

# BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE 2022-2027

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



## 2024 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA REGION





# COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

**BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE** 2022-2027

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Cover page image of Decatur

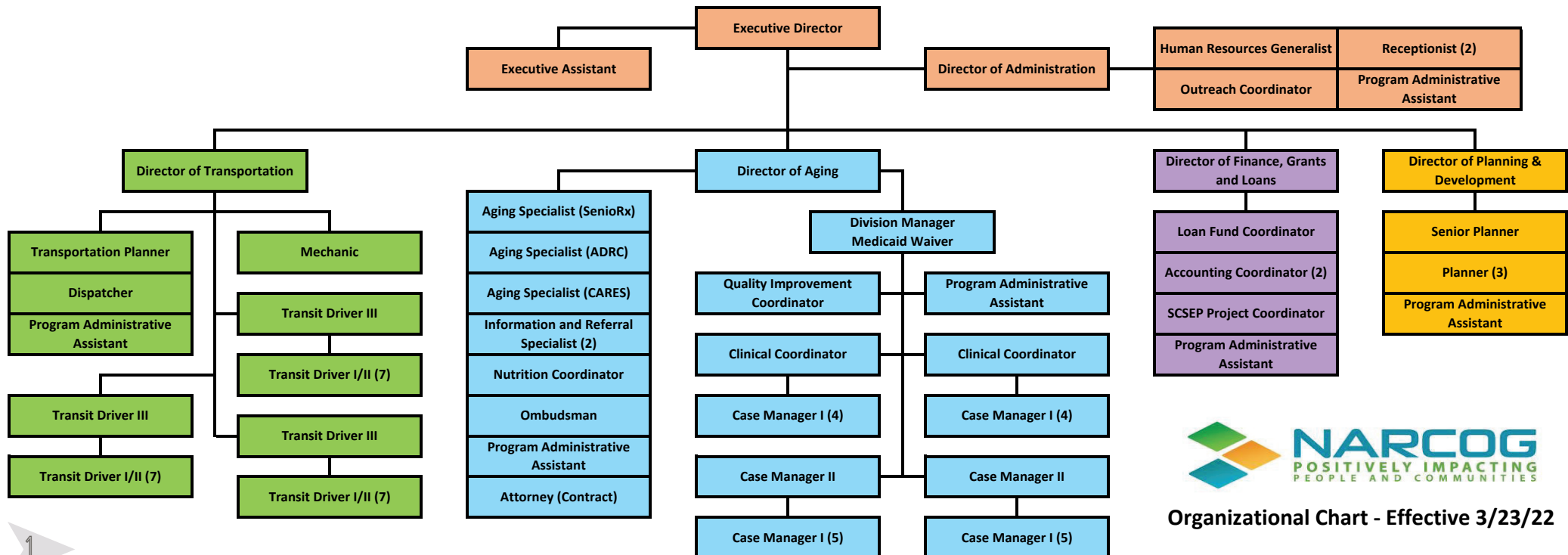
Source: [https://www.cityofdecatur.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/slide\\_downtownnight1.jpg](https://www.cityofdecatur.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/slide_downtownnight1.jpg)

# 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 organizational structure diagram.

The 2024 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

The CEDS Strategy Committee is comprised of various stakeholders representing economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, tourism, entrepreneurs, education, workforce development, utilities, and local business owners in the Region. The purpose of the committee is to provide input and information on performance measures, the future economic direction of the Region, and to offer guidance on potential future initiatives of NARCOG.

Kristi Barnett	Wallace State Community College
Penny Townson	Tennessee Valley Authority
Jasmine Sanderfer	Hartselle Chamber of Commerce
Matt Kinsland	Cullman County Economic Development
Jerry Felks	Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce
John Joseph IV	Decatur–Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center
Dale Greer	Cullman Economic Development Agency
Brooks Kracke	North Alabama Industrial Development Association
Jeremy Nails	Morgan County Economic Development Agency
Doug Brazier	Calhoun Community College
Tami Reist	North Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association
Crystal Brown	Decatur–Morgan County Chamber of Commerce
Joey Orr	Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce
Tabitha Pace	Lawrence County Industrial Development Board
Danielle Gibson	Decatur Morgan County Tourism
Kelly Thomas	Downtown Decatur Redevelopment Authority
Renona Siebert	Alabama's Mountains, Rivers & Valleys RC&D Council

# 3 MISSION, VISION, & GOALS

## MISSION

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

## VISION

**Build a sustainable and resilient regional economy that is vibrant, collaborative, diversified, entrepreneurial, forward-thinking, embraces change, and aggressively pursues new businesses, and high-tech industry, a skilled workforce, residential growth, tourism, and quality of life amenities that support and build upon our existing assets.**

## GOALS

- 1. Build Resilient Regional Businesses**
- 2. Build a Resilient and Sustainable Regional Economy**
- 3. Build a Resilient Regional Workforce Ecosystem**
- 4. Build Resilient Infrastructure for the Region**
- 5. Build a Resilient Regional Tourism Based Economy**
- 6. Build Resilient Regional Community Leaders and Capacity**

# 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 should be 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 some of 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 Accelerate Business Growth 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
- Number of new partnerships
- New development regulations
- New plans (downtown plans, comprehensive plans, hazardous mitigation, etc.)
- Number of hybrid or electric fleet cars added to local businesses and agencies

# 5 PERFORMANCE

In terms of implementation of the CEDS during FY2024, 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

## BUILD RESILIENT REGIONAL BUSINESSES

**Build resilient regional businesses through Innovation & Entrepreneurship (industry, financing, incentives, etc.)**

### **Decatur-Morgan County E-Center:**

- Serving 57 clients, near all-time high
- Singing River Trail (SRT) Launch Tank Event held in April 2024
- Pop-Up 2.0 events in Somerville and South Vinemont – *Continues* (see USDA RBEG grant below)

### **NARCOG:**

- Previously prepared and submitted a **USDA RBEG grant** for Pop-Up 2.0 for the Decatur Morgan County E-Center – **\$105,000**; *Underway*
  - Expanded Business 101 and business coaching to Somerville and South Vinemont
- Continued to successfully administer and market the **Accelerate Business Growth Fund (RLF)** program



# GOAL 2

## BUILD A RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL ECONOMY

**Build a resilient & sustainable regional economy to withstand economic shocks, pandemics, natural, man-made, etc.**

### **NARCOG:**

- Continued to successfully administer and market the **Accelerate Business Growth Fund (RLF)** program
- Regional Hazard Mitigation Plans (Divisions E& F); *On-going plan maintenance*
- Continued the implementation phase of the **Red Stone Joint Land Use Study (JLUS)** with TARCOG for the part of Morgan County that is in the affected area
- 



Source: <https://www.northalabamaworks.com/lawrence-county-community-of-churches-partners-with-decatur-career-center-and-local-organizations-to-connect-more-than-80-citizens-with-hiring-companies/>



# GOAL 3 BUILD A RESILIENT REGIONAL WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEM

**Build a resilient regional workforce ecosystem through education, healthcare, housing, childcare, etc.**

## **Cullman County:**

- Cullman County Streets & Drainage Improvements – **ARC Grant: \$269,772/\$539,544; Funded**
- Cullman County Commission of Education/Career Exploration and Workforce Training – **ARC Grant: \$162,500/\$325,000; Funded**
- Good Samaritan Health Clinic of Cullman, Inc.; Good Samaritan Health Clinic New Building – **ARC Grant: \$1M/\$2M; Funded**

## **Lawrence County:**

- Lawrence County Community of Churches partners with Decatur Career Center and local organizations to connect more than 80 citizens with hiring companies (photos to the left)

## **Calhoun Community College:**

- STEAM: Merging Art with Technology and Engineering project **ARC Grant – \$108,800/\$252,356; Funded**

## **Wallace State Community College:**

- Launch of the **Powerful Partnerships** program – partnerships between WSCC and local businesses where WSCC provides discounted tuition for employees, complimentary access to meeting spaces at the Workforce Training Center, access to a workers prepared for employment, apprenticeship, and internships, and priority registration for career fairs
- Commercial Motor Vehicle Operation Safety Training** - Serves 37 students, providing free CDL training (DoT)
- Alabama Rural Healthcare Centers** - provides scholarships for nursing students (ACCS)
- Evening PN** - enabled the college to launch a new nursing cohort available for evening classes (ACCS)
- Women's Foundation of Alabama - Good Jobs Challenge** - provided nearly \$250,000 in scholarships for women to enter the healthcare field - nurses, phlebotomy technicians, sonographers

## **Equipment Grants**

- Robotic Welding (ACCS)
- Physical Therapist Assistant
- Machine Tool
- HVAC

## **Grants Submitted: 21**

## **Grants Awarded: 20**

- Total amount requested in grants: **over \$5 million**
- Total grant funds received: **\$3,221,889.**
- Total students served with grants: 605

## **NARCOG:**

- Prepared and submitted ARC SAAW & EDA grants for:
  - Lawrence County Board of Education's Career Tech Center Expansion – **\$1,000,000/ARC SAAW; Funded; grant administration underway**
  - Lawrence County Board of Education's Career Tech Center Expansion – **\$2,000,000/EDA; Not Funded**
- Previously prepared and submitted a **USDA RBEG grant** for Pop-Up 2.0 for the Decatur Morgan County E-Center – **\$105,000; Underway**

