

5

FORWARD:
2018-2022

COMPREHENSIVE
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY



2020 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA REGION



COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

5

FORWARD: 2018-2022

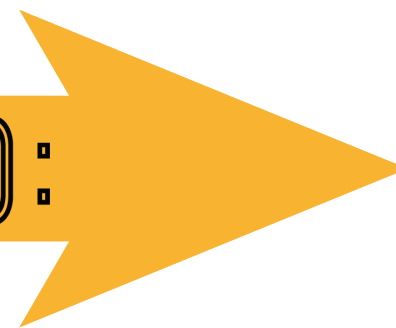


TABLE OF CONTENTS

2020 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

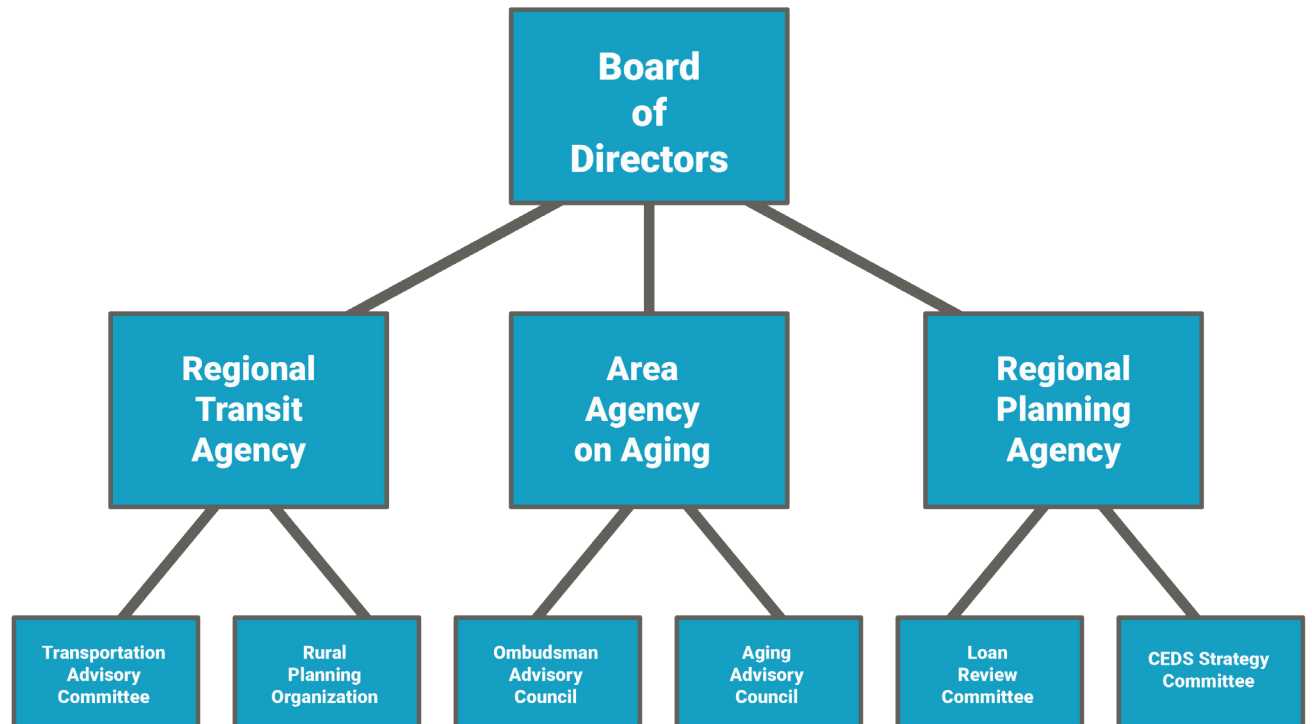
1 INTRODUCTION	1	APPENDIX	17
2 CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE	2	<i>A.) RESOLUTION</i>	17
3 MISSION, VISION, & GOALS	3	<i>B.) REFERENCES</i>	18
4 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK	4	<i>C.) MAPS & REVISED STRATEGIES</i>	19
5 PERFORMANCE	5	<i>MAPS</i>	20
<i>GOALS</i>	6	<i>REVISED STRATEGIES</i>	23
<i>PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES UPDATE</i>	9		
<i>NEW & EXPANDING INDUSTRY</i>	11		
<i>SELECTED ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS</i>	12		
<i>REGION & COUNTY DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOTS</i>	13		

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 FY2020, a couple changes occurred to the committee representatives from the organizations. 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 August 25th and September 15th on a virtual meeting platform that was hosted by NARCOG. 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 2020 Annual Performance Report.

Kristi Barnett	Wallace State Community College
Harry Schmidt	Tennessee Valley Authority
Missy Evans	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	Cullman Economic Development Agency
Brooks Kracke	North Alabama Industrial Development Association
Vacant	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:

- *TECHNA 4.0* – USDA RBEG grant - \$97,000; *Not Funded*
- EDA CARES Act grant – \$107,650; *Pending*



TIM BURNEY ARCHITECTS
Chattanooga + Hanceville

HANCEVILLE SENIOR CENTER
Hanceville, Alabama

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:

- 4 loans
- 76 jobs created/retained
- \$380,379 loaned
- \$1,563,750 private investment leveraged
- Developed COVID-19 Loan Policy
- Submitted EDA required RLF ADM Plan updates
- *NARCOG RLF Recap & ADM* – EDA CARES Act grant - \$700,000; *Funded*

NARCOG EDD:

- *NARCOG EDD Supplemental* – EDA CARES Act grant - \$400,000; *Funded*

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.

