

5

FORWARD: 2018-2022

COMPREHENSIVE
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY



2021 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA REGION



COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



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2021 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

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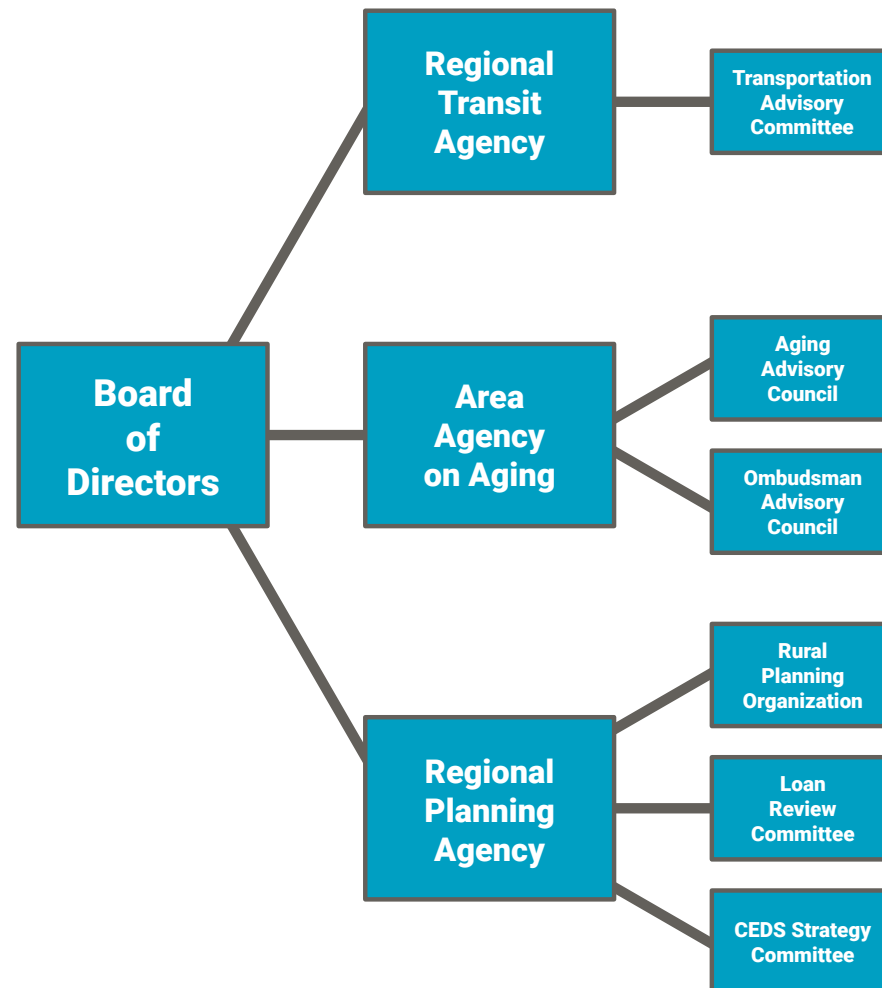
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1 INTRODUCTION

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 2021 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 FY2021, 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.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CEDS Strategy Committee met on August 25th and September 14th at the NARCOG Board Room along with offering a virtual meeting platform that was hosted by NARCOG. The purpose of the meetings was for NARCOG staff to provide an update on various initiatives and preliminary performance measures and receive input from the committee for the 2021 Annual Performance Report.

Kristi Barnett	Wallace State Community College
Harry Schmidt	Tennessee Valley Authority
Missy Evans	Hartselle Chamber of Commerce
Bradley Williams	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
Crystal Brown	Decatur–Morgan County Chamber of Commerce
Peggy Smith	Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce
Tabitha Pace	Lawrence County Industrial Development Board
Danielle Gibson	Decatur Morgan County Tourism
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

The 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 during FY2021, the NARCOG EDD and others made significant headway, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. 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:

- Currently supports 53 businesses and ranks #1 statewide for number of companies graduated, as well as ranked #1 per capita for current number of clients served.
- Partnered with a university to launch the first CEO program in the state where high school students receive course credit for starting a business.
- Recruited 37 young professionals to our community and received state/national recognition for the "Best and Brightest Initiative".
- Launched a partnership with the City, Chamber, and Economic Development Organizations to proactively recruit growing companies to our area.

NARCOG:

- Decatur-Morgan County E-Center's Project Rebound – USDA RBDG grant – **\$86,880**; *Funded*
 - First pop-up shop circuit event in Falkville, "Sip & Shop;" *September 25, 2021*
- Decatur-Morgan County E-Center's EDA CARES Act grant – **\$107,650**; *Not Funded*



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=199530828913003&set=a.131786155687471>



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.

Cullman County

- **Christmas Open House** – two-day event to kick off the Christmas Retail Season: 56 businesses participated; *November 2020*
- **Rock the South** – two-day music festival; 40,000+ attendees; *August 13-14, 2021*
- **Duck River Triathlon and Trail Runs** – 120 registrations; 10 States represented; *August 21-22, 2021*
- Cullman's sales tax revenue was up nearly 18%, liquor taxes were more than 30% higher, and revenue from the internet sales tax was 48.32% higher; *January 2021*

Lawrence County

- **Progressive Pipe Fabricators** held a grand opening for its 82,000 SF facility in the Mallard Fox West Industrial Complex creating 60 new jobs; *November 2020*
- **Servico, Inc.** cotton mill in Courtland, AL, invested **\$3.6 million** on an expansion to upgrade its production equipment.
- **Red Land Cotton** opened a new warehouse/distribution facility in Moulton, AL; the **\$1.1 million** investment created 10 new jobs; *January 2021*



Servico, Inc. cotton

NARCOG

- **Regional Hazard Mitigation Plans** Divisions E (*Complete*) and F (*Underway*)
- **Accelerate Business Growth Fund (ABGF)**: Rebranded; 8 loans and 9 COVID loans; 70 jobs created/retained; loaned - \$800K + (\$600K EDA CARES COVID +); \$2.9M +/- Private Investment Leveraged; completed EDA required RLF ADM Plan updates; completed the process of defederalizing our EDA RLF funds
- **North Central Alabama Regional Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan**; *Underway*
- **Berlin Storm Shelter grant** – FEMA PDM – **\$127,000**; *Pending*
- **Lawrence County CDBG-CV equipment grant** – **\$387,370**; *Awarded*
- **Morgan County CDBG-CV equipment grant** – **\$489,475**; *Awarded*



North Alabama Trail & Recreation

Improving North Alabama's Recreational Infrastructure by Providing Expertise, Awareness, Funds, and Workforce

Featuring

NATR Club	NATR Expo	NATR Fund	NATR Crew
Network of partners dedicated to building and improving recreational infrastructure together.	Event to bring awareness to orgs, businesses, clubs, retailers, etc. providing rec opportunities in N. AL.	Special fund for local and collaborative trail and recreation projects in the North Alabama area.	Volunteer program to accomplish trail and recreation project creation and maintenance.