# GOAL 4 BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE REGION

**Build resilient infrastructure for the region including broadband, planes, trains, automobiles, bike/ped, transit, ports, water, sewer, drainage, electric, etc.**

## **Cullman County:**

- Cullman Water, Sewer, Road Improvements: **CDBG Grant – \$500,000; Pending**
- Good Hope Road Improvements: **Grant – \$250,000; Funded**
- Resurfacing of AL Hwy 69 between US 31 and I-65 in Cullman and Good Hope; *Completed*
- Cullman County first to connect to Alabama Fiber Network
- Cullman Aviation Training Airport Hangar Project: **ARC Grant – \$1M/\$2M; Funded**
- Cullman Road Improvements: **CDBG Grant – \$250,000; Funded**

## **Lawrence County:**

- Town Creek Sewer Improvements: **CDBG Grant - \$400,000; Pending**
- Courtland Water Improvements: **CDBG Grant – \$400,000; Pending**

## **Morgan County:**

- Priceville Upper River Road/Bethel Road Sidewalk project: **ALDOT TAP Grant - \$798,168/\$997,710; Funded**
- Dr. Bill Sims Hike/Bike Way on the Singing River Trail: Reconnecting Old Town to Decatur's Riverfront: **RCN Grant - \$18.4M; Funded**

## **NARCOG:**

- Previously prepared and submitted **CDBG grants** for the following towns:
  - Colony Road Improvements – **\$400,000; Funded; grant administration underway**
  - Garden City Sewer Improvements – **\$350,000; Funded; Complete**
  - Falkville Drainage Improvements – **\$350,000; Funded; Complete**
  - Hillsboro – Stormwater Drainage – **\$350,000; Funded; Complete**
  - Moulton – Sewer Improvements – **\$500,000; Pending**
  - North Courtland Water Improvements – **\$400,000; Pending**

- Hillsboro Streets Improvements – **\$343,317; Pending**
- Previously prepared and submitted an **ARC grant** for Moulton Sewer Improvements – **\$198,627/\$283,753; Funded; grant administration underway**
- Prepared and submitted an **ARC SAAW grant** for Infrastructure Improvements for First Solar – **\$1,000,000; Funded**
- Prepared and submitted a **CDBG-ED grant** for Infrastructure Improvements for First Solar – **\$1,500,000; Funded; grant administration underway**
- Previously prepared and submitted an **ARC grant** for Falkville Drainage Improvements – **\$98,541/\$197,082; Funded; grant administration underway**
- Continued to improve the Rural Planning Organization (**RPO**) rural transportation planning program and implementation of the **FY24 Work Program** activities including administration, GIS data management and mapping, reports, public involvement, and committee service; *On-going*
  - Staff held RPO Committee meetings in the Region
- Prepared and submitted **ALDOT Rebuild Alabama Act (RAA) grants** for the following towns:
  - Berlin Road Improvements – **\$250,000; Not Funded**
  - Colony Road Improvements – **\$250,000; Not Funded**
  - Eva Road Improvements – **\$250,000; Not Funded**
  - Hillsboro Road Improvements – **\$250,000; Not Funded**
  - Holly Pond Road Improvements – **Not Funded**
  - North Courtland Road Improvements – **Not Funded**
  - Hartselle Road Improvements – **Not Funded**
  - Priceville Road Improvements – **Not Funded**
- Continued to provide clearinghouse services in support of local water and sewer projects funded through the **ADEM CWSRF and DWSRF programs; On-going**
- Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study – **\$1M ARC SAAW; Completed**

## GOAL 5 BUILD A RESILIENT, REGIONAL TOURISM-BASED ECONOMY

Build a resilient, regional tourism-based economy to leverage our assets (cultural, natural, & historical assets, downtowns, trails, etc.)

### Cullman County:

- Garden City River Park Renovations; *Completed*
- Garden City New Volunteer Fire Station; *Completed*
- Berlin Farmers Market with facilities and a walking trail; *Approved*
- Cullman Downtown Revitalization - Depot Park Renewal: **ARC Grant – \$500,000/\$1M; *Funded***

### Lawrence County:

- Lawrence County selected to participate in the Tennessee “RiverTown” Program by Tennessee RiverLine



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/BerlinAlabamaFarmersMarket/photosBerlinAlabamaFarmersMarket/photos>

### Morgan County:

- Dr. Bill Simms Hike/Bike Way on the Singing River Trail: Reconnecting Old Town to Decatur’s Riverfront; **Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Grant – \$18.4M; *Funded***

### NARCOG:

- Support the design and development of the Wild Alabama Educational Facility
- Participation with the North Alabama Trails and Recreation (NATR) and the Singing River Trail (SRT) planning initiatives
- Attendance at **Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, RC&D, and NATR meetings**



**Intersection of Vine Street and Sycamore Street photosimulation of recommended project:** The streetscape improvements will create a gateway into Old Town and foster a walkable and thriving community that was once in place along Vine Street. Improved sidewalks, new crosswalks, lighting, and new landscape will create a comfortable environment for residents and visitors.

Rendering from the RCN Grant



## GOAL 6

### BUILD RESILIENT REGIONAL COMMUNITY LEADERS & CAPACITY

**Build resilient regional community leaders & capacity through partnerships, training, planning, etc.**

**Decatur-Morgan County E-Center:**

- Best and Brightest program has recruited over 75 young professionals to Decatur
- Student CEO program had the largest class ever

**Lawrence County:**

- Lawrence County selected to participate in the Tennessee “RiverTown” Program by Tennessee RiverLine

**Morgan County:**

- Hartselle Area Chamber of Commerce establishes the “Hartselle For Tomorrow 501C3 Chamber Foundation”

**NARCOG:**

- Completed the **Hartselle Comprehensive Plan 2045**; *Adopted*
- Submitted **Lawrence County** to the Tennessee RiverLine’s “**RiverTown’s Program**”; *Selected*
- Provided FEMA FIRM flood maps and **information to citizens** upon request
- Continued to serve on the Alabama Association of Regional Council’s (AARC) **Planning Task Force** that is charged with coordinating and developing regional and statewide economic development and planning projects
- Serves on the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) **Ambassador’s Council**
- Continued partnerships with the Economic Development Association of Alabama (EDAA) Main Street Alabama, DesignAlabama, and Your Town Alabama, etc.

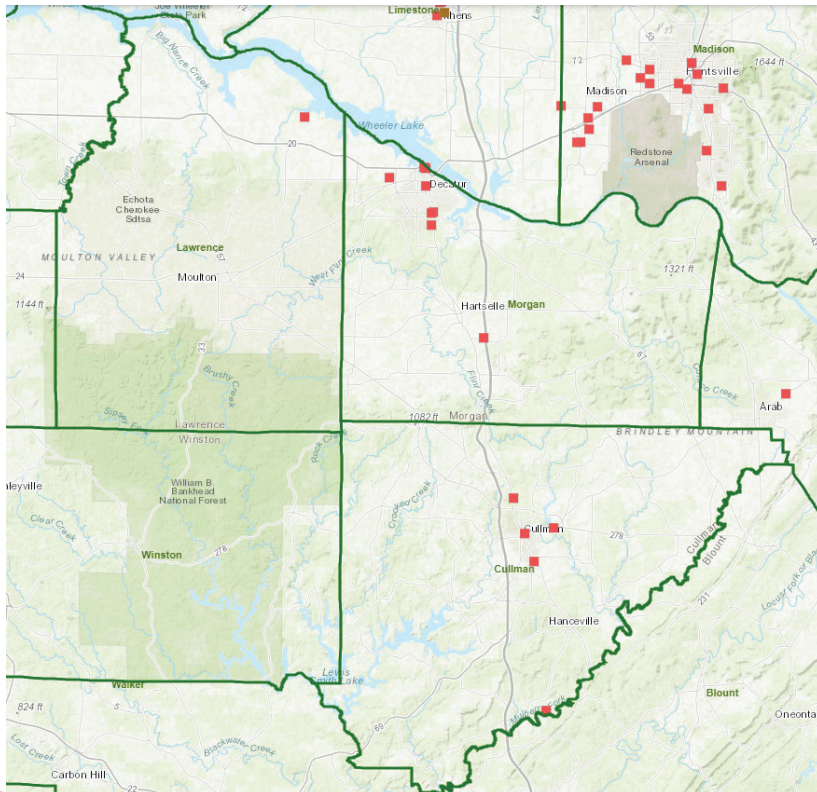


# PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES UPDATE

## BROWNFIELD INITIATIVE

A brownfield is defined as land that has been previously developed for industrial or commercial use that has possibly been compromised by contamination. Brownfields are typically compromised by a hazardous substance, contaminant, or pollutant. Although compromised, brownfields can be redeveloped and reused if properly assessed and remediated. The redevelopment of remediated brownfields can help the local economy, create jobs, and expand the tax base while preserving undeveloped land (or "greenfields") and restoring land that has already been developed in the past.

The EPA's Brownfields Program provides grants and technical assistance to communities, states, tribes and others to assess, safely clean up and sustainably reuse contaminated properties. NARCOG is currently working with an environmental consulting firm to submit a \$1.2M EPA Brownfield Assessment Coalition Grant for the Region. Also, NARCOG will continue to partner with ADEM and their BF Program.



[Link to ADEM'S map of Alabama Brownfields](#) as shown in the image to the left.