- *AMLTA Second Helpings* – EDA CARES Act grant - \$116,000; *Pending*

WSSC

- *Small Farms Camp* – AMRV RC&D Grant - \$3,500; *Pending*
- *College Success for Single Mothers* – National College Transition Network - \$8,000; *Pending*
- *Masonry Grant* – Alabama Associated General Contractors - \$75,000; *Funded*
- *Career Coach* – AL Office of Workforce Development (OWD) - \$40,000; *Pending*
- *Central Six 20-21 (Welding)*– OWD Region 4 - \$67,887; *Pending*
- *NAW 20-21 (5 Axis)* – OWD Region 1 - \$118,628; *Pending*
- *NAW 20-21 (Alamap)* – OWD Region 1 - \$608,130; *Pending*
- *TPSID Grant* – DOE Consortium Grant - \$2,308,146; *Pending*
- *Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC)* – ARC Grant - \$1,500,000; *Pending*
- *STEAM* – Alabama Community College System (ACCS) Grant - \$25,000; *Pending*
- *Ready to Work* – ACCS Grant - \$73,194; *Pending*
- *Dual Enrollment* – ACCS Grant - \$459,000; *Pending*
- *Family College* – Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham - \$49,300; *Pending*
- *AFRI (Agriculture and Food Research Initiative)* – USDA - \$500,000; *In Progress*
- *Advanced Technology Education* – National Science Foundation - \$300,000; *In Progress*

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 Transit (Lawrence & Morgan Counties) & RPO Programs

- *Participation in Launch 2035: Regional Trail Plan (Morgan, Limestone, Madison Counties)*
- *Hanceville Street & Drainage Improvements* – ALDOT RAA Grant - \$250,000 (\$275,000); *Funded*
- *Falkville Sidewalk Improvements* – ALDOT TAP Grant - \$558,026 (\$697,532); *Pending*
- *NARCOG Inland Port Feasibility Study* – RC&D Grant - \$30,000; *Funded*
- *NARCOG Inland Port Feasibility Study* – EDA CARES Act - \$133,000; *Pending*
- *Falkville Drainage Improvements* – CDBG Grant - \$350,000 (\$469,996); *Pending*
- *Hillsboro Drainage Improvements* – CDBG Grant - \$350,000; *Pending*
- *North Courtland Drainage Improvements* – CDBG Grant - \$347,300; *Pending*
- *Moulton Sewer Improvements* – CDBG Grant - \$450,000 (\$557,465); *Pending*

Others

- *Garden City Water Improvements* – CDBG Grant - \$350,000; *Pending*
- *Courtland Water Improvements* – CDBG Grant - \$350,000; *Pending*
- *Cullman County Senior Center* – CDBG Grant - \$250,000; *Pending*
- *Holly Pond Senior Center* – CDBG Grant - \$250,000; *Pending*
- *Morgan County Community Center* – CDBG Grant - \$250,000; *Pending*
- *AL Highway 157 Widening in Cullman* – BUILD Grant - \$14,000,000; *Underway*

GOAL 5 LEVERAGE CULTURAL & NATURAL ASSETS

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

- Lawrence County Trail Plan: Existing Assets Report (RPO); *Underway*

WSCC

- NEH CARES Grant – National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) - \$221,108; Not Funded*
- Wallace State CARES about Access – IMLS (Institute of Museum & Library Services) Grant - \$154,000; 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.

NARCOG EDA EDD (CEDS) & ARC LDD Programs:

- 2020 Census (Complete Count Committee)
- Hanceville Comprehensive Plan Update; *Adoption Process*
- Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan; *Underway*
- Regional Hazard Mitigation Plans (Divisions E and F); *Underway*
- EDAA Rural Development Committee RDI: Northwest Strategic Plan (includes Lawrence County); *Underway*
- Hartselle Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) Re-Designation; *July 2020*
- Regional Downtown Network Initiative; *Underway (Year 4)*
- Partnerships with ACE, DesignAlabama (North Courtland and Moulton interested), MSAL, and YTAL
- DesignAlabama Mayors Design Summit (North Courtland and Moulton); *Accepted (February 2021)*

PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES UPDATE

➤ **Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE)**

- **Hartselle Re-designation**
 - NARCOG – Mentor
 - Re-designated July 2020
 - Comprehensive Plan Update (Pending)
- **Hanceville - 2017 ACE Class**
 - NARCOG – Team Captain
 - Designation – May 4, 2019
 - Phase 3 - Comprehensive Plan (Adoption in Process)

➤ **Regional Redevelopment Initiative**

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

➤ **Regional Downtown Network (Year 4)**

- **Walkability Audit Projects Implementation** - *Underway*

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. For the period October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020, 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**