For more info visit amrvrcd.org/natr or email jared.carter@amrvrcd.com

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.

Lawrence County

- Lockheed Martin held its **Advanced Manufacturing Technician Apprenticeship Program (AMTAP)** cohort graduation in September 2021.
- **Teachers on Tour Event** hosted by the Lawrence County Board of Education and the Lawrence County Industrial Development Board was held in August of 2021.

Cullman County

- Cullman County Workforce Training - **Ready to Work** and **Liberty Learning**
- **Cullman Job Fair** - *Fall 2020* (Approximately 150 registrations & Approximately 15 business & industry registered; *Spring 2021* (approximately 120 registrations & 40 businesses & industries registered)

Wallace State Community College (WSCC)

- Received the **Department of Labor WORC grant (\$1,500,000)** to increase the number of skilled Diesel Technicians in North Alabama.
- Received the **National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education grant** award to recruit and retain more women and adult students into skilled trades programs, beginning with the Diesel Technology program
- Received funding from the **Alabama Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Program** to expand industry-recognized apprenticeships in North Alabama - thus recruiting students into skilled trades programs, providing them work-based learning opportunities, and providing area manufacturers with skilled workers during a time of low labor force participation
- Hosted college fairs on campus; *2020 (virtual) and 2021*
- Hosted the first annual **Manufacturing Day and Networking Event; 2021**

- Hosted two **STEM Camps** this summer to introduce area elementary and middle school students to the variety of careers available in STEM
- Received funding from an **ARC Power grant** to complete an industry study on automotive manufacturing in north Alabama as it relates to electric vehicles and Industry 4.0; will use the study findings to create a strategic plan for preparing skilled workers for "Car 2.0 Manufacturing"
- Expanded work with recovering addicts through partnership with **Jimmie Hale Mission** and **Restoring Women**; served 199; 54 completed the **Ready to Work (RTW)** program; 22 completed **OSHA 10** training; 2 completed **Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC)** certification; 60% were either able to secure employment or continue education; *2020-2021*
 - Phase 2 of this program will partner with Jeff State
- Partnered with **Talent Search program** which serves 1st generation prospective college students still in high school to offer RTW for them online; 82 students are currently enrolled in the program
- Launched a partnership with **Ed2go** which offers online courses and career training programs for a new career, or for advancing within current occupation



Teachers on Tour

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.

Cullman County

- **Construction of Fire Loop Road** around new Reliance Worldwide Building - CDBG - **\$500,000**; *Funded*
- **Rehabilitation of 24th St** to serve the REHAU expansion - CDBG - **\$350,000**; ARC - **\$350,000**; *Funded*
- **Install traffic light at 24th St and Hwy 69** - CDBG - **\$100,000**; *Funded*
- **Sidewalk improvements** – 2nd Ave / Clark St / 1st Ave – ALDOT TAP - **\$640,000**; *Funded*
- **The 2021 Worlds of Work** (hands on career fair) for Cullman City, County, and Private Schools - Cullman County Community Development Committee - **\$12,000**
- **Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment (ATCMTD)** for the North Alabama Connected Road Weather & Traffic Management Technology Project - USDOT - **\$5 million**; *Pending*
- **Warnke Road Improvements** (water, sewer, street) - CDBG - **\$500,000**; *Pending*
- **AL Highway 157 Widening** project in Cullman – BUILD Grant – **\$14,000,000**; *Underway*

Lawrence County

- Joe Wheeler Electric Membership Corporation launched **FlashFiber**, a world class fiber optic internet that will provide more than 43,000 members/residents in rural Morgan and Lawrence Counties access to faster more reliable internet technology.

Morgan County

- **Decatur's 6th Ave streetscape project** - **\$640,000** (\$800,000) ALDOT TAP (\$8M Total); *Funded*



NARCOG

- **NARCOG Regional Transit** (Lawrence & Morgan Counties)
 - **Resolution 2021-0022** – Authorizing Submittal of an application to ALDOT for the § 5307 "Urban" portion of the Transit Program; *Approved*
 - **Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan** – *Complete*
- **Falkville Drainage Improvements**: CDBG Grant - **\$350,000** (\$493,868); *Pending*
- **Hillsboro Drainage Improvements**: CDBG Grant - **\$350,000**; *Pending*
- **Garden City WWTP Improvements**: CDBG Grant - **\$346,900**; *Pending*
- **Moulton Sewer Improvements**: CDBG Grant - **\$500,000** (\$621,100); *Pending*
- **Falkville Drainage Improvements**: ARC Grant **\$98,541** (\$197,082); *Funded*
- **Moulton Sewer Improvements**: ARC Grant - **\$200,000** (\$319,978); *Funded*
- **NARCOG Inland Port Feasibility Study**; *Underway*
- **Decatur-Morgan County Port Authority Warehouse Expansion** – ARC SAAW grant – **\$1 million** (\$2,185,854); *Awarded*
- **RPO FY2022 Work Program**; *Approved*
 - **Cullman County OHV Park Improvements**: RTP Grants – **\$524,937** (\$752,020); *Pending*
 - **Berlin Street Assessment**; *Complete*
 - **Fairview Road Improvements** – RAA (ALDOT) grant – **\$202,001**; *Not Funded*
 - **Garden City Road Improvements** – RAA (ALDOT) grant – **\$250,000** (\$328,449); *Not Funded*
 - **Hillsboro-Oakdale Street Improvements** – RAA (ALDOT) grant – **\$248,250** (\$273,075); *Not Funded*
 - **Eva Road Improvements** – RAA (ALDOT) grant – **\$250,000** (\$329,373); *Not Funded*
 - **Falkville Roads Improvements** – RAA (ALDOT) grant – **\$213,165** (\$234,165); *Not Funded*