## ALABAMA COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE (ACE)

- Hartselle (Designated)
  - NARCOG – Mentor
  - Comprehensive Plan Update (Complete)
- Hanceville (Designated)
  - NARCOG – Mentor
- The following communities are eligible to participate in the ACE Program:
  - Cullman
  - Good Hope
  - Moulton
  - Priceville
  - Trinity

## REGIONAL DOWNTOWN NETWORK INITIATIVE

- Walkability Audit Projects Implementation - *Underway*



## ACCELERATE BUSINESS GROWTH FUND

The NARCOG Accelerate Business Growth Fund Loan Program (RLF) has been successful in FY2024 and was partially funded by EDA. NARCOG's Loan Program was marketed in the Region by the Director of Finance/Loan Coordinator and information was made available at: NARCOG, local Chambers of Commerce, economic development organizations, industrial development boards, local banks, member governments, Facebook, and online at [www.narcog.org](http://www.narcog.org).

- Active Loans: 48
- Loan Inquiries: 4
- Loan applications received: 9
- Loan applications reviewed: 6
- Applications/Loans approved: 6
- Loans closed: 5
- Pending Loans: 1
- Amount Loaned: \$220,750 (\$200,000 pending)
- Private Investment: \$1,238,365
- Jobs Created: 12
- Jobs Retained: 23
- Loan Review Committee Meetings: 3

### Small Business Fund Program

Loan Activity Since October 1, 2023



AMOUNT		PRIVATE FUNDS LEVERAGED	JOBS CREATED	JOBS RETAINED
TOTAL	\$420,750	\$1,238,365	12	23

**Funding opportunities to strengthen your business.**

[narcog.org](http://narcog.org)  
(256) 355-4515



**Accelerate**  
BUSINESS GROWTH FUND

# 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, 2023 to September 30, 2024. 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.



## New & Expanding Industry: FY2024

	CULLMAN COUNTY	LAWRENCE COUNTY	MORGAN COUNTY	NARCOG REGION
Total New Companies:	3	0	1	4
Total New Jobs:	10	0	40	50
Total New Capital Investment:	\$13,250,000	\$0	\$4,150,000	\$17,400,000
Total Expanding Companies:	2	1	9	12
Total Expanding Jobs:	50	224	37	311
Total Expanding Capital Investment:	\$55,000,000	\$45,000,000	\$61,030,000	\$161,030,000
<b>Total New &amp; Expanding Companies:</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total New &amp; Expanding Jobs:</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>361</b>
<b>Total New &amp; Expanding Investments:</b>	<b>\$68,250,000</b>	<b>\$45,000,000</b>	<b>\$65,180,000</b>	<b>\$178,430,000</b>

**Sources:** Cullman Economic Development Agency

Lawrence County Industrial Development Board

Morgan County Economic Development Agency

# SELECTED ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

## Cullman County

- **"Garden City River Park reopens with renovations"** – "The newly opened park now features a kayak boat launch, a revitalized walking trail and on-site restroom facilities. The riverbank itself has also been stabilized with large boulders. The town approved on Monday, June 10, for primitive camping permits to be issued to those looking to stay at the park overnight."

Sources: [https://www.cullmantimes.com/news/garden-city-river-park-reopens-with-renovations/article\\_8963a1ea-280e-11ef-82be-d317a472e463.html](https://www.cullmantimes.com/news/garden-city-river-park-reopens-with-renovations/article_8963a1ea-280e-11ef-82be-d317a472e463.html)

<https://www.outdooralabama.com/articles/mulberry-fork-access-upgraded-garden-city-river-park>



- **"Berlin opens community storm shelter"** – Berlin was awarded a \$75,000 grant from NARCOG for the shelter and approved an additional \$25,000 to cover the rest of the project. The shelter sits in the Berlin Town Hall parking lot along CR-1615, can accommodate 70 people, and has built-in restrooms, wifi access points, and a generator.

Source: [https://www.cullmantimes.com/news/berlin-opens-community-storm-shelter/article\\_942effb0-2db4-11ef-90e4-77c19ec308df.html](https://www.cullmantimes.com/news/berlin-opens-community-storm-shelter/article_942effb0-2db4-11ef-90e4-77c19ec308df.html)

- **"Flying Fifty Hotel coming to Cullman in 2024"** – The city of Cullman's first luxury boutique-style hotel, the Flying Fifty Hotel, opened in May of 2024, and pays homage to the story of the group of men known as the "Flying Fifty" in the 1950s. It is located at 515 4th St SW in downtown Cullman.

Source: <https://www.cullmantribune.com/2023/12/25/flying-fifty-hotel-coming-to-cullman-in-2024/>





## Lawrence County



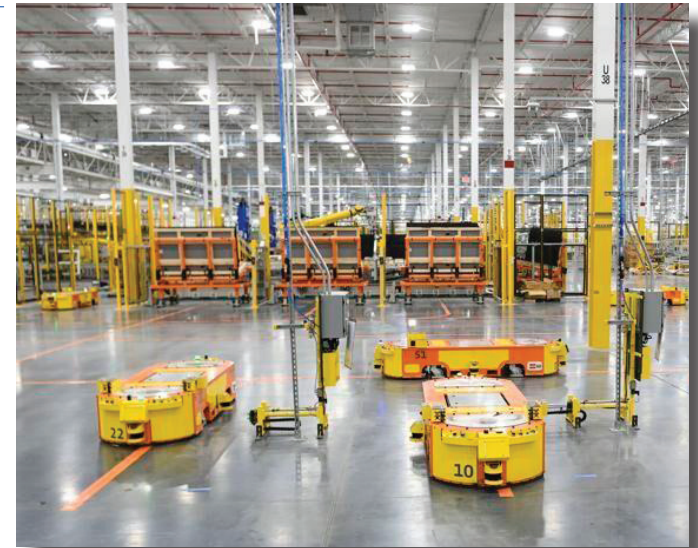
- **"First Solar inaugurates \$1.1 billion Alabama manufacturing facility"** – The facility adds 3.5 gigawatts (GW) of "fully vertically integrated nameplate solar manufacturing capacity" in the U.S.

Source: <https://www.madeinalabama.com/2024/09/first-solar-inaugurates-1-1-billion-alabama-manufacturing-facility/>

- **"First Solar introduces Lawrence County plant to public"** – "First Solar Inc., headquartered in Tempe, Arizona, introduced its fourth plant in the United States and gave a tour of the 2.4 million-square-foot manufacturing facility, showcasing the efficiency and speed of production." There are currently already over 700 employees and more will be hired until the plant gets close to 800.

Sources: [https://www.moultonadvertiser.com/news/article\\_a68e4b38-7cde-11ef-a1fe-37e1d6d2ae51.html](https://www.moultonadvertiser.com/news/article_a68e4b38-7cde-11ef-a1fe-37e1d6d2ae51.html)

<https://thebamabuzz.com/first-solar-opens-new-1-1b-solar-manufacturing-plant-in-lawrence-county/>



- **"Tennessee RiverLine announces Lawrence County among three new communities enrolled in Tennessee RiverTowns Program"** – "Supported and guided by the Tennessee RiverLine staff, enrolled communities can benefit from equitable access to the river, enhanced public health, improved river stewardship and new opportunities for economic impact through the program. Also, this is

"a great opportunity for Lawrence County," said Heather Dyar Rose, Lawrence County Commission Administrator. "By partnering with Tennessee RiverLine through the Tennessee RiverTowns Program, this will enable us to utilize the County's natural resources to benefit economic development, entrepreneurship opportunities, quality of life amenities, equitable access to river experiences that improve public health and stewardship of Lawrence County's natural resources. The Tennessee RiverLine is a continuous system of paddling, hiking, and biking experiences along the Tennessee River's 652-mile reach, and Lawrence County has been named one of the 22 communities enrolled in the Tennessee RiverTowns Program."

Sources: [https://www.moultonadvertiser.com/news/article\\_9c31fb68-d64d-11ee-b5d5-eff6d8dfaba5.htm](https://www.moultonadvertiser.com/news/article_9c31fb68-d64d-11ee-b5d5-eff6d8dfaba5.htm)

<https://www.tnriverline.org/new/2024/2/22/three-new-communities-join-tennessee-rivertowns-program>



## Morgan County



- **"New Fairfield Inn & Suites opens in Decatur"** – The new four-story, 80-room hotel by Marriott in downtown Decatur also comes with 90 reserved parking spots in the new 230-spot parking deck adjacent to it.

Sources: <https://hvilleblast.com/new-fairfield-inn-suites-opens-in-decatur/>  
<https://www.dcc.org/2024/06/27/new-downtown-decatur-parking-deck-now-open/>  
<https://www.visitdecatur.org/exciting-new-additions-transform-the-downtown-scene>



- **"Decatur receives \$18.4 million grant from U.S. Department of Transportation"** – With funding provided from the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA), the grant is designed to connect Decatur's Old Town community with stores, shops, and the riverfront. The total funding amounts to \$18,407,687.76." The route extends from Point Mallard Park to Benjamin Davis Elementary School in Northwest Decatur. The project adds new safety enhancements to the existing Bill Sims Trail, extends the trail into Old Town Decatur for the first time, increases access to parks and commercial redevelopment along the Tennessee River, and creates safer and more connected walking and bicycling facilities in Old Town and along the riverfront. Notably, the project will provide safe pedestrian and bike access across both AL-20 and the railroad, and also serves as a key section of the Singing River Trail.