Small Business Fund Program Loan Activity Since October 1, 2019



AMOUNT		PRIVATE FUNDS LEVERAGED	JOBS CREATED	JOBS RETAINED
CLOSED LOANS				
	\$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
TOTAL CLOSED	\$645,000	\$1,558,700	10	30
APPROVED LOANS				
TOTAL	\$645,000	\$1,558,700	10	30

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, 2019 to September 30, 2020. 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: FY2020	CULLMAN COUNTY	LAWRENCE COUNTY	MORGAN COUNTY	NARCOG REGION
Total New Companies:		2	0	
Total New Jobs:		73	0	
Total New Capital Investment:		\$23,400,000	\$0	
Total Expanding Companies:		1	3	
Total Expanding Jobs:		0	69	
Total Expanding Capital Investment:		\$6,500,000	\$184,062,500	
Total New & Expanding Companies:		3	3	
Total New & Expanding Jobs:		73	69	
Total New & Expanding Investments:		\$29,900,000	\$184,062,500	

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

SELECTED ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS *

* TO BE UPDATED AS INFORMATION IS GIVEN

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*
- The city of Cullman has plans to construct a multi-purpose sports complex, at a cost of \$15 million to \$20 million, to attract state and national sports tourism while meeting a wide range of local demands. The complex will hold 7,500 people, perhands more, depending on the events. State and national sporting events held at the complex are expected to benefit local hotels and businesses while bringing many new people to the city.

Lawrence County

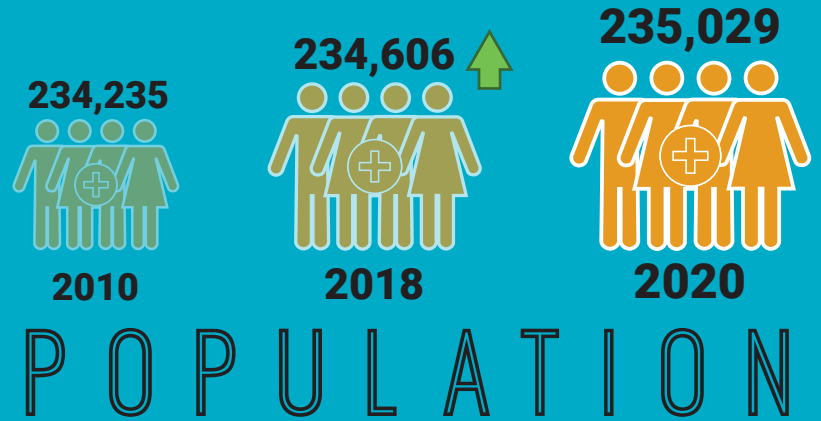
- Nucor Tubular Products is expanding a newly acquired site in the Mallard Fox West Industrial Park. The expansion will provide 35 new jobs that are anticipated to pay \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year. The \$27.2 million expansion includes new production, processing and packaging equipment, finishing, and workforce growth to support new operations. *Source: Moulton Advertiser; April 2019*
- Lockheed Martin has announced the construction of a "hypersonic manufacturing facility" that will create 72 jobs over three years in Courtland, with the possibility of more jobs in the future. This new facility will double the number of employees Lockheed has at the Courtland site, which opened in 1993. Marillyn Hewson, presdient and CEO of Lockheed Martin, said that workers will need science, technology, engineering and mathematics training, and that Lockheed has plans to invest in STEM and apprenticeship programs. The initial 72 workers will be assembling a prototype missile system, and projected wages will be "very competitve and attractive." *Source: Decatur Daily; September 2019*

Morgan County

- 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	104,976	↑
Vacancy	15%	↑
Housing units with no vehicle	4.9%	↑

EDUCATION

82.2%	Age 25+ with ≥ high school diploma	↑
17.5%	Age 25+ with ≥ bachelor degree	↑

HEALTH

10.5%	Population with no health insurance	↓
15.2%	Food insecurity rate	↑
20.7%	Child food insecurity rate	↑

TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

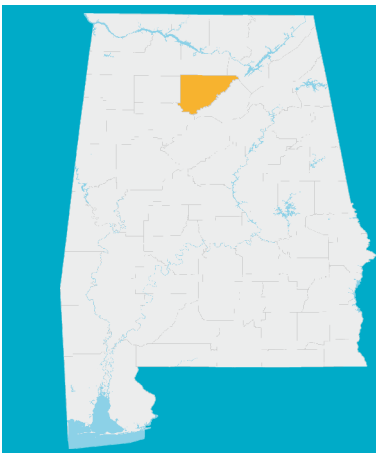
- Decatur Morgan Hospital
- GE Appliances, a Haier company
- Cullman County Schools
- Cullman Regional Medical Center
- Decatur City Schools
- Wayne Farms Prepared Foods
- Wal-Mart Distribution
- Morgan County Schools
- 3M Company
- Wayne Farms Fresh Facility