GOAL 5

LEVERAGE CULTURAL & NATURAL ASSETS

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

NARCOG

- Lawrence County Trail Plan: Existing Assets Report (RPO) – *Complete*
- Courtland Mural Project w/Lockheed Martin

Cullman County

- Submitted murals for the Alabama Mural Trail and the North Alabama Mural Trail
- 19+ acres were donated to Hanceville to establish a park to be named the Larry and Lillie Tucker Arboretum in support of implementation of the Comprehensive Plan

Lawrence County

- The first Singing River Trail meeting was held in August 2021. The Singing River Trail is a vision for a long-distance trail in North Alabama that connects communities, provides active-living opportunities for residents, and spurs further economic development for the region

Morgan County

- The "Clean Up for the Cranes" volunteer effort was held as part of a partnership between Decatur Morgan County Tourism, the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, and the Tennessee RiverLine to remove litter from the TN River and the Refuge and raise awareness of the positive recreational impact; *September 18, 2021*



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/VisitDecaturAL/>



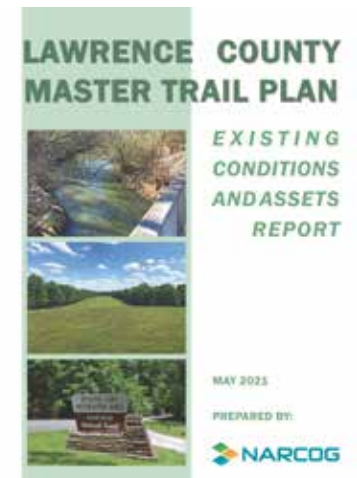
GOAL 6

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 :

- Hanceville Comprehensive Plan Update; *Adopted*
- EDAA Rural Development Committee RDI: Northwest Strategic Plan (includes Lawrence County); *Complete*
- Regional Downtown Network Initiative; *Underway (Year 5)*
- Partnerships with ACE, DesignAlabama, MSAL, and Y TAL
- DesignAlabama Mayors Design Summit (Courtland, North Courtland, and Moulton); *Attended (February 2021)*
- Area Agency on Aging Area Plan 2022-2025; *Approved*



PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES UPDATE

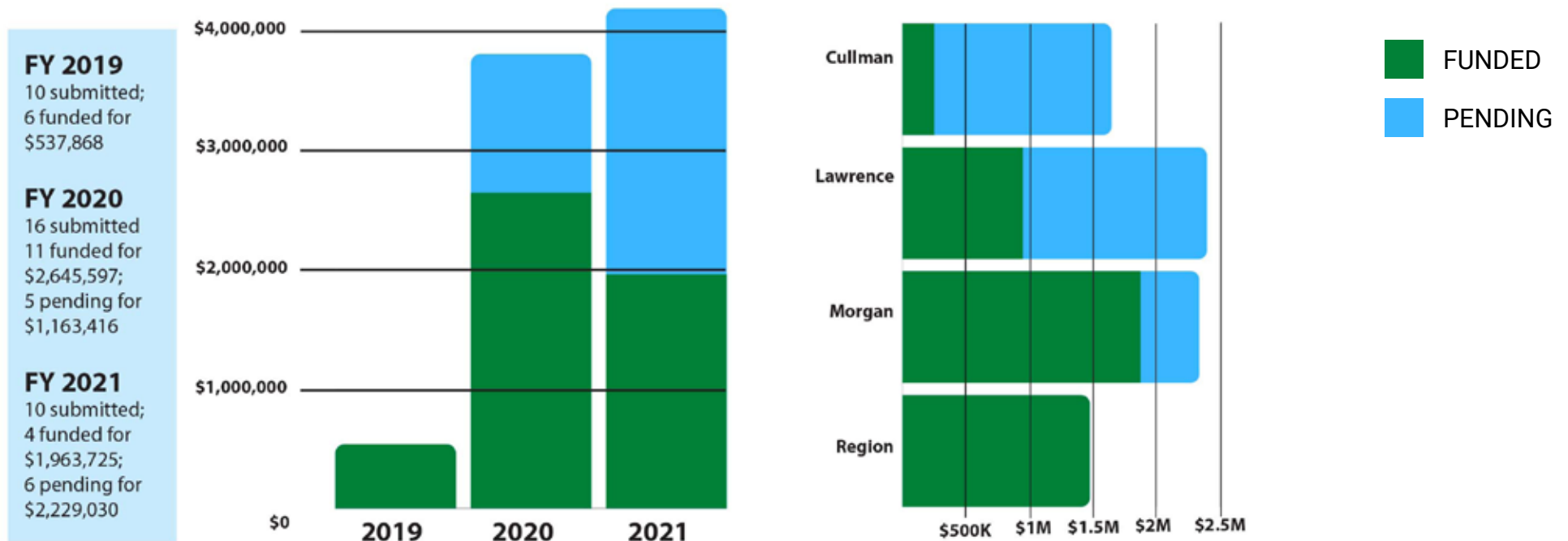
➤ Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE)

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

➤ Regional Downtown Network (Year 5)

- Walkability Audit Projects Implementation - *Underway*
- Courtland, Moulton, and North Courtland
 - Participated in Design Alabama's Mayor's Design Summit in February 2021

NARCOG GRANTS 3-YEAR STATUS REPORT



ACCELERATE BUSINESS GROWTH FUND

NARCOG operates a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program intended to assist small businesses and industries throughout the region with gap financing. This program was rebranded in 2020 to the Accelerate Business Growth Fund. The NARCOG program has been very successful over the years and is partially funded by EDA. In 2020, the EDA CARES program was funded with \$700K additional funding to service small businesses affected by COVID-19. \$600K of the funds have been loaned.