Sources: <https://www.rocketcitynow.com/article/news/local/decatur-alabama-multimillion-dollar-grant-department-of-transportation/525-2992bd63-bba4-448e-a487-dabe925b7f21>  
<https://www.cityofdecatur.com/departments/community-development/rcn/>

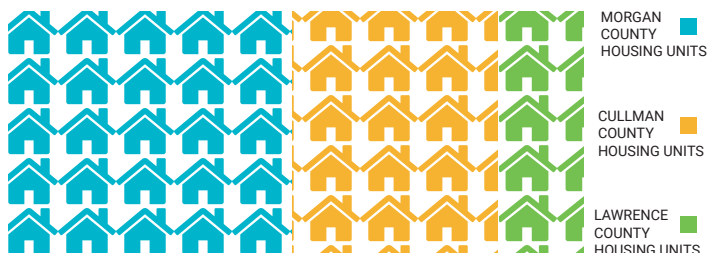
- **"Singing River Trail's \$18.4 million RCN Grant sees approval"** – It will link "several iconic landmarks including Rhodes Ferry, Deadman's Alley on Bank Street, Etta Freeman Park, Scottsboro Boys Civil Rights Museum, Judge Horton Home, Old Town Historic District, Ingles Harbor, and Malone Park."

Sources: <https://huntsvillebusinessjournal.com/news/2024/03/14/singing-river-trails-18-4-million-reconnecting-communities-grants-sees-approval/>  
[https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-03/RCN%20FY23%20Awardees%20Factsheet\\_3\\_13.pdf](https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-03/RCN%20FY23%20Awardees%20Factsheet_3_13.pdf)





## HOUSING



Housing units	107,776	↑
Vacancy	12.3%	↓
Housing units with no vehicle	4.3%	

## EDUCATION

84.7%	Age 25+ with ≥ high school diploma	↑
20.7%	Age 25+ with ≥ bachelor degree	↑

## HEALTH

10.6%	Population with no health insurance
17%	Food insecurity rate
18.5%	Child food insecurity rate

## TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

Decatur Morgan Hospital  
Wal-Mart Distribution  
GE Appliances, a Haier company  
Cullman Regional Medical Center  
Decatur City Schools  
Cullman County Schools  
Wayne Farms Prepared Foods  
Topre America Corporation  
Morgan County Schools  
3M Company

## EMPLOYMENT

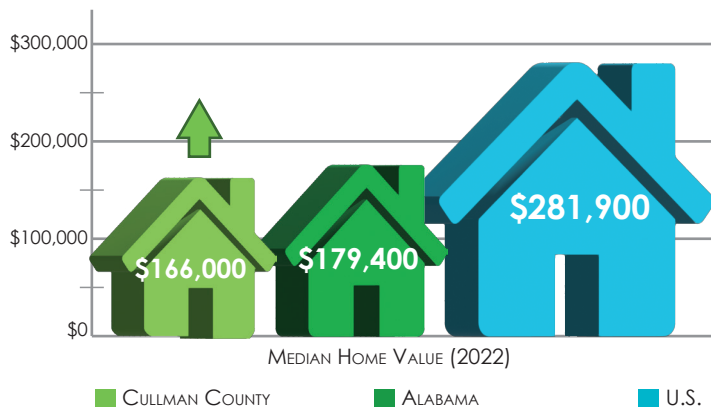
118,675	Total labor force	↑
3,129	Unemployed	
2.64%	Unemployment rate	

## ECONOMY

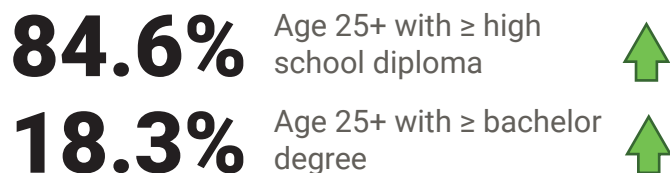
\$11,571,670,000	Total personal income	↑
\$4,808,649,060	State Assessed Value	↑
19.4%	Public assisted households	↓
\$45,616	Per capita income	↑
\$54,703	Annual wages per employee	↑



## HOUSING



## EDUCATION



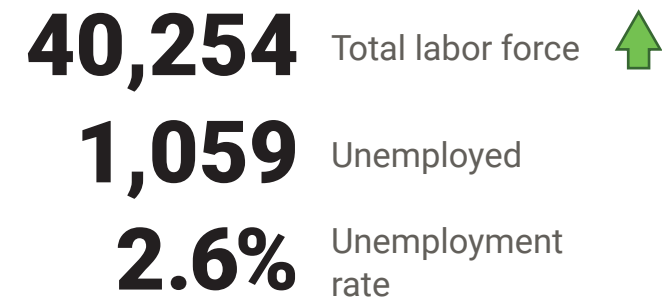
## HEALTH



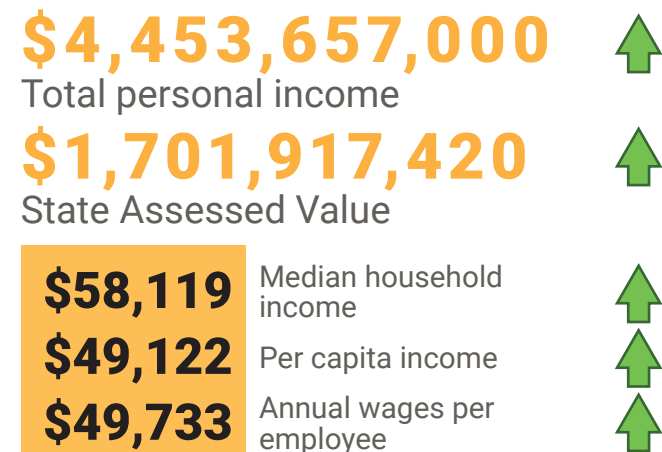
## TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

Cullman County Schools  
Cullman Regional Medical Center  
Topre America Corporation  
Wal-Mart Distribution  
Wal-Mart Super Center North/South  
City of Cullman  
REHAU  
Wallace State Community College  
Cullman County Commission  
Reliance Worldwide Corp

## EMPLOYMENT

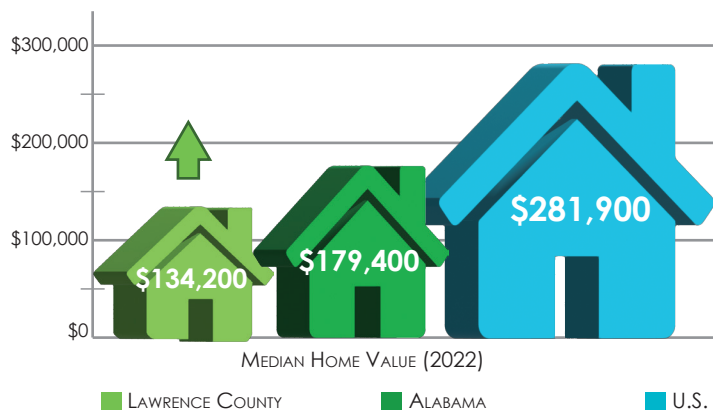


## ECONOMY

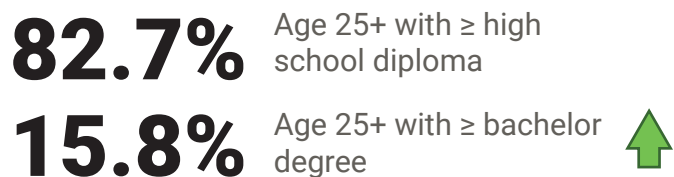




## HOUSING



## EDUCATION



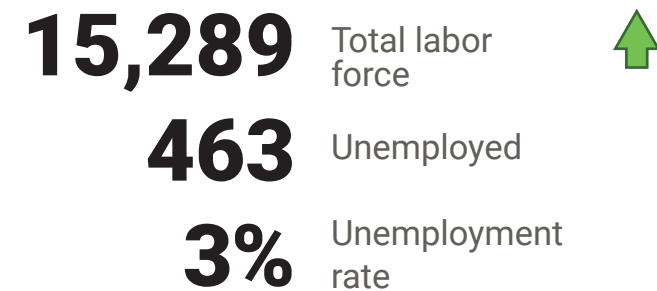
## HEALTH



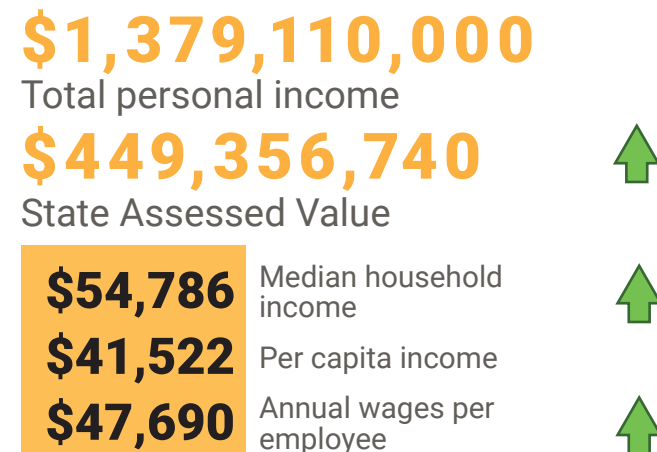
## TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

Lawrence County School System  
 Wal-Mart  
 Lawrence County Medical Center  
 Lawrence County Commission  
 Jack Daniel Cooperage  
 Lockheed Martin Space Systems  
 Joe Wheeler EMC  
 Nucor Tubular Products  
 Country Brook Design  
 City of Moulton