EMPLOYMENT

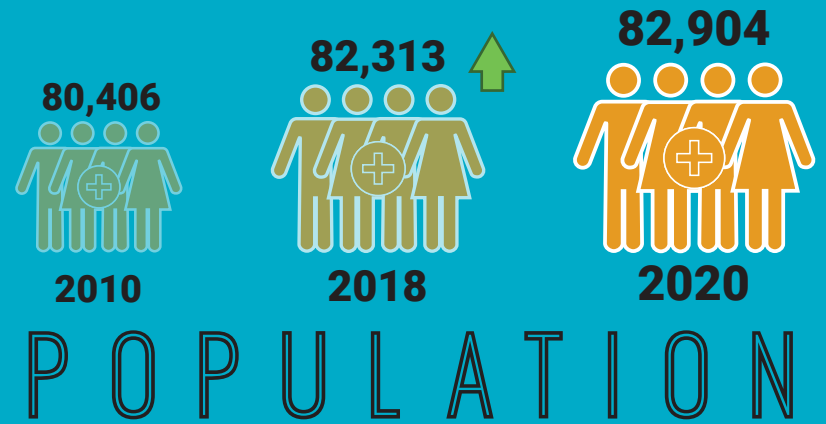
109,412	Total labor force	↓
6,485	Unemployed	↑
5.93%	Unemployment rate	↑

ECONOMY

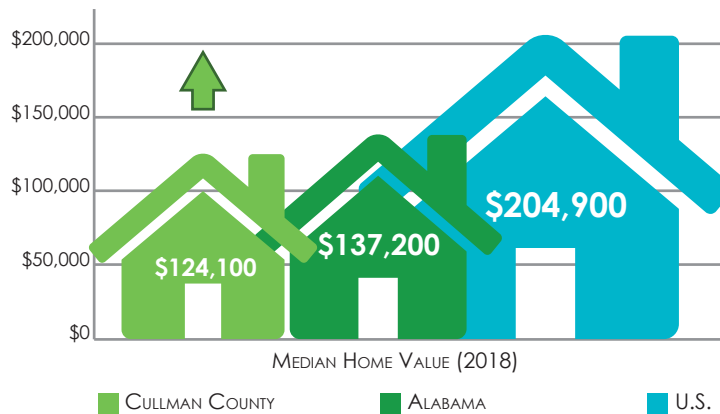
\$9,191,988,000	Total personal income	↑
\$2,756,632,160	Net taxable assessed valuation	↑
21.9%	Public assisted households	↓
\$37,908	Per capita income	↑
\$44,146	Annual wages per employee	↑



CULLMAN COUNTY



HOUSING



EDUCATION

81.8% Age 25+ with ≥ high school diploma ↓

13.7% Age 25+ with ≥ bachelor degree ↓

Wallace State Community College
4,800 enrolled students

HEALTH

11.8% Population with no health insurance ↓

15.1% Food insecurity rate ↑

20.2% Child food insecurity rate ↑

TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

- Cullman County Schools
- Cullman Regional Medical Center
- Wal-Mart Distribution
- State of Alabama
- Topre America Corporation
- Wal-Mart Super Center North/South
- Wallace State Community College
- REHAU
- Cullman County Commission
- Yutaka Technologies