Program information is made available at: NARCOG, local Chambers, industrial development associations, Decatur-Morgan Entrepreneurial Center, local banks, all member governments, and online at www.narcog.org. For the period October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021, the Accelerate Business Growth Fund has done the following:

➤ Loan Review Committee Meetings via Online (due to COVID-19)

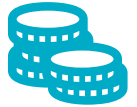
– 16

- November 2, 2020
- November 6, 2020
- December 16, 2020
- December 18, 2020
- December 30, 2020
- January 21, 2021
- January 28, 2021
- February 3, 2021
- February 18, 2021
- March 26, 2021
- April 7, 2021
- April 22, 2021
- May 20, 2021
- June 17, 2021
- July 15, 2021
- September 2, 2021
- September 30, 2021

➤ Defederalized EDA RLF Funds

Small Business Fund Program

Loan Activity Since October 1, 2020



AMOUNT	PRIVATE FUNDS LEVERAGED	JOBS CREATED	JOBS RETAINED	EDA CARES
CLOSED LOANS				
\$15,000	-	-	1	
\$75,000	-	-	10	\$75,000
\$46,714	-	2	8	\$46,714
\$20,000	-	-	1	\$20,000
\$150,000		-	11	\$150,000
\$200,000	\$400,000	-	10	
\$90,000		-	11	\$90,000
\$75,000	\$275,000	-	6	
\$12,000	-	-	1	\$12,000
\$6,000	-	-	1	\$6,000
\$100,000	-	-	24	\$100,000
\$50,000	-		2	
\$50,000	-	2	1	\$50,000
\$50,000		2	1	\$50,000
\$75,000	\$160,000	2	3	
\$62,500	\$187,500	-	3	
\$39,600	\$102,000	-	2	
TOTAL	\$1,116,814	\$1,124,500	8	96
				\$599,714

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, 2020 to September 30, 2021. 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: FY2021

	CULLMAN COUNTY	LAWRENCE COUNTY	MORGAN COUNTY	NARCOG REGION
Total New Companies:	3	0	2	5
Total New Jobs:	36	0	31	67
Total New Capital Investment:	\$7,630,000	\$0	\$4,875,000	\$12,505,000
Total Expanding Companies:	27	1	21	49
Total Expanding Jobs:	599	0	378	977
Total Expanding Capital Investment:	\$156,939,174	\$3,600,000	\$201,717,010	\$362,256,184
Total New & Expanding Companies:	30	1	23	54
Total New & Expanding Jobs:	635	0	409	1044
Total New & Expanding Investments:	\$164,569,174	\$3,600,000	\$206,592,010	\$374,761,184

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



SELECTED ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Cullman County

- "REHAU celebrates 25 years in Cullman" *(Photo on previous page at top right)*

Source: https://www.cullmantimes.com/news/rehau-celebrates-25-years-in-cullman/article_34736014-0537-11ec-980d-27536cb4c224.html

- "Continued growth: REHAU announces \$50M expansion"

Source: https://www.cullmantimes.com/news/continued-growth-rehau-announces-50m-expansion/article_05885ec6-0ab4-11ec-ad48-37fa32215f81.html

- "Cyber Broadband receives grants for internet expansion"

Source: https://www.cullmantimes.com/news/cyber-broadband-receives-grants-for-internet-expansion/article_7dce98a6-af3c-11eb-820c-5733afcfecac.html

Lawrence County

- Red Land Cotton opened a new warehouse distribution facility in Moulton, AL in January 2021 representing a \$1,100,000 investment and creating 10 new jobs.
- Lockheed Martin held its Advanced Manufacturing Technician Apprenticeship Program (AMTAP) cohort graduation in September 2021. *(Photo on previous page, second from the top)*
- Joe Wheeler Electric Membership Corporation launched the \$90M FlashFiber, a world class fiber optic internet that will provide more than 43,000 members/residents in rural Lawrence and Morgan Counties with access to faster more reliable internet technology.
- Progressive Pipe Fabricators held a grand opening in November 2020 for its 82,000 SF facility located in the Mallard Fox West Industrial Complex, which will create 60 new jobs. *(Photo on previous page, third from the top)*
- The first Singing River Trail meeting was held in Moulton in August 2021. The Singing River Trail is envisioned as a trail across North Alabama that connects communities, while spurring economic development opportunities in the region.
- Servico, Inc., a cotton mill located in Courtland, AL, invested \$3.6 million on an expansion to upgrade its production equipment.
- Teachers on Tour Event hosted by the Lawrence County Board of Education and the Lawrence County Industrial Development Board was held in August of 2021.

Source: Lawrence County IDB

Morgan County

- "City receives grant for Sixth Avenue sidewalks"

Source: https://www.decaturdaily.com/news/morgan_county/decaturn/city-receives-grant-for-sixth-avenue-sidewalks/article_17a90db2-5439-5e40-8aa1-b2b269043906.html

- "Council commits to Sixth Avenue streetscape project"

Source: https://www.decaturdaily.com/news/morgan_county/decaturn/council-commits-to-sixth-avenue-streetscape-project/article_aa77c1b1-5a4a-5b5e-84ea-f61a08fb3427.html

- "Census shows Decatur, Athens share in regional growth, but mayors say population undercounted"

Source: https://www.decaturdaily.com/news/local/census-shows-decaturn-athens-share-in-regional-growth-but-mayors-say-population-undercounted/article_63b50de6-f04d-51a2-8584-28bbc-0f8358a.html

- "Bank to build new headquarters at former Lucky's site" *(Photo on previous page at bottom right)*

Source: https://www.decaturdaily.com/news/local/bank-to-build-new-headquarters-at-former-luckys-site/article_31ec2020-0e16-56f5-afc2-bb88943923e3.html

- "City's planned subdivision developments surpass 500 homes"

Source: https://www.decaturdaily.com/news/morgan_county/decaturn/citys-planned-subdivision-developments-surpass-500-homes/article_14a2c962-64be-5c9b-a929-9a43081175d4.html

- "Agriculture joint venture makes its headquarters in Decatur"

Source: https://www.decaturdaily.com/news/morgan_county/decaturn/agriculture-joint-venture-makes-its-headquarters-in-decaturn/article_323c62db-32fa-5f88-9bb4-46bc64da5b0e.html