## EMPLOYMENT

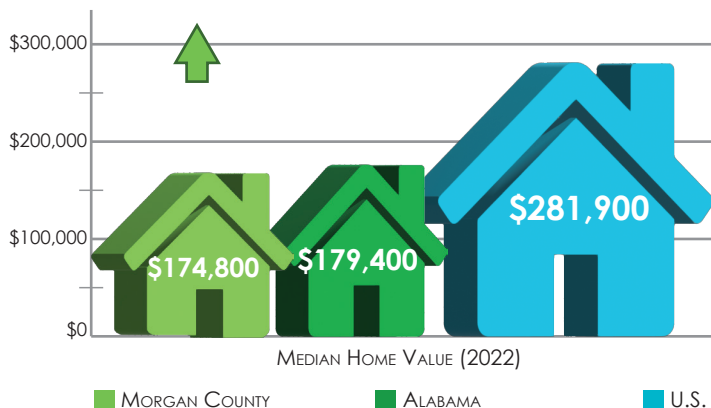


## ECONOMY

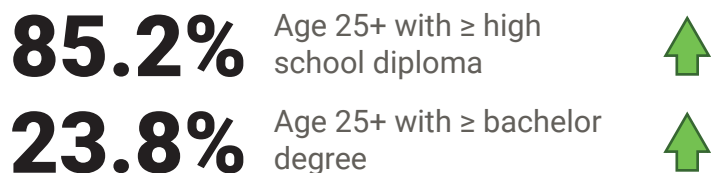




## HOUSING



## EDUCATION



\*Calhoun Community College  
9,500 enrolled students

\*Physical location is in Decatur city limits, but in Limestone County

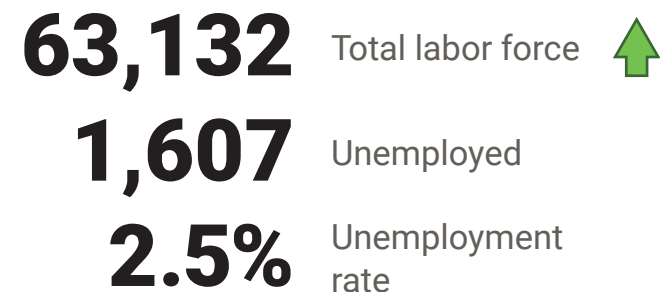
## HEALTH



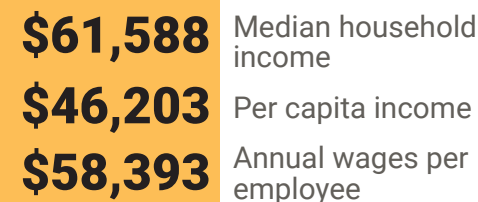
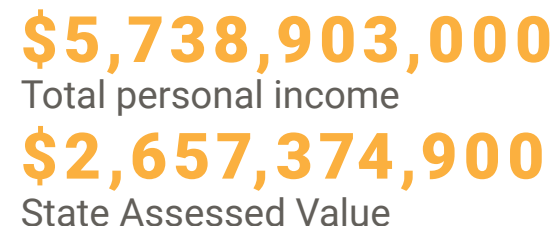
## TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

Decatur Morgan Hospital  
Decatur City Schools  
GE Appliances, a Haier company  
Morgan County Schools  
Wayne Farms Prepared Foods  
3M Company  
Nucor Steel  
United Launch Alliance  
Wayne Farms Fresh Facility  
City of Decatur

## EMPLOYMENT



## ECONOMY



## A RESOLUTION

### NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Resolution Number 2025 - 0001

#### 2024 CEDS Annual Performance Report

**WHEREAS**, the North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG) Board of Director's recognizes the importance of creating employment opportunities and promoting a stable and diversified economy throughout our Economic Development District (EDD) as designated by the Economic Development Administration (EDA), and

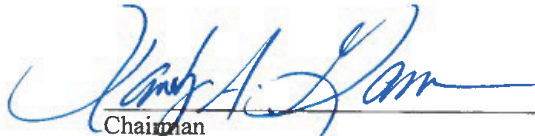
**WHEREAS**, the NARCOG EDD is required by EDA to prepare and maintain a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as part of its annual work program, and

**WHEREAS**, the Building For The Future: 2022 – 2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was approved and adopted by the NARCOG Board of Directors to cover the five-year period from 2022 to 2027, and Annual Reports are required for the intervening four-year period from 2023 to 2026, and

**WHEREAS**, the NARCOG staff, CEDS Strategy Committee, and stakeholders have undertaken and completed the performance measures review and input, economic research, data updates, and analysis required by EDA resulting in the 2024 CEDS Annual Performance Report,

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NARCOG Board of Director's approves and adopts the NARCOG EDD's 2024 CEDS Annual Performance Report.

**RESOLVED** this 4th day of December 2024.

  
Chairman

  
Executive Director





# B<sup>2</sup> REFERENCES

## DATA SOURCES:

- U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates
- U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census
- Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER), The University of Alabama, 2023
- Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) 2021 CA1 Personal Income Summary: Personal Income, Population, Per Capita Personal Income
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2022 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), County High-Level Annual Averages
- Alabama Department of Revenue (ADOR), 2020 Annual Report (2019 data)
- Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Civilian Labor Force by County, September 2023 Unemployment Data
- Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, 2021 State Data Tables by county for Alabama
- 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:
  - Lawrence County Industrial Development Board
- (Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce)  
<https://www.dcc.org/assets/pdf/2301-107+Chamber+Of+Commerce+Booklet+2023+May+Update/>

## DISCLAIMER

Neither the North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG) nor any employees thereof, make any warranty, expressed or implied, or assume any legal liability or responsibility, for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information contained on these maps. Linear and Spatial Data obtained from U.S. Census Bureau 2022 TIGER/Line Shapefiles. Maps produced by North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments, 2023.

# C<sup>2</sup> 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>

<https://adeca.alabama.gov/Divisions/OpportunityZones/Pages/Opportunity-Zones.aspx>

<https://opportunityalabama.com/>

There are 4 designated opportunity zones in the NARCOG region. Two of them are in Cullman County, which are Tract 9648 (01043964800) and Tract 9650 (01043965000). There is also one tract in Lawrence County, which is Tract 9791 (01079979100), and one tract in Morgan County, which is Tract 1 (01103000100).

\*See map on following page

**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.

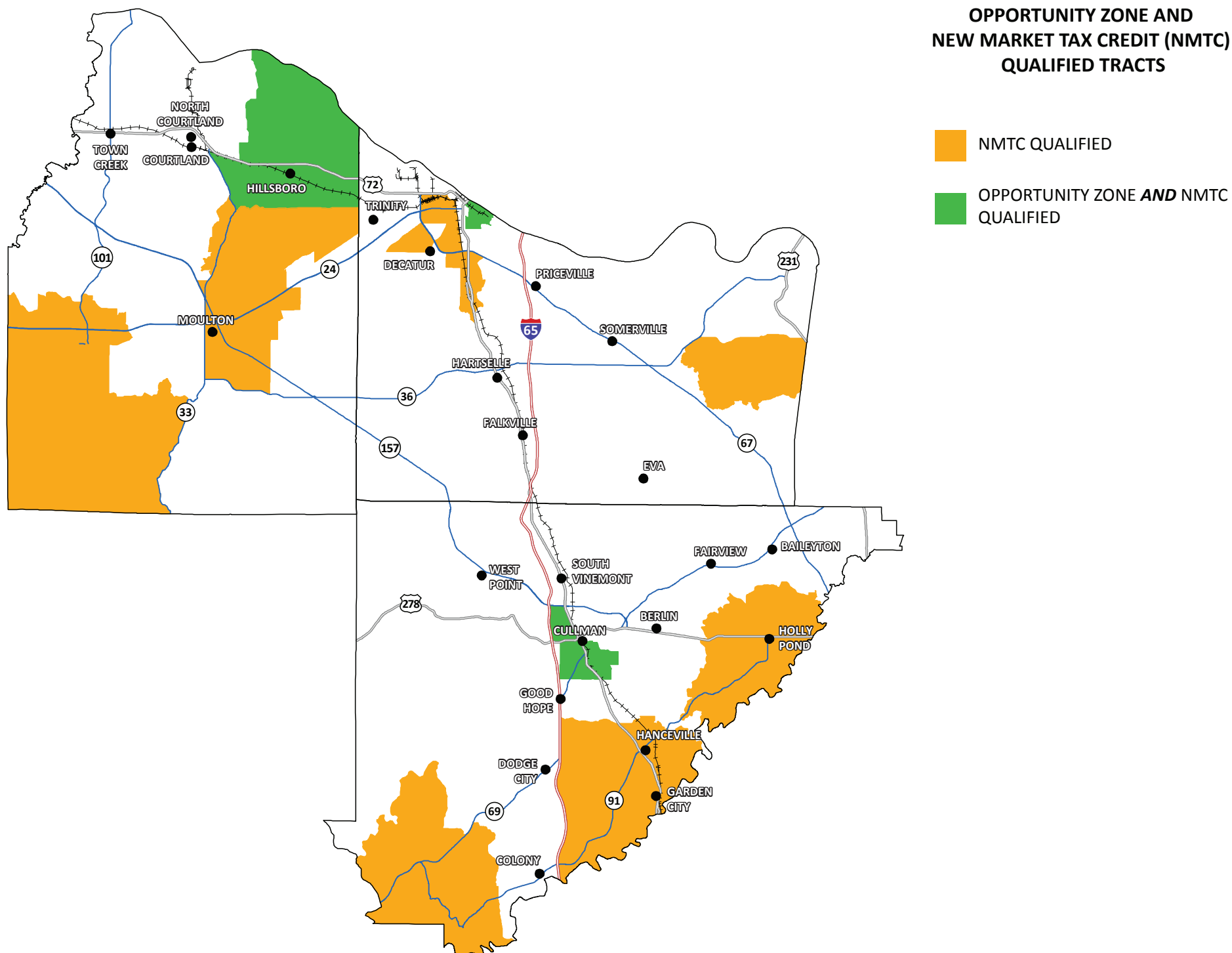
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Markets\\_Tax\\_Credit\\_Program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Markets_Tax_Credit_Program)

