellness Initiative

3.3.3 Utilize the many programs available through NARCOG's Area Agency on Aging

3.3.4 Partner with the Alabama Department of Public Health to implement telemedicine opportunities to rural residents

3.3.5 Continue to utilize and promote NARCOG Transit and CARTS to provide access to healthcare

3.3.6 Support efforts to curb Opioid Epidemic

# GOAL 4

## INVEST IN & MODERNIZE TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

**Invest in and modernize transportation and critical infrastructure such as broadband, water, sewer, and others to support community and economic development opportunities.**

4.1 Explore the deployment of high speed broadband internet service through strategic use of wireless systems and smart grids that are partially funded by regional and state initiatives

4.2 Foster sharing of resources to improve multimodal transportation, including public transit, and shipping infrastructure in the Region and to leverage community development efforts in a manner that most effectively generates new resources for infrastructure and community services

4.2.1 Maintain and expand federal and state highways including the Appalachian Development Highway System and local roads

4.2.2 Develop working relationships and partnerships with the CSX and Norfolk Southern Railways

4.2.3 Capitalize on the Tennessee River, the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway and the Port of Decatur

4.2.4 Promote, maintain, and improve small local airports

**4.2.5** Invest in safe alternative transportation facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, such as sidewalks, walking trails, and bike lanes

**4.3** Promote viable and reliable Regional Transit for the elderly and disabled [See Appendix E for goals from the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan – FY 2017 (HSCTP)]

**4.3.1** Support the Regional Transit Agency that serves Lawrence and Morgan County

**4.3.2** Support the Cullman Area Rural Transit System (CARTS) and HSCTP –FY2017 plan

**4.4** Continue to administer transportation planning programs, including the North Central Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO), which provide a forum for coordinating transportation improvements in the region

**4.5** Promote the Inland Port Initiative for Transportation-Based Economic Development

**4.5.1** Seek funding for a feasibility study

**4.6** Improve, maintain, and expand existing water and sewer systems

**4.6.1** Provide professional assistance to prepare grants and other applications

**4.7** Improve, maintain, and provide adequate stormwater drainage facilities

**4.7.1** Provide professional assistance to prepare grants and other applications

**4.8** Support a Fixed Route Transit System for Downtown Decatur

**4.9** Participate in the Decatur MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Plan

## GOAL 5 LEVERAGE CULTURAL & NATURAL ASSETS

**Leverage the Region's cultural and natural assets to strengthen the community and provide for economic development opportunities.**

**5.1** Continue to partner with and support the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association to promote the cultural and natural assets in the Region

**5.1.1** Support the continued success and development of the tourism industry in the Region

**5.1.2** Promote existing special events and festivals and establish new ones

**5.2** Preserve and capitalize on existing natural assets in support of local and regional economic opportunities

**5.2.1** Promote the Tennessee River, Smith Lake, Wheeler Lake, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Bankhead National Forest, Sipsey Wilderness, and others as eco-tourist destinations

**5.2.2** Discourage development of prime agricultural land; explore incentives for conservation programs

**5.3** Preserve and capitalize on existing cultural assets in support of local and regional economic opportunities

**5.3.1** Promote the historic downtowns, Jesse Owens Park and Museum, Oakville Indian Mounds and Museum, Joe Wheeler Home, Cook Museum of Natural History, the Shrine, Ave Maria Grotto, Princess Theater, and others as tourist destinations

**5.4** Support investments in natural and cultural heritage resources for preservation and stewardship of community character

**5.4.1** Continue to partner with and support the efforts of the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area

**5.4.2** Support development of heritage tourism by investing in downtown redevelopment, gateway communities, historic districts and other unique local community features

**5.5** Support the development of the Singing River Trail and Trail of Tears, etc.



# GOAL 6

## ADVOCATE PLANNING & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

**Advocate for community and regional planning and build the capacity and skills of current and future leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate and advance community and economic development opportunities.**

### **6.1 Advocate for community and regional planning**

**6.1.1** Continue to provide planning and technical assistance for local comprehensive planning, area development plans including downtown plans, and neighborhood revitalization plans that build support for partnering investments from state, federal, and private sources

**6.1.2** Champion a Centers and Corridors planning approach to guide regional economic development and spacial patterns (e.g. downtown and corridor plans)

**6.1.3** Adopt, improve and/or enforce existing development regulations and design guidelines

**6.1.4** Continue the Regional Downtown Network Initiative partnership with Main Street Alabama

**6.1.5** Develop a community design and aging in place program at NARCOG

### **6.2 Invest in, and take advantage of, available opportunities for networking and**

training current and future leaders

**6.2.1** Encourage participation in the Alabama Community Leadership Network

**6.2.2** Encourage participation in the adult and youth leadership development programs provided by local chambers of commerce

**6.2.3** Encourage participation in the Alabama League of Municipalities training conferences

**6.2.4** Encourage participation in the Association of County Commissions of Alabama training conferences

**6.2.5** Encourage communities to participate in Main Street Alabama's training conferences and webinars

**6.2.6** Encourage eligible communities (Hartselle, Hanceville, Cullman, Good Hope, Moulton, and Priceville) to seek and maintain designation as Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE)

**6.2.7** Encourage participation in the Economic Development Association of Alabama's (EDAA) Leadership Training Program

**6.2.8** Encourage council members, planning commissioners, and building inspectors to participate in and pursue certification in the University of North Alabama's Certified Alabama Planning and Zoning Official (CAPZO) Program

**6.2.9** Encourage participation in Your Town Alabama

**6.2.10** Encourage attendance at other professional development training related to community and economic development

### **6.3 Expand upon existing regional cooperation and collaboration and look beyond regional borders**

**6.3.1** Support counties, municipalities, economic development organizations, and chambers of commerce

### **6.4 Support efforts to provide diverse housing opportunities for workers**

### **6.5 Support and promote efforts to maximize participation in the 2020 Census**