EMPLOYMENT

39,315 Total labor force ↑

1,992 Unemployed ↑

5.1% Unemployment rate ↑

ECONOMY

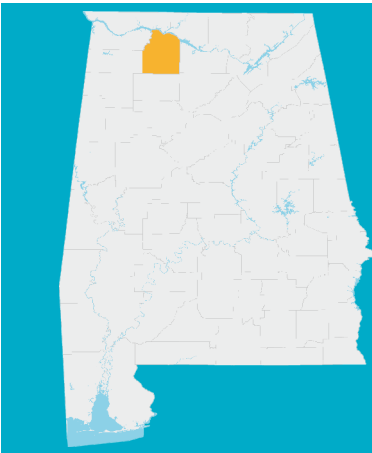
\$3,304,856,000 ↑
Total personal income

\$925,515,900 ↑
Net taxable assessed valuation

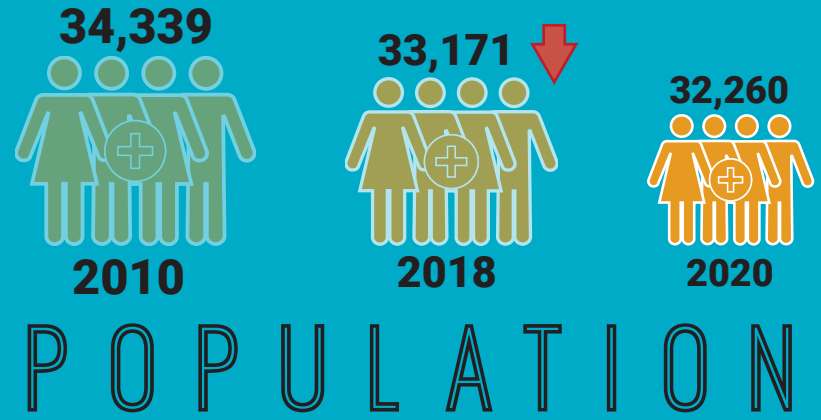
\$42,558 ↑
Median household income

\$39,607 ↑
Per capita income

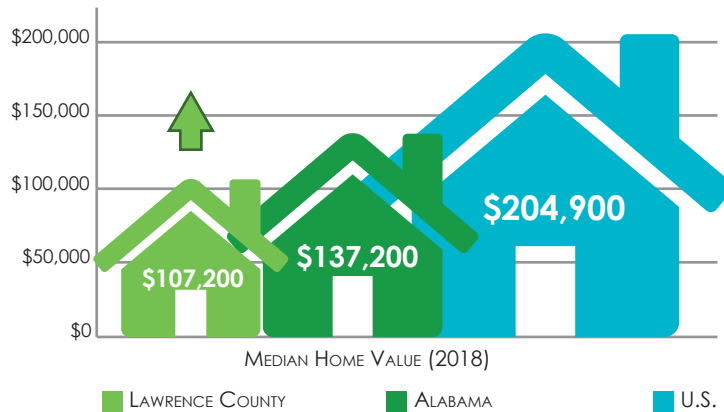
\$39,961 ↑
Annual wages per employee



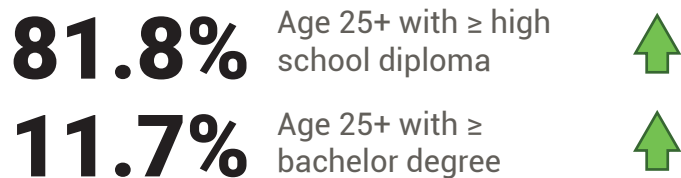
LAWRENCE COUNTY



HOUSING



EDUCATION



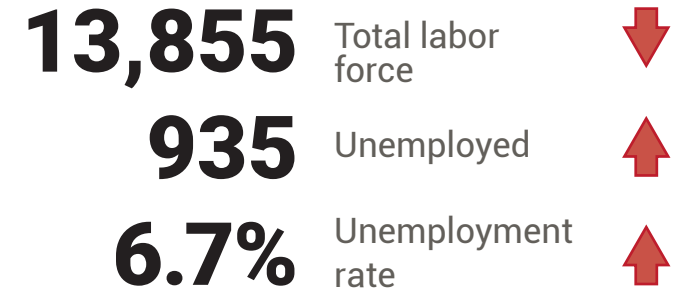
HEALTH



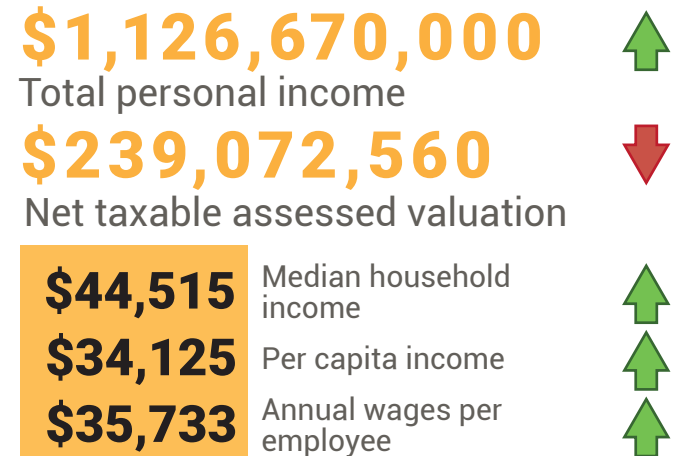
TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

- 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

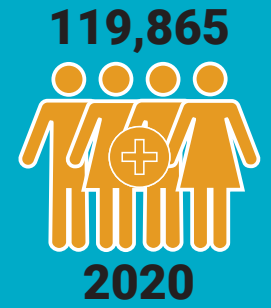


ECONOMY



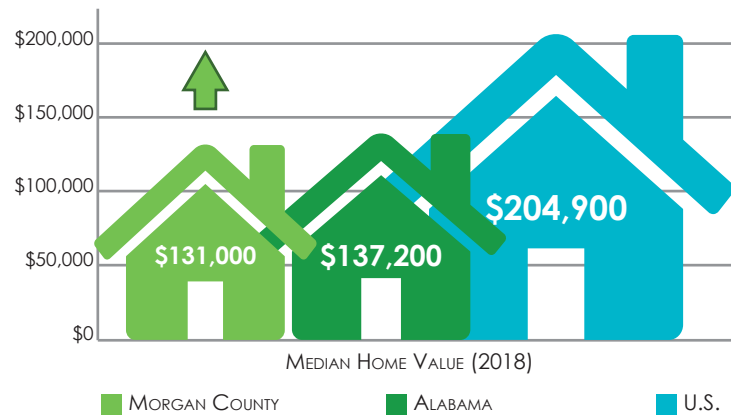


MORGAN COUNTY

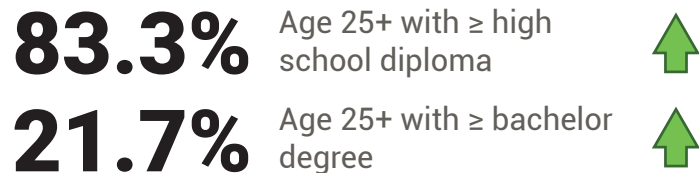


POPULATION

HOUSING



EDUCATION



*Calhoun Community College
9,315 enrolled students
*Physical location is in Decatur city limits, but in Limestone County