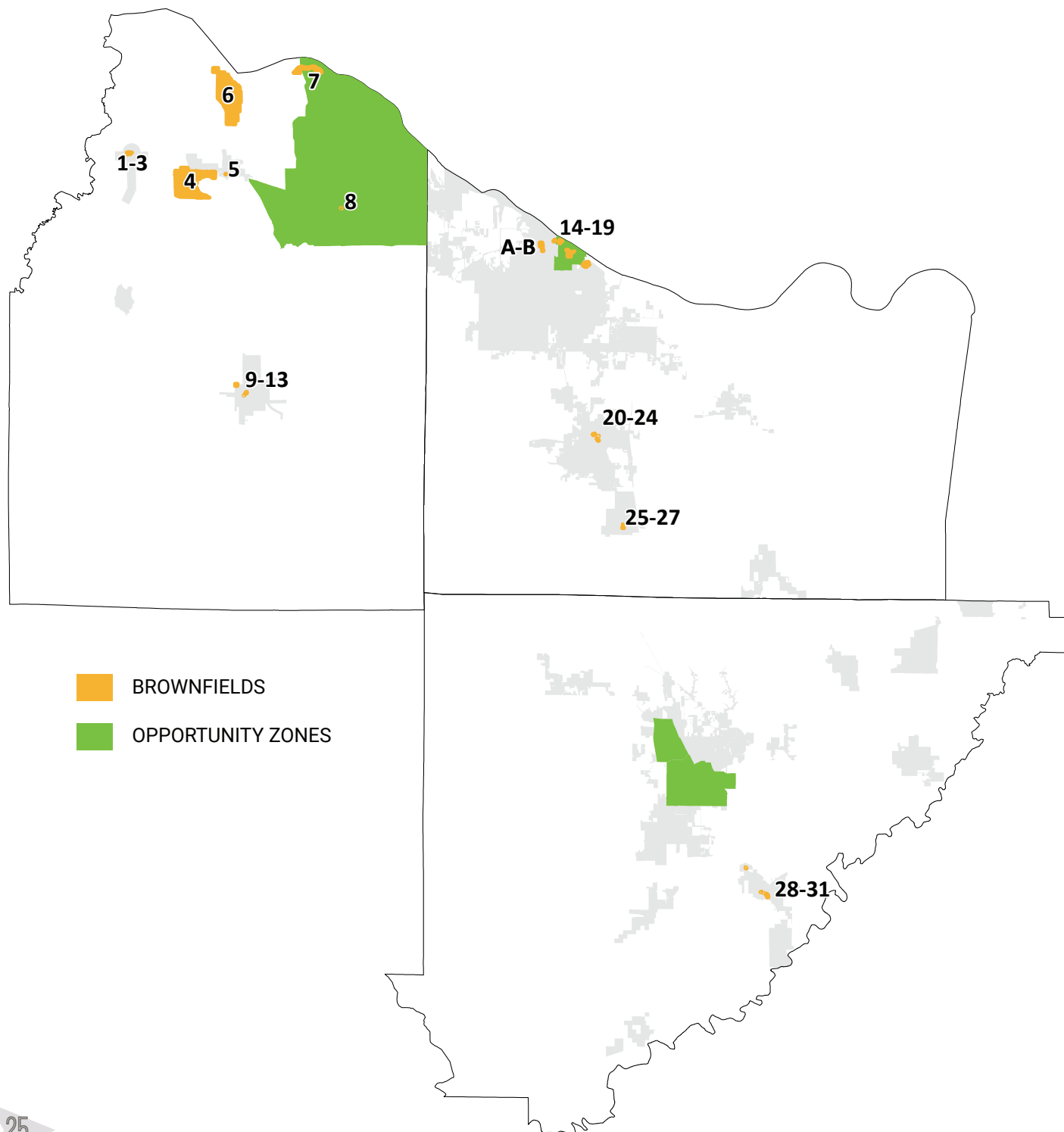
\*See map on following page

## Revised Strategies to Support the CEDS Goals

While working the last year to implement the goals established in the 2022 CEDS, some gaps were recognized in the existing supporting strategies. The following is the original six goals with accompanying objectives and strategies from the 2022 CEDS along with newly identified objectives and strategies in 2024 (indicated in **Red**) to better support the implementation of the NARCOG's CEDS.

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





### **Lawrence County**

- 1.) Hazelwood School (925 Wallace St, Town Creek)
- 2.) Warehouse (499 Factory St, Town Creek)
- 3.) Warehouse (452 Factory St, Town Creek)
- 4.) Lawrence Co Industrial Airpark/Courtland Airport (Lindburgh St, Courtland)
- 5.) Abandoned warehouses (240 College St, Courtland)
- 6.) Demolished International Paper mill (CR-150, Courtland)
- 7.) West Morgan-East Lawrence Water Treatment Facility (6505 CR-400, Hillsboro)
- 8.) Abandoned pawn shop/gas station (Approximately 11569 Main St, Hillsboro)
- 9.) Sewage plant (120 Beacon St, Moulton)
- 10.) Abandoned lot (14438 Market St, Moulton)
- 11.) Old Courthouse Annex (750 Main St, Moulton)
- 12.) Old automotive and miscellaneous buildings (14459 and 14485 Court St, Moulton)
- 13.) Old auto shop and other building (715 and 753 Spring St, Moulton)

### **Morgan County**

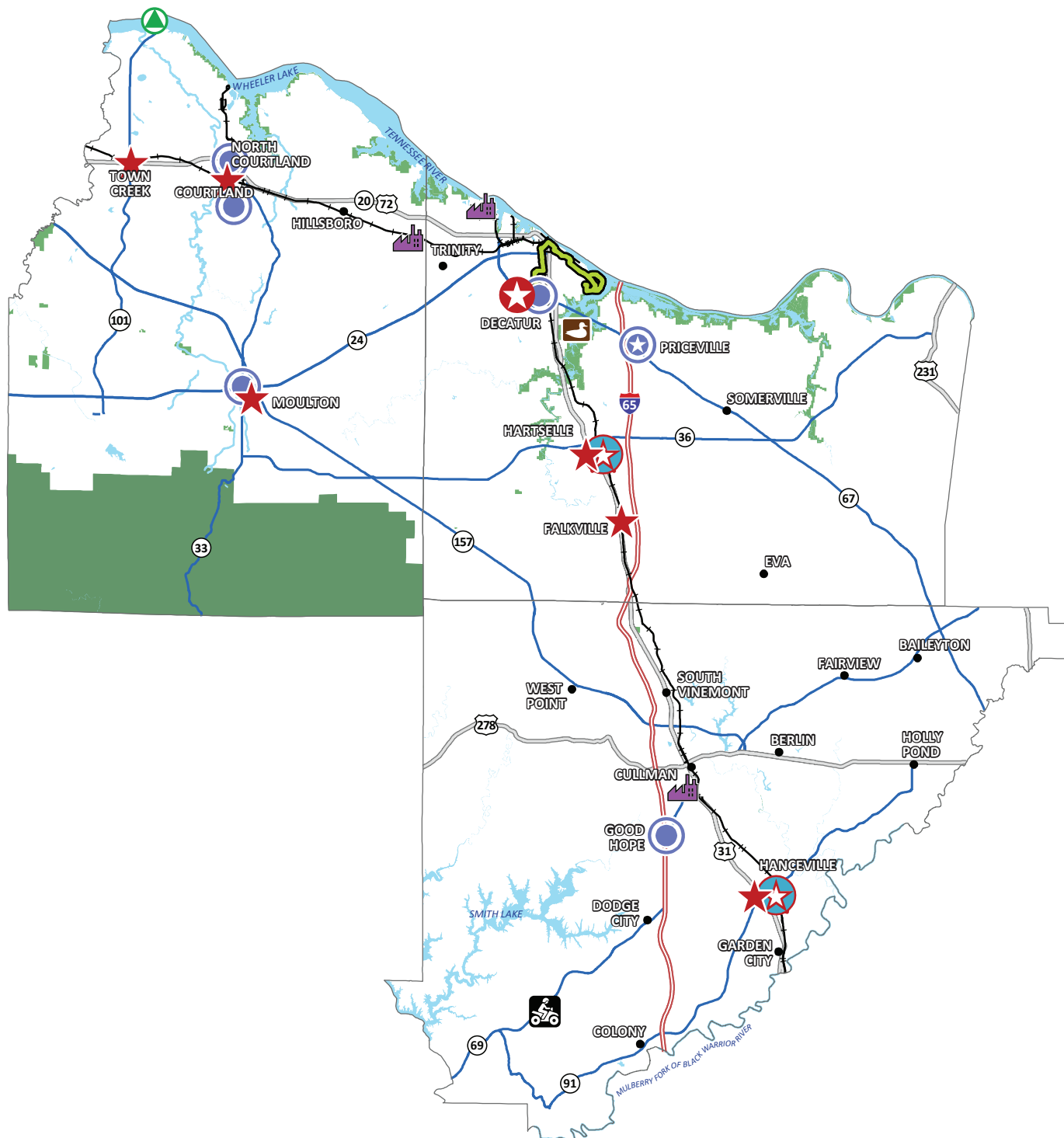
- 14.) Gateway Opportunity Zone - warehouses (616 Church St NE)
- 15.) Gateway Opportunity Zone - abandoned building (620 Wilson St NE, Decatur)
- 16.) Waterfront Opportunity Zone - Stone Lumber Company property (1100 Somerville Rd NE, Decatur)
- 17.) Hyosung Warehouse/Factory (500 19th Ave SE, Decatur)
- 18.) Parcel for waterfront access on Wolverine property (2100 Market St SE, Decatur)
- 19.) Undeveloped GE waterfront property (between 2519 and 2400 Point Mallard Dr SE, Decatur)
- 20.) Demolished hospital (201 Pine St NW, Hartselle)
- 21.) Vacant gas station (121 Main St E, Hartselle)
- 22.) Gas station (201 Sparkman St SW, Hartselle)
- 23.) Gas station (200 Sparkman St SW, Hartselle)
- 24.) Old auto shop (532 Sparkman St SW, Hartselle)
- 25.) Vacant gas station and car wash (property north of 4662 US-31, Falkville)
- 26.) Vacant building (8 W 2nd St, Falkville)
- 27.) Vacant Drinkard Chevrolet auto building (120 Grissom Way or Corner of E 2nd St and N 1st Ave, Falkville)
- A.) Warehouses (2 Moulton St, Decatur)
- B.) Warehouse (402 1st Ave SW, Decatur)