HOUSING



Housing units	105,188	↑
Vacancy	14.8%	↓
Housing units with no vehicle	4.7%	↓

EDUCATION

82.5%	Age 25+ with ≥ high school diploma	↑
18%	Age 25+ with ≥ bachelor degree	↑

HEALTH

10.1%	Population with no health insurance	↓
15.2%	Food insecurity rate **	
20.7%	Child food insecurity rate**	

** Updated data unavailable

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

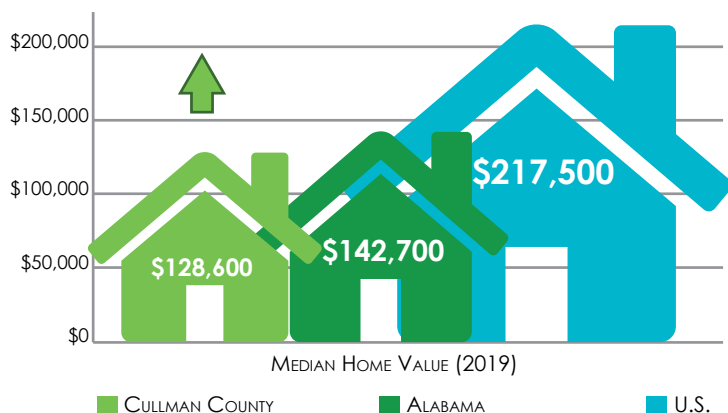
111,667	Total labor force	↑
2,745	Unemployed	↓
2.5%	Unemployment rate	↓

ECONOMY

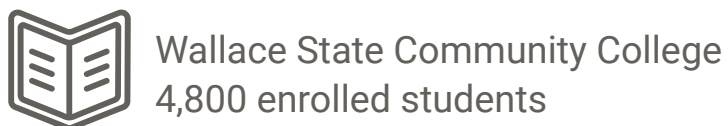
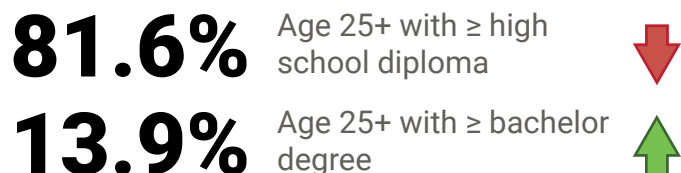
\$9,568,376,000	Total personal income	↑
\$2,822,401,400	Net taxable assessed valuation	↑
21.8%	Public assisted households	↓
\$39,199	Per capita income	↑
\$47,244	Annual wages per employee	↑



HOUSING



EDUCATION



HEALTH

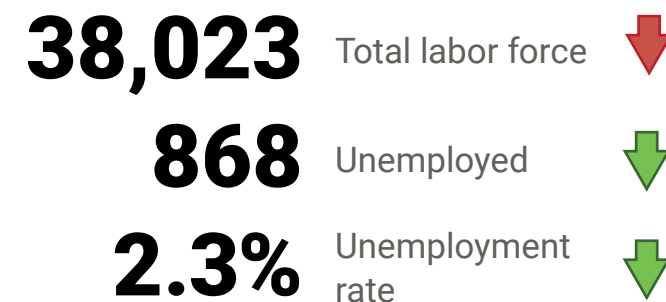


** Updated data unavailable

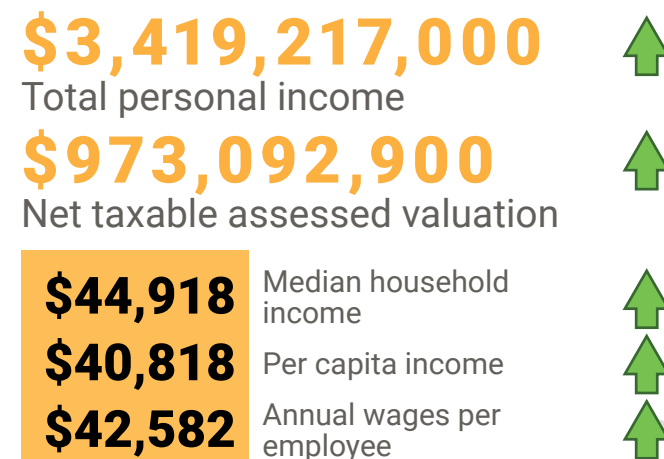
TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

Wal-Mart Distribution
Cullman Regional Medical Center
Cullman County Schools
Topre America Corporation
Wal-Mart Super Center North/South
REHAU
City of Cullman
Reliance Worldwide
Yutaka Technologies
Cullman County Commission

