**Community Home Improvement Program Funds Awarded!**

Congratulations to **Moultrie, Sylvester and Meigs** for being awarded **2017 CHIP Awards**! Grant Administrator Brenda Wade and staff of The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission worked tirelessly with the local governments and applicants to submit the successful applications.

The total award for applications submitted through the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission was **$918,000**. Each of the three cities were awarded **$306,000** for housing rehabilitations.

Congratulations to the Community Home Improvement Program Fund (CHIP) recipients for 2017. There were 12 CHIP grants totaling $4.25 million dollars in Georgia and three of those were awarded to the grant applications written by our staff.

It is also the time of year when we get to welcome new Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Members. Welcome to Dougherty County’s Bobby Coleman and Freddy Grimsley, Grady County’s Keith Moye, Lee County’s Dennis Roland, Thomas County’s Ken Hickey, Worth County’s Fred Dent and we would like to welcome back June Merritt from Early County.
February

21st (Tuesday) **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Grant Writing Workshop.** 9am-2pm This meeting will be held in the Large Conference Room of the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission at 181 East Broad Street, Camilla, Georgia. The fee is $35 and lunch is included. Please contact Kimberly Brooks at kbrooks@swgrc.org or 229-522-3552 x1615 for reservations or inquiries.

23rd (Thursday) **CEO Meeting.** 5:30pm– 6:30 pm. Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Building at 181 East Broad Street in Camilla, Georgia. If you have any questions call Pascha Spence at Worksource Southwest Georgia 229-336-2378.

23rd (Thursday) **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting.** Council and their guests share a meal at 6:30pm. Business meeting begins promptly at 7:00pm. This will be held at the Regional Commission’s Joe B. Adams Conference Center, located at 181 E. Broad Street in Camilla, Georgia.

March

30th (Thursday) **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting.** Council and their guests share a meal at 6:30pm. Business meeting begins promptly at 7:00pm. This will be held at the Regional Commission’s Joe B. Adams Conference Center, located at 181 E. Broad Street in Camilla, Georgia.

April

27th (Thursday) **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting.** Council and their guests share a meal at 6:30pm. Business meeting begins promptly at 7:00pm. This will be held at the Regional Commission’s Joe B. Adams Conference Center, located at 181 E. Broad Street in Camilla, Georgia.

CEO Meetings will be held at the Regional Commission’s Joe B. Adams Conference Center, located at 181 E. Broad Street in Camilla, Georgia from 5:30 pm until 6:30 pm on the following Thursdays in 2017; February 23, May 25, and August 31. If you have any questions call Pascha Spence at Worksource Southwest Georgia 229-336-2378.
**Housing News**

**Homeless Count 2017 Update**

Homeless County 2017 Volunteer Training was held at the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission January 11, 2017. Planner Ms. Kimberly Brooks facilitated the training. The training included information and instruction on how to conduct the surveys. The Count Coordinators from Region 10 volunteer to help survey the homeless population in the region. The Homeless Count took place January 24th - January 30th, 2017. Results of the count should be available later this year. For more information about the count in your County please give Kimberly Brooks a call at 229.522.3552 or by email @ kbrooks@swgrc.org.

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**Southwest Georgia Housing Task Force**

The Housing Task Force was identified in the Regional Plan as a need in Southwest Georgia. Following the same model as the RPN, the Task Force holds monthly meetings that bring together housing professionals and other interested parties to work on solutions to the pressing problems in housing. The efforts of the Task Force have been very successful and have been recognized by the state as an innovative approach to housing issues. For more information contact Barbara Reddick (breddick@swgrc.org) or Kimberly Brookes (kbrookes@swgrc.org) at 229-522-3552 x1615.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Topic &amp; Coordinator</th>
<th>Organizer</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Camilla, Georgia</td>
<td>Grant Writing</td>
<td>Barbara Reddick and Kimberly Brookes</td>
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<td>March 14, 2017</td>
<td>Bainbridge, Georgia</td>
<td>501(c)3 &amp; Capacity Building</td>
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<td>April 11, 2017</td>
<td>Cairo, Georgia</td>
<td>Financial Capabilities for Individuals</td>
<td>Patricia Fletcher-Edwards</td>
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<td>May 9, 2017</td>
<td>Albany, Georgia</td>
<td>17th Annual Housing Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 13, 2017</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Planning Meeting</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
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General Funding Guidelines

The Local Government Scrap Tire Abatement Reimbursement Program covers the costs of removing, transporting, and processing scrap tires cleaned up from identified, state-listed scrap tire dumps; removed from city and county right-of-ways; and collected during scrap tire amnesty events.

Funding for the program is provided by the Solid Waste Trust Fund and is based on the availability of funds. Projects will be funded first come, first served, contingent on funding availability and demand. Submission of a completed application does not guarantee that a project will be selected for reimbursement.

Applicants to the program must comply with all applicable procurement and purchasing regulations established pursuant to state law.