### **Cullman County**

- 28.) Vacant buildings (Corner of Magnolia Ave NE and Arkadelphia Rd, Hanceville)
- 29.) Abandoned gas station (110 Main St NE, Hanceville)
- 30.) Abandoned warehouse (Approximately 504 Bangor Ave, Hanceville)
- 31.) Public Works buildings (Corner of Park St and Main St/US-31, Hanceville)



## REGIONAL STRATEGIC EXISTING ASSETS MAP



- PLACES
- COUNTIES
- WATER
- BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST
- PROTECTED AREAS
- RAILROAD

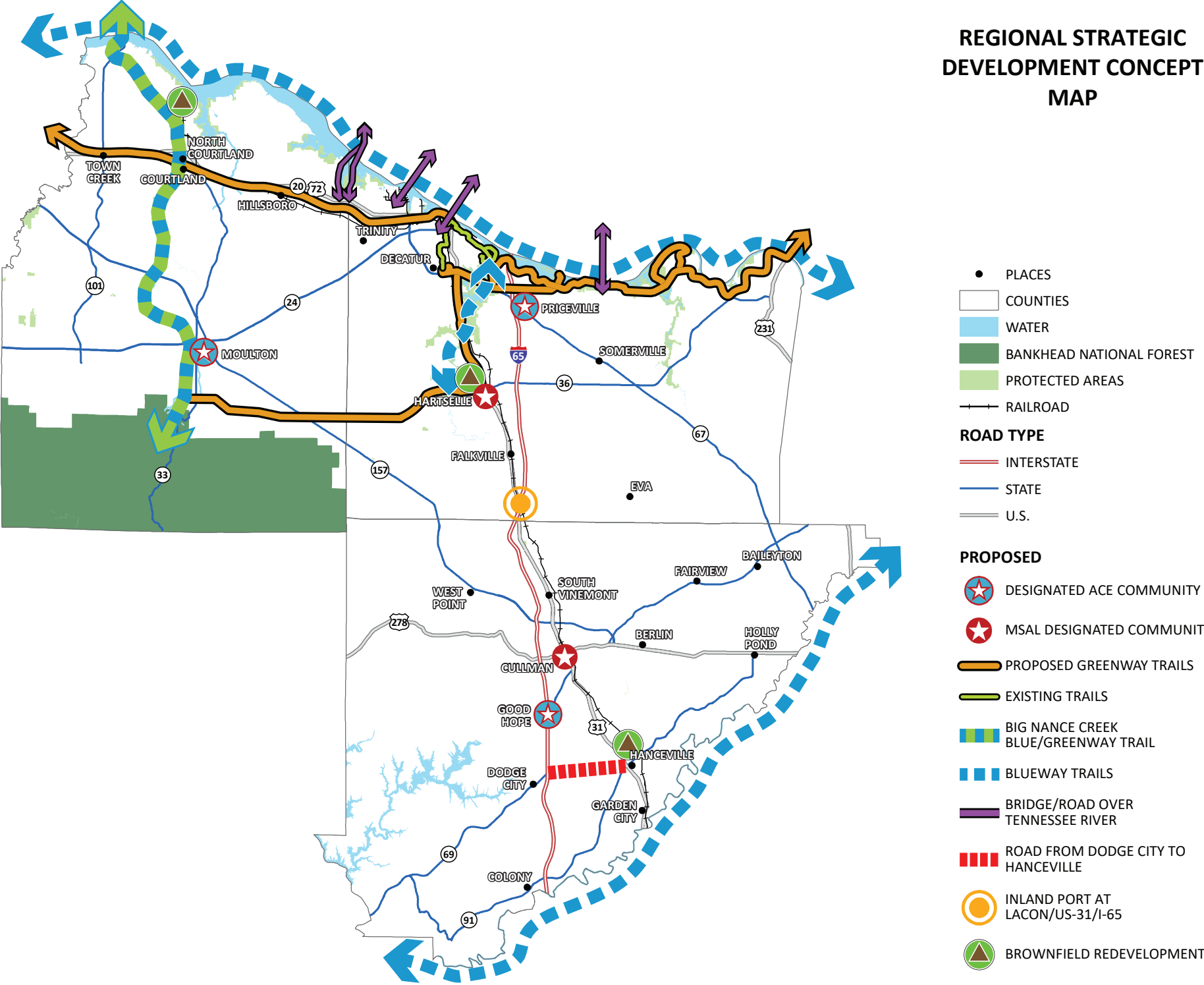
### ROAD TYPE

- INTERSTATE
- STATE
- U.S.

### REGIONAL INITIATIVES & ASSETS

- EXISTING TRAILS
- 🏍️ STONY LONESOME OHV PARK
- 🌐 DESIGNALABAMA MAYORS DESIGN SUMMIT
- 🌐 DESIGNALABAMA MAYORS DESIGN SUMMIT & DESIGNPLACE
- 🌟 DESIGNATED ACE COMMUNITY
- 🌟 MSAL DESIGNATED COMMUNITY
- 🌟 DOWNTOWN NETWORK COMMUNITY
- 🌳 JOE WHEELER STATE PARK CABINS
- 🦆 WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
- 🏭 INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS

# REGIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT MAP



# GOAL 1

## BUILD RESILIENT REGIONAL BUSINESSES

**Build resilient regional businesses through Innovation & Entrepreneurship (industry, financing, incentives, etc.)**

**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" to house tech startups, and Business Incubator Centers

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

**1.1.3** Create a Downtown Innovation District in Decatur

**1.1.4** Recruit entrepreneurs to the region

**1.1.5** Support efforts to recruit high-tech, high image companies to the Region

**1.1.6** Support efforts to expand Entrepreneurial education

**1.1.7** Participate in EDPA's Alabama Launchpad Program

**1.2** Support the Entrepreneurial Center

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

**1.2.2** Support the Best & Brightest Initiative

**1.2.3** Expansion of Business 101 and business coaching to Somerville and South Vinemont

**1.2.4** Explore the expansion of Best and Brightest Initiative to recruit nurses and teachers

**1.2.5** Support the new partnership with Innovate Alabama to strengthen the entire region

**1.2.6** Establish an Executive Council to set regional entrepreneurship priorities

**1.3** Continue expansion of technology and innovation programs in public and private schools

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

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

**1.3.3** Support Robotics Technology Park training programs

**1.3.4** Help facilitate partnerships between the Region's public schools, 2-year colleges, and the US Space and Rocket Center

**1.3.5** Implement Entrepreneurial Education curriculum in high schools

**1.4** Support the continued growth of the Alabama Center for the Arts and other higher education projects, such as the Cook Museum of Natural Science, to further the initiative of establishing a STEAM-based economy in Downtown Decatur

# GOAL 2

## BUILD A RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL ECONOMY

**Build a resilient & sustainable regional economy to withstand economic shocks, pandemics, natural, man-made, etc.**

**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 and Post-Disaster Recovery Plans

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

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

**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

## GOAL 3

## BUILD A RESILIENT REGIONAL WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEM

**Build a resilient regional workforce ecosystem through education, healthcare, housing, childcare, etc.**

**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)

**3.1.2** Support federal funding to increase the number of career coaches based on enrollment numbers

**3.1.3** Support federal funding for high-quality early education opportunities including head start, Pre-K, early education, professional development for personnel, etc.