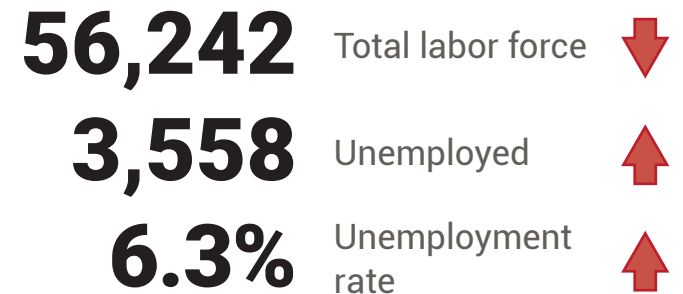
HEALTH



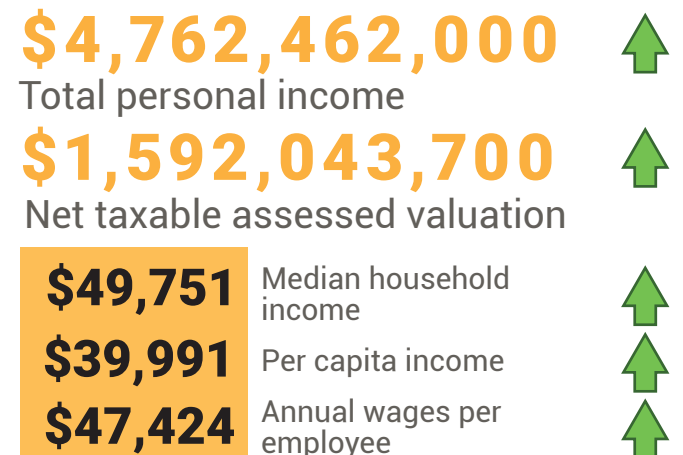
TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

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

EMPLOYMENT



ECONOMY



A RESOLUTION

NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Resolution Number 2020-XXX

2020 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 5 Forward: 2018-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was approved and adopted by the NARCOG Board of Directors to cover the five-year period from 2018 to 2022, and Annual Reports are required for the intervening four-year period from 2018 to 2021, and

WHEREAS, the NARCOG staff, CEDS Strategy Committee, and stakeholders have undertaken and completed project review, input, status, economic research, evaluation, and analysis required by EDA resulting in the 2020 CEDS Annual Performance Report,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the NARCOG Board of Director's approves and adopts the NARCOG EDD's 2020 CEDS Annual Performance Report.

RESOLVED this ___ day of October 2020

Chairman

Executive Director

B REFERENCES

DATA SOURCES:

- U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 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) 2018 CA1 Personal Income Summary: Personal Income, Population, Per Capita Personal Income
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2019 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), County High-Level Annual Averages
- Alabama Department of Revenue (ADOR), 2019 Annual Report (2018 data)
- Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Civilian Labor Force by County, July 2020 Unemployment Data
- Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, 2019 State Data Tables by county for Alabama (2018 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) and the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA), Advantage Alabama – <http://advantagealabama.com/county/103/morgan/edpa-advantage-alabama-county.html>
- 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>

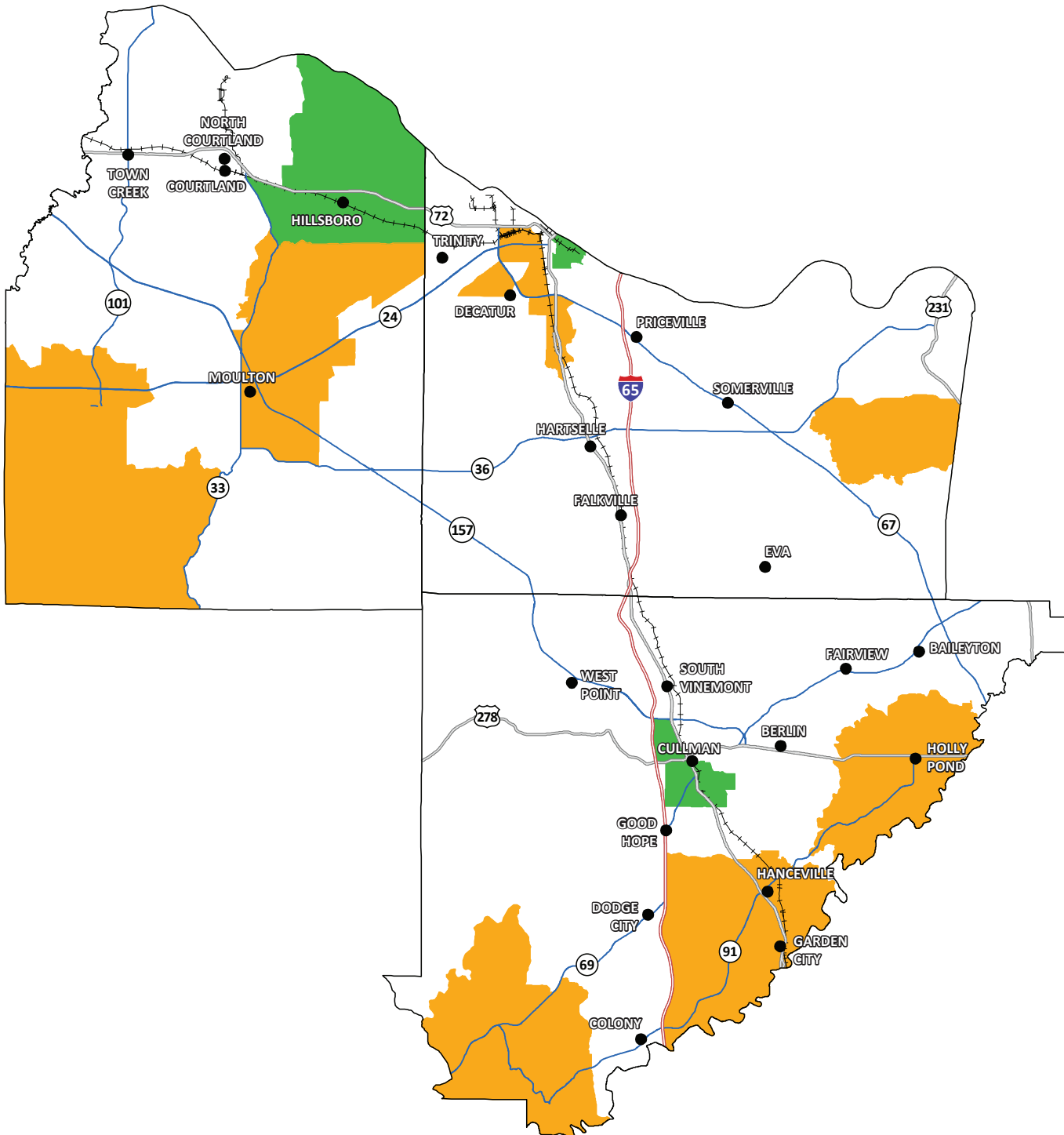
New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program incentivizes business and real estate investment in low-income communities of the United States via a federal tax credit. The program is administered by the US Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund and allocated by local Community 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