To apply, please complete a Local Government Scrap Tire Abatement Reimbursement Program application. If your application is to clean up one or more traditional dump sites, please submit a Tire Dump Inspection Form for each site along with your application (this form is not required for right-of-way cleanups or amnesty events). The form and applications can be found at epd.georgia.gov/scrap-and-used-tires.

Eligibility Criteria

1. Applicants must be a local government (city, county, or solid waste authority)
2. The scrap tire site(s) must be located in Georgia
3. Permitted tire carriers and permitted or approved scrap tire processors must be used for the scrap tire abatement activities
4. Appropriate and necessary safety measures (e.g., personal protective equipment) must be employed at all times during the scrap tire abatement activities

Eligible Costs

Costs that are eligible for reimbursement consist of expenses directly related to the approved scrap tire abatement project. Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- The cost of accessing and loading the scrap tires
- The cost of transporting the scrap tires by a permitted tire carrier to a permitted or approved scrap tire processor
- The cost of processing the scrap tires at a permitted or approved scrap tire processor
- Purchases of equipment/supplies essential to completing the scrap tire abatement project, such as personal protective gear (does not include heavy equipment or large power tools)

Guidelines for Submitting Applications

Applications will be accepted on an on-going basis. As part of the review process, EPD will discuss any changes that might be needed with the applicant. When approved, EPD will send a contractual agreement to the local government authority. Please call EPD at 404-362-2537 to inquire more about the guidelines.
Activities Eligible for Reimbursement

Scrap tire abatement activities are eligible where:

1. The property owner is either financially unable to clean up the tires, or
2. The property owner is unknown, or
3. The local government has determined that the property owner is a victim of illegal dumping, or
4. The scrap tires are located on a city or county right-of-way, or
5. The scrap tires have been collected during a scrap tire amnesty day event sponsored by the local government.

Ineligible Costs

Costs that are not eligible for reimbursement include, but are not limited to:

- Overhead expenses (e.g., costs for accounting/budget/finance staff, rental/lease of space, utilities, copying, office supplies, advertising)
- Purchase of non-essential equipment and items unrelated to the scrap tire abatement project
- Fines or penalties due to violation of federal, state or local laws, ordinances or regulations
- Purchase of items that would violate the gratuities clause of the state constitution
- Costs associated with the cleanup of items other than tires (e.g., e-waste, construction/demolition debris, white goods, solid waste)

If you have any questions about the application or the reimbursement process, call EPD at 404-362-2537.

To find out what the environmental impacts are of throwing tires away visit [http://homeguides.sfgate.com/environmental-impacts-throwing-away-tires-79649.html](http://homeguides.sfgate.com/environmental-impacts-throwing-away-tires-79649.html)

To find out what some recyclers do with recycled tires visit [http://www.brighthub.com/environment/green-living/articles/28648.aspx](http://www.brighthub.com/environment/green-living/articles/28648.aspx)
Leadership: Next Generation

The 2017 Southwest Georgia Youth Summit was the result of a collaborative effort of more than a dozen Southwest Georgia organizations. The Youth Summit was held on Wednesday, February 15, 2017 at Southwest Georgia RESA in Camilla, GA. The Summit brought together nearly 80 youth in grades 11th and 12th from the 14 counties in Region 10. Students enrolled in public and private schools were invited as well as those students who are home schooled. The theme for this year’s Summit was Leadership: Next Generation.

The Summit’s goal is to bring leadership training and other opportunities to Southwest Georgia for all students in the region. The high impact event was filled with motivational speakers, leadership activities and a panel of professionals that students have the opportunity to interact with and gain insight. Kimberly Brooks, Planner with the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission said “The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission and the Regional Partners Network Inc. are committed to helping youth understand that they can be successful in their communities without leaving the area.”

The day started off with Rev. Brian Jones, Youth Pastor for Mt. Zion Church in Albany, Georgia, encouraging attendees to be leaders and not followers. The panel of professionals included: Mayor Rufus Davis, City of Camilla; Stedderick Thomas, Mitchell County Coroner; Nathaniel Thomas & Son Home for Funerals; Dondrial Pinkins, Pelham High School Head Football Coach/Athletic Director; Dr. Cynthia Drayton, Georgia Department of Labor; and Robert Adams, Mitchell County High School Superintendent. The panel answered questions from the students about how to be successful and the skills needed in the work place. This lively discussion ended with questions still coming from the students after more than an hour. The take away for students was to follow their dreams and pursue careers they are passionate about and things they enjoy. Youth attended sessions on leadership, financial literacy, soft skills and social media do’s & don’ts. Youth were able to see first-hand how the things they post on social media have long lasting consequences. They realized how important it is to handle finances and how developing the right skills can impact their ability to move forward in their careers.