EMPLOYMENT

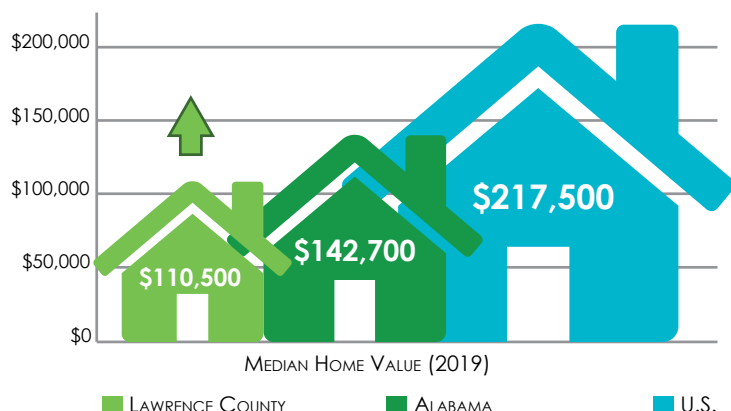


ECONOMY

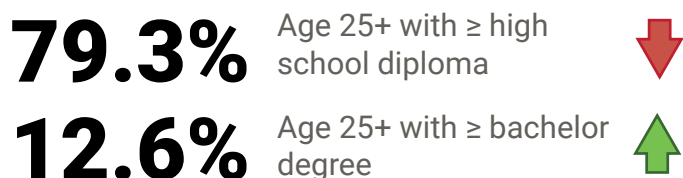




HOUSING



EDUCATION



HEALTH

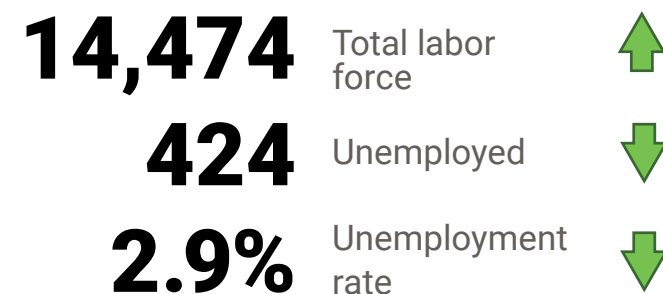


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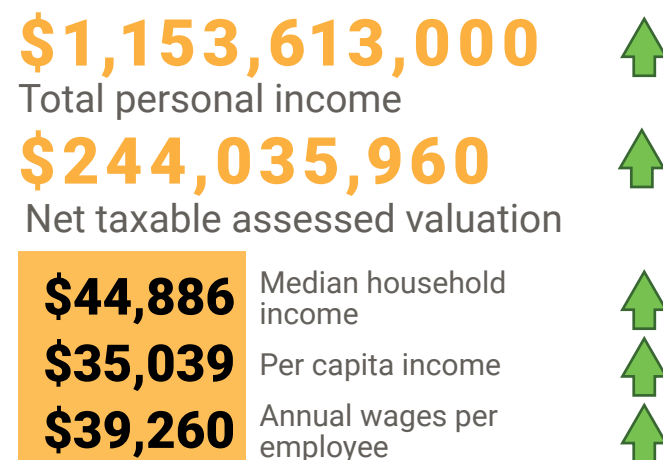
TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

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

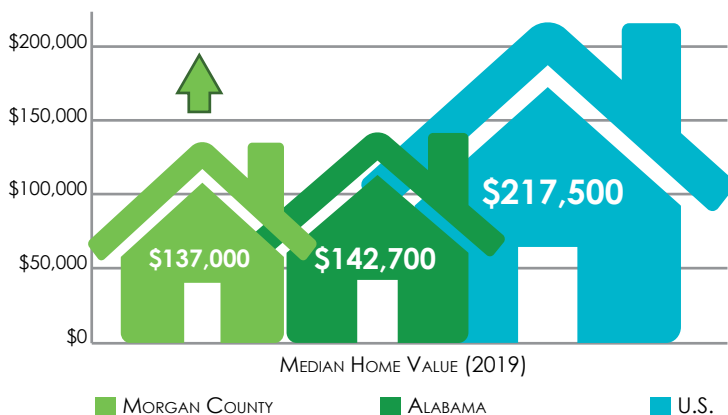


ECONOMY

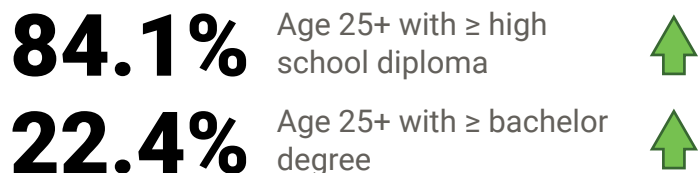




HOUSING



EDUCATION



*Calhoun Community College
9,315 enrolled students

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

HEALTH

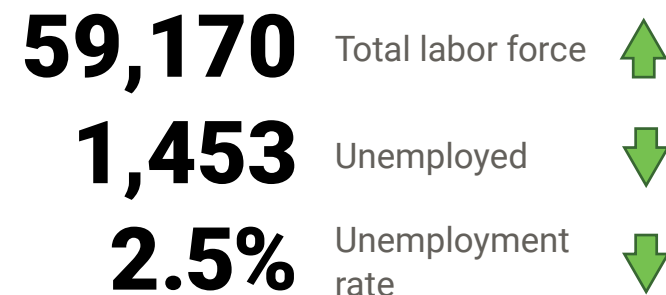


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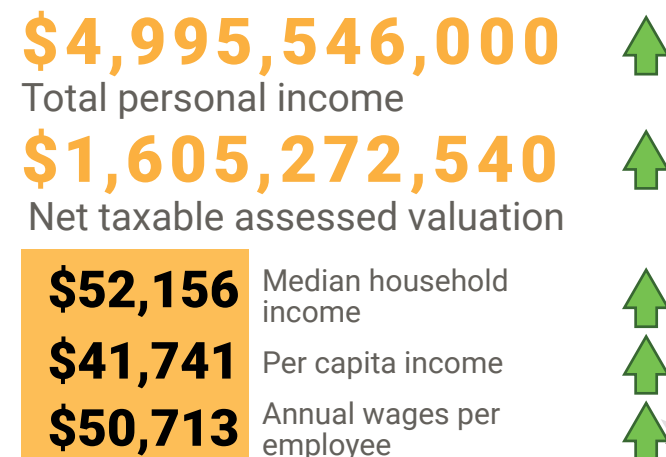
TOP 10 EMPLOYERS

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

EMPLOYMENT



ECONOMY



A[■] RESOLUTION

NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Resolution Number 2021-0026

2021 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 2021 CEDS Annual Performance Report,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the NARCOG Board of Director's approves and adopts the NARCOG EDD's 2021 CEDS Annual Performance Report.

RESOLVED this 28th day of October 2021


Chairman


Executive Director

B. REFERENCES

DATA SOURCES:

- U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 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) 2019 CA1 Personal Income Summary: Personal Income, Population, Per Capita Personal Income
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2020 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, July 2021 Unemployment Data
- Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, 2019 State Data Tables by county for Alabama (2018 data, no new data)
- Cullman County Top Employers:
 - Cullman Economic Development Agency (CEDA) – <https://www.cullmaneda.org/workforce/largest-employers>
- Morgan County Top Employers:
 - Morgan County Economic Development Association (MCEDA)
- Lawrence County Top Employers:
 - Lawrence County Industrial Development Board

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>

<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.