**3.1.4** Continue County Leadership and Youth Leadership Programs through the Chambers of Commerce

**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 workforce development solutions/training programs

**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 such as solar and EV charging stations

**2.3.3** Seek federal and state funds to support our Regional Brownfield Initiative to identify, assess, clean-up, and reuse contaminated brownfield sites

**2.3.4** Support development of advanced electric power generation and transmission grid improvements that allow

for sustainable growth while delivering low cost, reliable power for industrial, commercial, and residential customers

**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

**2.7** Support Electric Vehicles (EVs) and future technological efforts in Alabama

**2.7.1** Support the completion of AIDT's new EV Training Center at the RTP in Tanner



**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

**3.2.6** Support the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and funding for the Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) initiative as well as the Alabama Technology Network (ATN)

**3.2.7** Support funding for marketing and economic recruitment efforts at the Alabama Robotics Technology Park

**3.2.8** Support continued grant funding for workforce development and education improvement programs

**3.2.9** Utilize the AIDT Military Training Program (AMTP) & DoD Skill Bridge

**3.2.10** Continue the new Lawrence County Job Fair (LCIDB)

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

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

**3.3.4** Support legislation and funding/incentives for community mental health centers to ensure the centers cover a broad range of mental health services, including: 24-hour crisis care, increased integration of physical, mental and substance abuse treatment, and expanded support for families of people living with mental health issues

**3.4** Attract new and affordable housing with a variety of housing types

**3.4.1** Update and modernize zoning ordinances to reflect the changing land use patterns (mixed uses)

**3.4.2** Market region to progressive real estate developers who adhere to good planning practices

**3.5** Advocate for affordable and reliable childcare and transportation options for the workforce

## GOAL 4

## BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE REGION

**Build resilient infrastructure for the region including broadband, planes, trains, automobiles, bike/ped, transit, ports, water, sewer, drainage, electric, etc.**

**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

**4.1.1** Support the State Broadband Initiative

**4.1.2** Support Joe Wheeler EMC and Flash Fiber with installing high-speed internet in Courtland and North Courtland

**4.2** Foster the sharing of resources to improve multimodal transportation, including public transit, and shipping infrastructure in the Region to leverage community development efforts

**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** Enhance all modes of freight movement in the region to allow for maximum safety and efficiency

**4.2.6** Actively participate in the Decatur Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Plan

**4.3** Support viable and reliable transit in the region for the elderly and disabled

**4.3.1** Support the NARCOG Transit that serves Decatur

**4.3.2** Support the City of Decatur Transit System and HSCTP –FY2020 plan

**4.3.3** Champion and support a Fixed Route Transit System for Downtown Decatur

**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

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

**4.4.2** Continue to prepare Street Assessments, Corridor Studies, Trail Plans, and County Transportation Plans

**4.5** Promote the implementation of the Inland Port Initiative to create Transportation-Based Economic Development

**4.5.1** Support local leaders, CSX, Port of Mobile, Port of Decatur, and the State

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

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

**4.6.2.** Support wastewater treatment improvements for West Morgan East Lawrence Water and Sewer Authority

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

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

**4.8** Promote the use of electric or hybrid fleet vehicles and invest in more EV charging stations and electric vehicle production for the Region

**4.9** Promote the funding and construction of all road and bridge improvement projects in the region

**4.9.1** Support the construction of a new southbound U.S. 31 Bridge over the Tennessee River

**4.9.2** Support the construction of a third

Bridge over the Tennessee River

**4.9.3** Support the construction of a new U.S. 278/St. Bernard Bridge in Cullman

**4.9.4** Continue seeking funding for a completed Corridor Study and improvements along US Alt 72/SR 20 and US 31 to create a limited access roadway from the I-65/I-565 interchange to US 31 and SR 20/Wilson Street intersection

**4.9.5** Study and recommend improvements along US Alt 72/SR 20 from Wilson Street intersection to the Morgan-Lawrence County line.

**4.9.6** Seek funding to widen US 67 from two to four lanes from Priceville to the US 36 intersection

**4.9.7** Improve the I-65/US 67 interchange by increasing the number of turn lanes to access the interstate from US 67

**4.9.8** Support the construction of a Hartselle Bypass to avoid excessive downtown traffic

**4.9.9** Actively pursue widening of US Highway 31 to 4-lanes from South Vinemont to Lacon/I-65 Exit in Cullman County

**4.9.10** Actively pursue widening of I-65 to 6-lanes from Exit 291 (Colony/Hanceville) to Exit 304 (Good Hope) in Cullman County

**4.9.11** Support construction of the proposed I-65/Bethel Road interchange in Hartselle

**4.9.12** Actively pursue widening of I-65 to 6-lanes from Thompson Rd exit to I-565 in Morgan (and Limestone) County

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

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

**4.11.2** Support the development of the Tennessee RiverLine Trail

**4.11.3** Support the development and implementation of the Singing River Trail

**4.11.4** Support the development and implementation of the Lawrence County Master Trail Plan

## GOAL 5

### BUILD A RESILIENT, REGIONAL TOURISM- BASED ECONOMY

**Build a resilient, regional tourism-based economy to leverage our assets (cultural, natural, & historical assets, downtowns, trails, etc.)**

**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

**5.2.3** Promote the North Alabama Birding Trail

**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

**5.3.2** Promote the Hallelujah Trail

**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

**5.4.3** Support seeking the additional funding needed to complete the 32-acre Ingalls Harbor project

**5.4.4** Explore development of the proposed Agricultural Center/ Equestrian Arena Complex in Moulton

**5.4.5** Support the new Civil Rights District including the Scottsboro Civil Rights Museum and the Judge Horton Home and its inclusion in the State's Civil Rights Trail

## GOAL 6 BUILD RESILIENT REGIONAL COMMUNITY LEADERS & CAPACITY

**Build resilient regional community leaders & capacity through partnerships, training, planning, etc.**

**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

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

**6.1.6** Support the mission of the Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority to implement the Envision Decatur plan updated in the One Decatur plan

**5.4.6** Support efforts of the “Hartselle For Tomorrow 501C3 Chamber Foundation” to raise funds to renovate the Old Post Office Building Downtown for a new Chamber home and Innovation Hub

**5.5** Support the development of the **Singing River Trail Western Route Master Plan**, Lawrence County Master Trail Plan (LCMTP), the Tennessee RiverLine program, and the **Sweet Trails Alabama program**, etc.

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

**5.5.2** Support the Initiatives of the Decatur and Lawrence County Tennessee “RiverTown” Programs by Tennessee RiverLine

**5.6** Support the AMRV RC&D's North Alabama Trail & Recreation (NATR) initiative

**5.6.1** Continue to support and participate in the Annual NATR Fest Event

**5.7** Support, promote, and invest in Cultural Arts in the Region

**5.7.1** Promote all of the Mural Trails in the Region

**5.7.2** Utilize the Alabama Center for the Arts students to create a thriving art scene in Decatur

**5.7.3** Support the annual Rock the South Music Festival in Cullman

**5.8** Support, promote, and invest in parks and recreation facilities in the Region

**5.8.1** Support the implementation of the Point Mallard Park Master Plan

**5.8.2** Support the implementation of the Point Mallard Park Children's Play Area Master Plan

**5.8.3** Provide technical assistance to prepare grants and other applications

**5.9** Support the de-industrialization and careful redevelopment of the Decatur riverfront along the Tennessee River to include land uses that promote tourism and stewardship of the natural resources provided by the River

**5.9.1** Support the “City Harbor” development at Ingalls Harbor

**5.9.2** Support the redevelopment of the historic McEntire House into a destination along the riverfront



**6.1.7 Prepare a Strategic Plan for the “Hartselle For Tomorrow 501C3 Chamber Foundation”**

**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 and other programs

**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

**6.2.11** Encourage communities to participate in the programs offered by DesignAlabama

**6.2.12** Encourage communities to participate in the new ARC Capacity Building Program

**6.2.13** Support the Local Leadership Teams of the Decatur and Lawrence County Tennessee “RiverTown” Programs by Tennessee RiverLine

**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

**6.3.2** Support the Tennessee RiverLine, Singing River Trail, and Sweet Trails Alabama

**6.4 Continue to develop and maintain partnerships at all levels**

**6.4.1** Local partnerships (EDO’s, Chambers, Tourism, etc.)

**6.4.2** State partnerships (ADECA, ADC, AIDT, ADEM, ALDOT, AHC, AEMA, Alabama Department of Tourism, Alabama STEM Council, Regional Workforce Councils, etc.)

**6.4.3** Federal partnerships (ARC, EDA, FHWA, FEMA, DoD, etc.)

**6.4.4** Other Agency and Organization partnerships (AARC, ACE, AMRV-RCD, DA, EDAA, EDPA, MSAL, NAIDA, SRT, N AL Tourism, TNRL, YTA, etc.)





December 5, 2024

Mr. Philip Paradise, Jr. Regional Director  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic Development Administration  
Atlanta Regional Office  
401 West Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 1820  
Atlanta, GA 30308

**RE: 2024 CEDS Annual Performance Report Submittal**

Dear Mr. Paradise:

This letter is to confirm that the North Central Alabama Regional Council of Government's (NARCOG) Board of Directors adopted a resolution approving the NARCOG 2024 CEDS Annual Performance Report (APR) on December 4, 2024. The resolution is included in our 2024 CEDS APR, which is posted on our website at: [www.narcog.org](http://www.narcog.org).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (256) 355-4515.

Sincerely,

Robby Cantrell, Executive Director

cc: Joseph F. Hester, AICP, Director of Planning and Development  
Files