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.

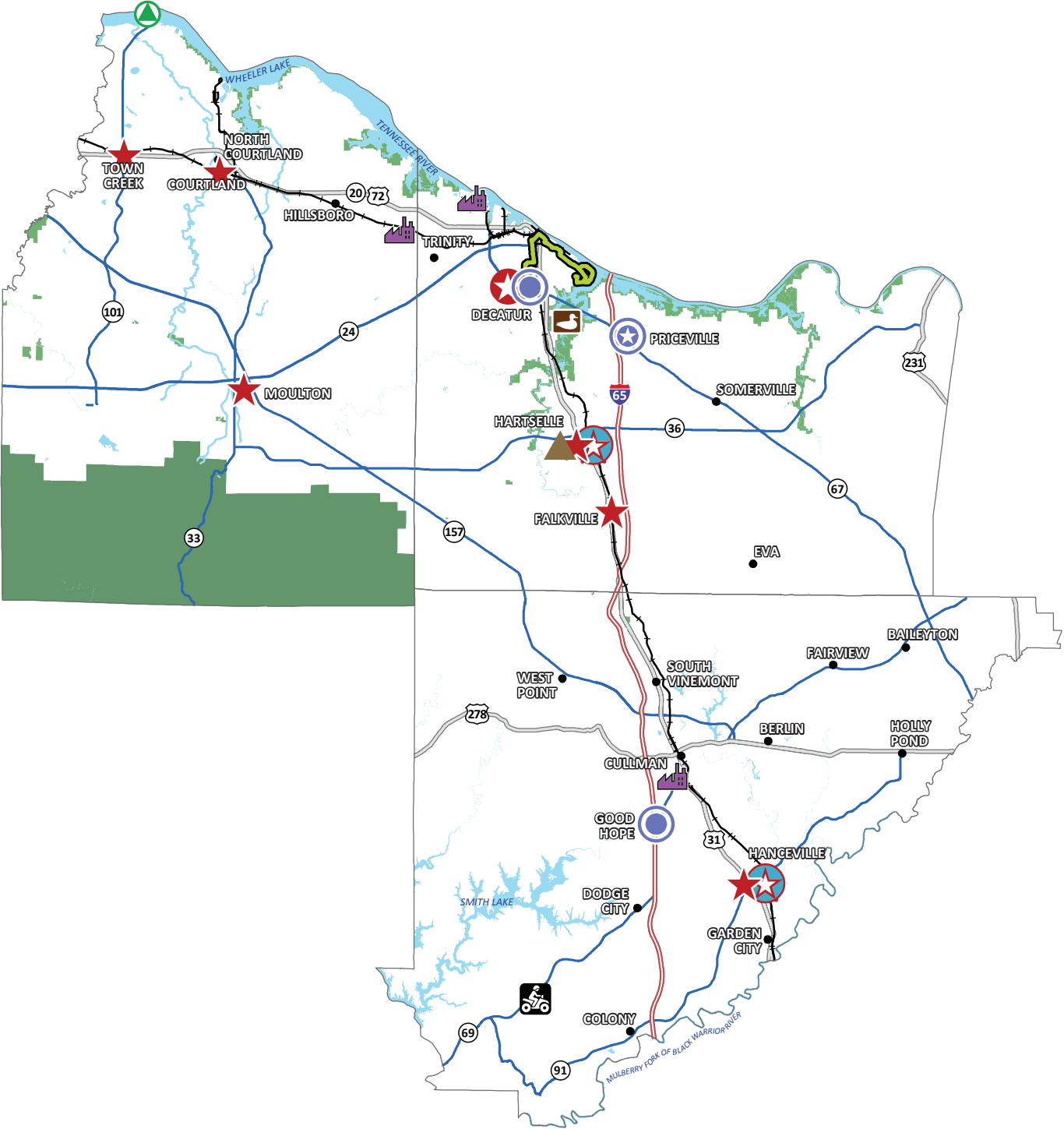
OPPORTUNITY ZONE AND NEW MARKET TAX CREDIT (NMTC) QUALIFIED TRACTS



- NMTC QUALIFIED
- OPPORTUNITY ZONE *AND* NMTC QUALIFIED

REGIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT MAP

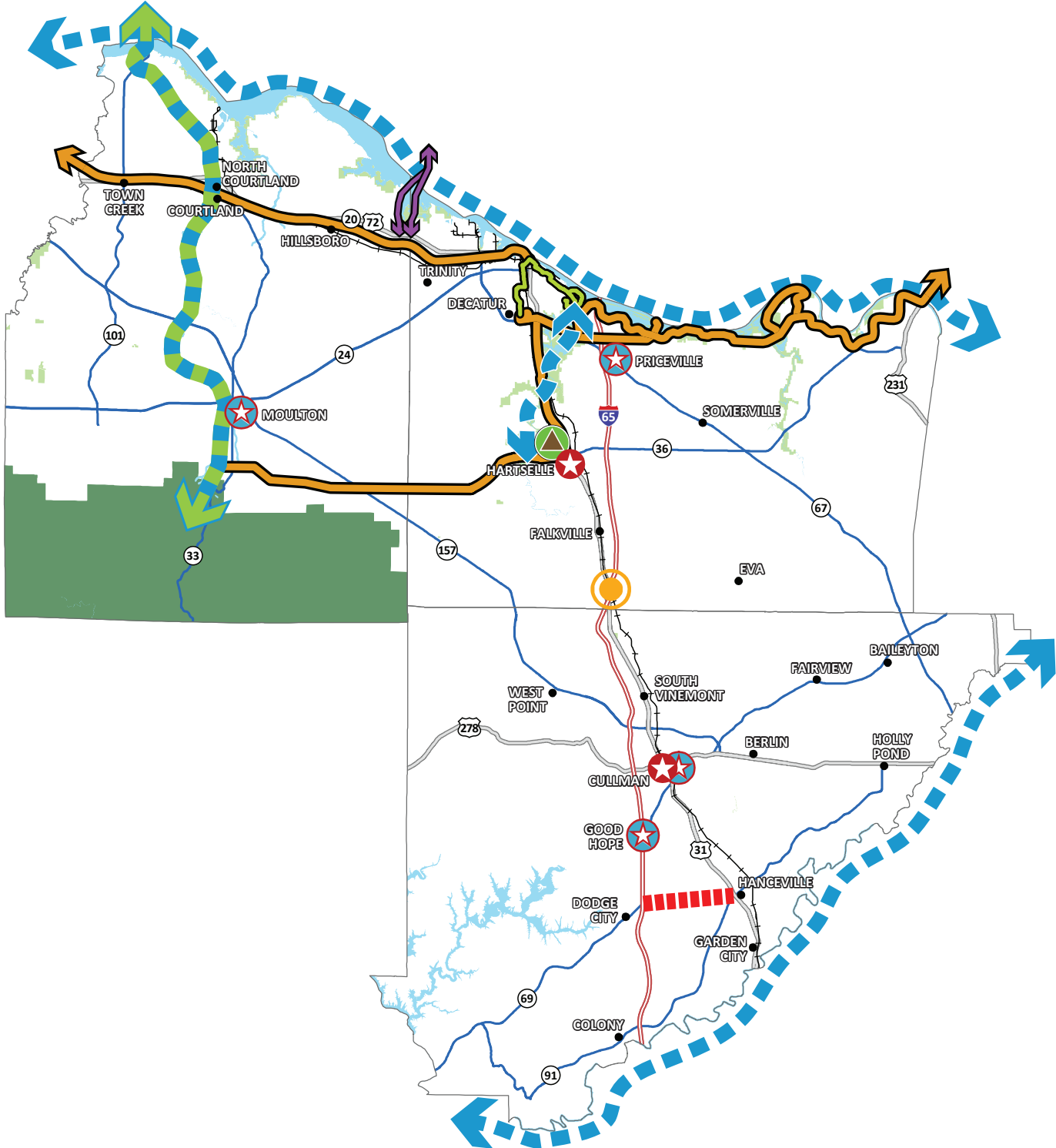
EXISTING ASSETS



- 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
 - ★ MSAL NETWORK COMMUNITY
 - ▲ ADEM BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM
 - 🌲 JOE WHEELER STATE PARK CABINS
 - 🦋 WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
 - 🏭 INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS

REGIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT MAP

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
 - BLUEWAY TRAILS
 - BRIDGE/ROAD FROM US-72 OVER TENNESSEE RIVER
 - ROAD FROM DODGE CITY TO HANCEVILLE
 - INLAND PORT AT LACON/US-31/I-65
 - ▲ BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

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