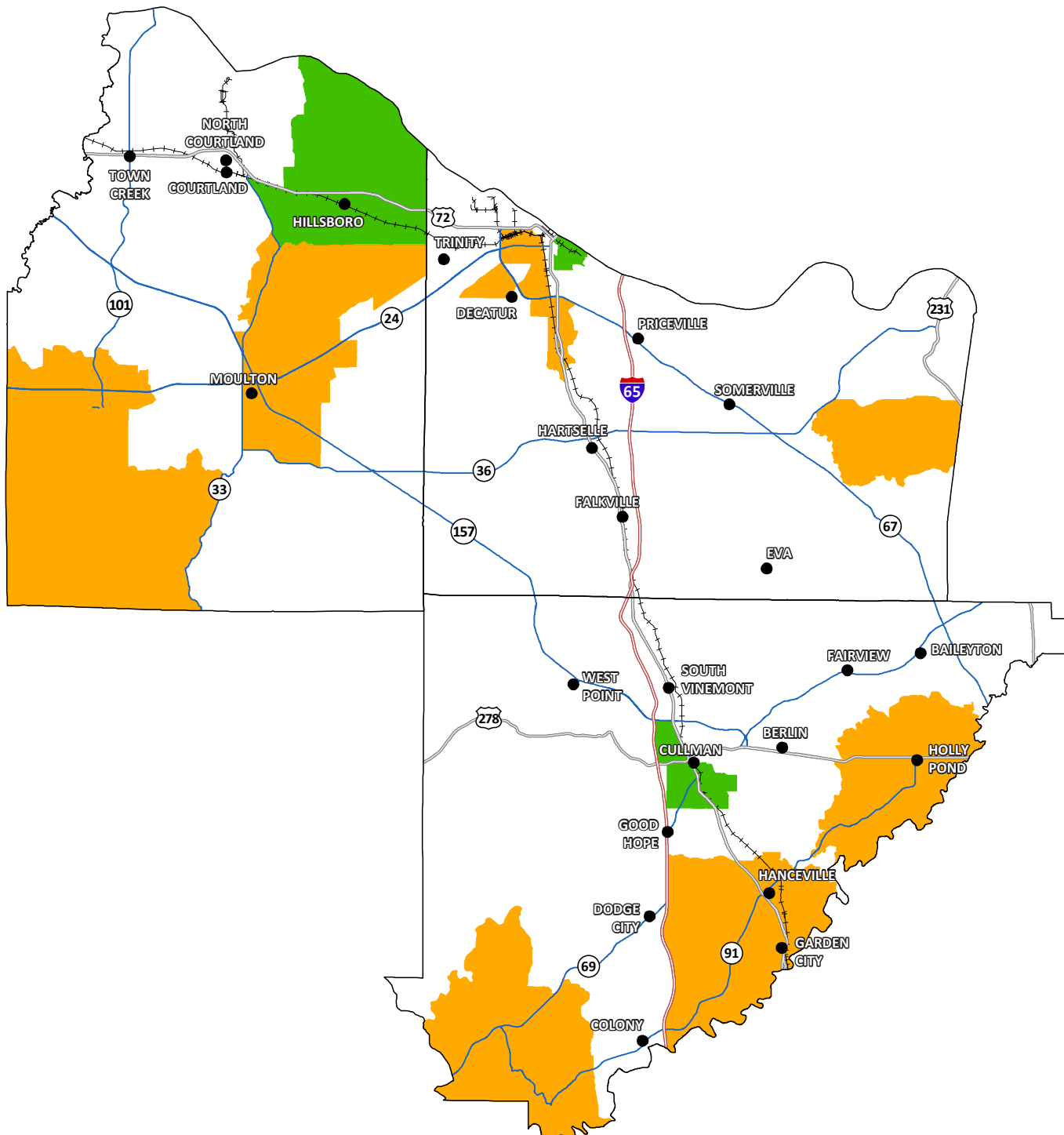
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Markets_Tax_Credit_Program

*See map on following page

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 in 2021 (indicated in Red) to better support the implementation of the NARCOG's CEDS.

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

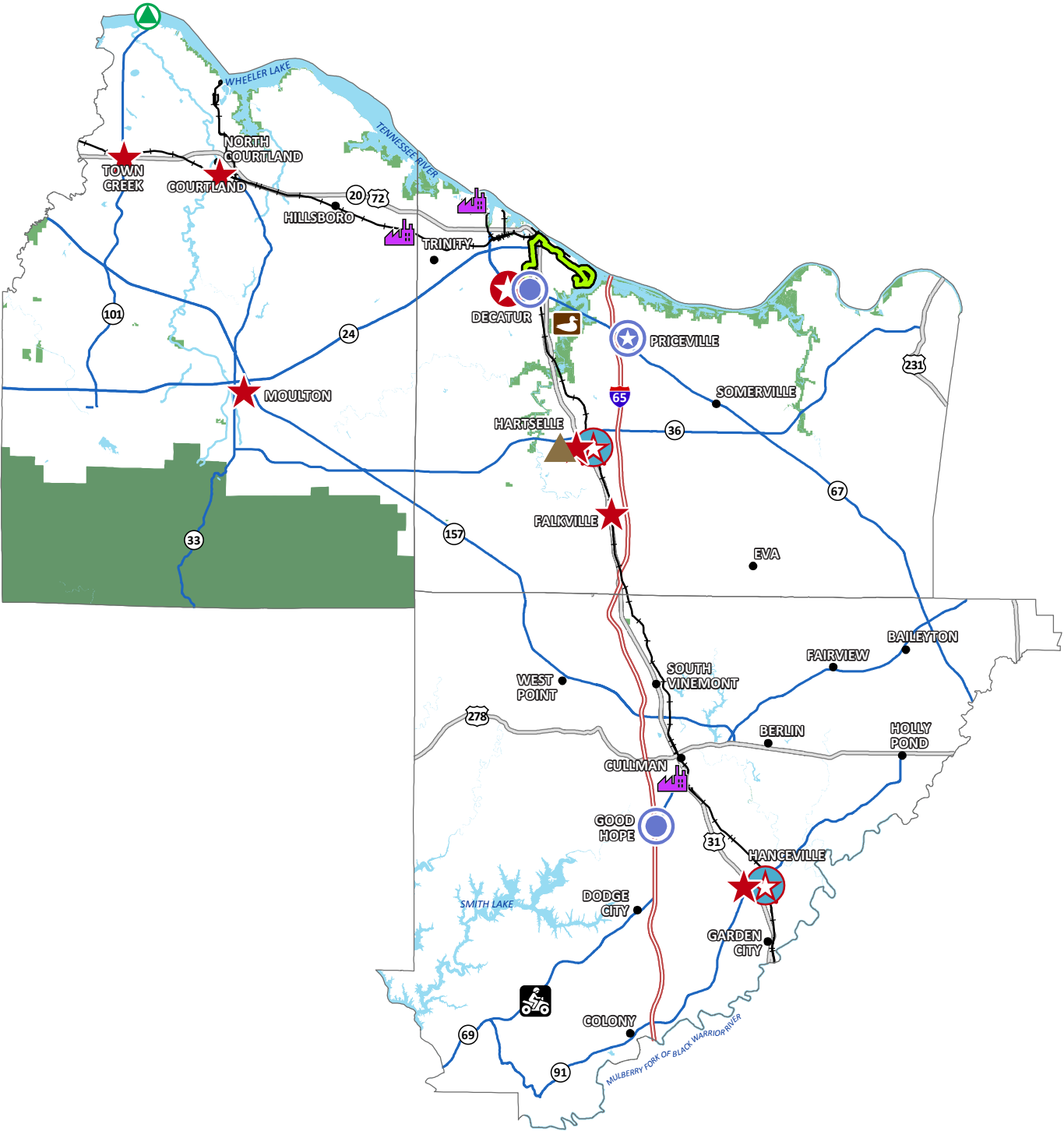


- NMTC QUALIFIED
- OPPORTUNITY ZONE *AND* NMTC QUALIFIED

REGIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT MAP

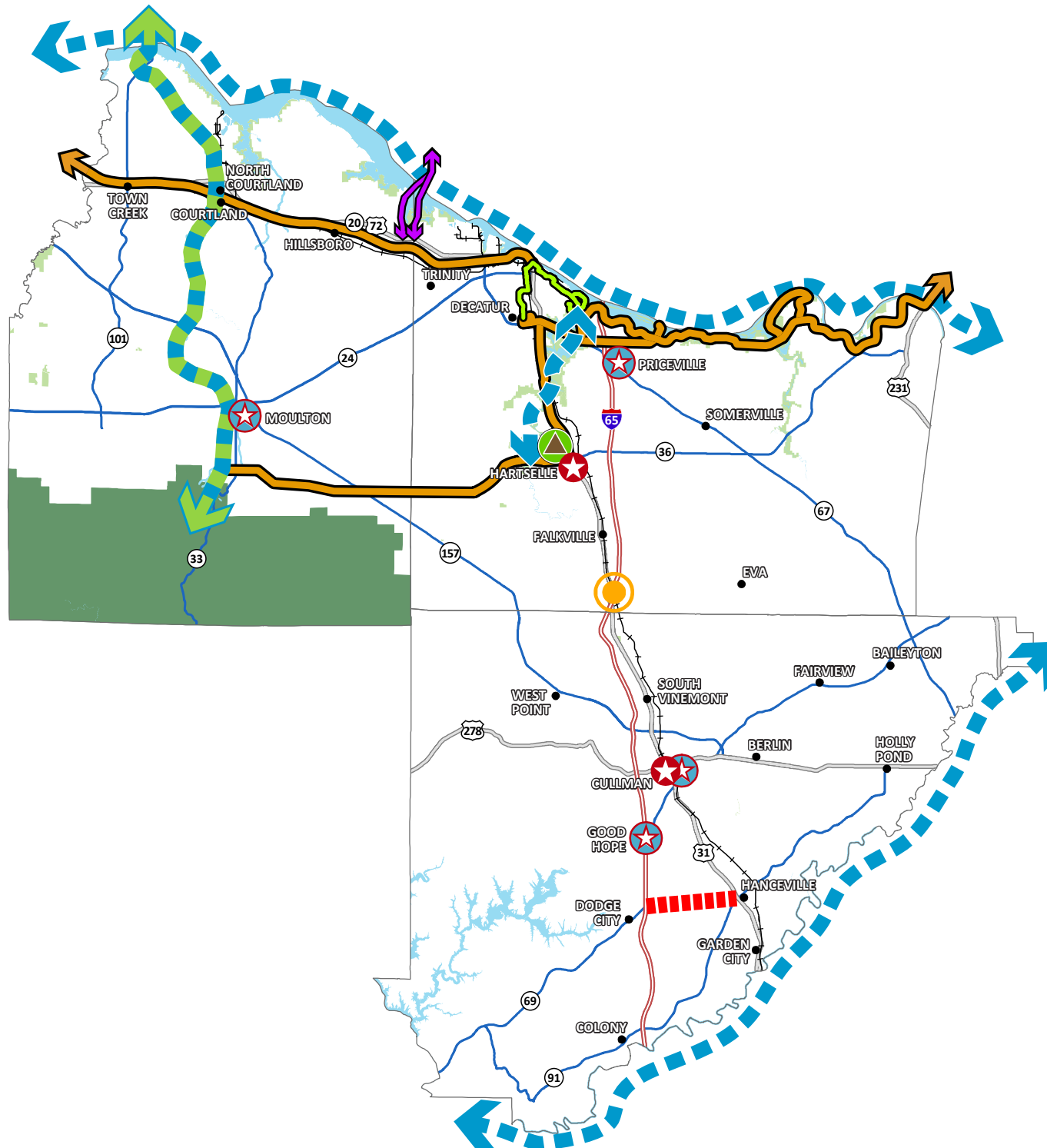
EXISTING ASSETS

- 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

1.1.5 Explore creating an expanded support infrastructure to "surround" E-Center clients with mentoring, coaching, professional development, mental health offerings and more

1.1.6 Explore the E-Center partnering to create a new industrial park where emerging, growing tech companies could locate

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.

1.2.3 Explore enabling Alabama students to have access to a K-12 entrepreneurship introduction and curriculum

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

4.2.6 Explore the designation of a Corridor V-1 for the proposed 2nd TN River Bridge to accommodate the Automotive and Aviation Sectors

4.2.7 Explore the feasibility of another bridge over the Tennessee River from County Line Road to Somerville

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

4.10 Support efforts to construct a parking deck in downtown Decatur

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 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

5.5.1 Support the Singing River Trail's Decatur to Shoals planning efforts

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

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

6.6 Explore opportunities for Corridor Redevelopment Plans throughout the region