The students were also able to compete for prizes by writing an essay. To be eligible to compete, participants had to submit a 500 word essay on the theme Leadership: Next Generation and how this is applicable in their life and their career goals. This year’s winners were all from Worth County High School:
- 1st Place: Day Leigh Story
- 2nd Place: Dakota Mathis
- 3rd Place: Bryan Manuel

This event would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. Sponsors for the 2017 Youth Summit were Waffle House, Bank of Camilla, A&J Enterprises, Kebos BBQ &More, Pelham Banking Company, Southwest Georgia RESA, Flowers Foods, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Regional Partners’ Network Inc. and the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission. Special thanks to all of our speakers for the event: Jenny Robbins, Georgia EMC; Karen McWhite, McWhite Law Office; Betty Jackson Burton, Loan Officer II/ Counselor, City of Albany DCED; Patricia Fletcher Edwards, National Investment Division (NID) Housing Counseling Agency and Charlene Brinson, Georgia Department of Labor Business Services Recruiter.

The planning for next year’s summit has already begun and we look forward to seeing you there. For more information contact: Kimberly Brooks at (229) 522-3552 or kbrooks@swgrc.org.

The students seemed genuinely receptive to gaining knowledge about Soft Skills and Employers Expectations. They asked some particularly thought-provoking questions that make us think they plan to use the information right away to their benefit.

The breakout sessions and the Lunch Panel open discussions were the best way to advance innovative thought processes from the students creating value and fostering involvement.

All in all, I was thrilled about the potential of the students to challenge themselves to become future Workforce Professionals. The entire set up, directional flow, and student participation was an overwhelming success. Thanks again for the invite.
Winning Essay

My Future Plans by Day Leigh Story

Education has always been something I have valued throughout my life, whether it was academic or vocational. Two of my strongest fields would have to be music and my ability to speak. So when trying to decide a career, it is a scary thought. So I took into consideration my talents and abilities. Speech Pathology and Music Therapy go hand in hand. I discovered this after a young boy at my church was born prematurely. As he began to get older he was not as developed as other children his age, and still suffered from the strokes he had from a young age. So the parents looked for therapy to help him catch up. That is when I found out about Music Therapy and Speech Pathology. He went to Music Therapy where they would teach him songs, and he had no idea he was also getting a speech lesson. The teachers also taught him how to play the piano, forcing him to use his hand that was affected by the strokes. His improvements inspired me to become a Speech Pathologist and to get a dual degree with Music Therapy.

I began to do a deeper study about the correlation of music and speech. I discovered that one side of the brain controls speaking, however, the other side of the brain controls singing. After reading miraculous stories of how people were helped by Music Therapy and Speech Pathology it made me want to become a part of those stories. Through the combination of music and speech I could live out my lifelong dream. My lifelong dream has always been able to influence others in a positive way, to be a good leader, and a positive role model. I’ve always wanted to be a person that everyone else wants to be like. My life quote is from Ronald Reagan who happens to be my inspiration. Reagan was quoted saying “The greatest leader is not the one who does the greatest things, but who gets the people to do the greatest things.” This career would not only allow me to live a life of leadership, but it would also combine my second love of music with it. Through Speech Pathology and Music Therapy I can live out my wishes of being a great leader to inspire others, to incorporate music in a positive way and strive for success.

To read the other Essays that placed visit www.swgrc.org and click on the Youth Summit 2017 tab at the top.
On November 17, the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission’s Kimberly Brooks, Planner 1 and Planning Assistant, Beka Shiver graduated from Georgia Academy for Economic Development put on by The Board of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development. Class participants represented a number of professional and non-professional economic development fields, including elected officials, public servants, business leaders, educators, and social service providers from 9 counties in Southwest Georgia. The Academy provided each of the graduates an opportunity to gain a unique understanding of the complexities of economic and community development on the local, regional, and state levels.

Created in 1993, the Academy assembles a cross section of economic development professionals and resources to provide this training in all twelve service delivery regions in Georgia. The Academy’s multi-day program, taught one day a month over a four-month period, includes training in the basics of economic and community development, plus specialized segments on business recruitment and retention, tourism product development, downtown development, planning, and other essentials for community success. In addition, the curriculum features specific leadership skills such as consensus building, ethics in public service, collaborative leadership and other segments needed for effective community leadership in economic development. Local elected officials may receive certification training credits through the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and the Georgia Municipal Association for completion of this program.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan is the result of a community-based planning process that draws on the general public, stakeholders and experts. Wise planning ensures that future development will take place in a manner compatible with the best interests of the community. Local governments in Georgia are required to submit comprehensive plans to DCA every ten years (rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning ¶110-12-1). A county and its cities are encouraged to create a joint plan, but may choose to do their own separate plans. All comprehensive plans must be done in accordance with the Local Planning Requirements. Listed below are the Comprehensive Plans the RC staff is currently working on:

- Baker County & Newton
- Calhoun County & Cities
- Decatur County & Cities
- Early County & Cities
- Miller County & City of Colquitt
- Seminole County & Cities
- Thomas County & Cities (excluding Thomasville)
- Worth County and Cities
Meet the SWGRC Interns

**Shykeiria Carter** is a junior at Mitchell County High School. She enjoys Math, Language, Reading, and Social Studies.

She said that the program at the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission will help her with business skills in conjunction with her business class she is currently in. She believes she will learn how to work in a professional environment and contribute as a responsible employee. After school she would like to become a General Dentist or Orthodontist and enlist in the Air Force. She is also interested in opening a hair salon and starting her own make up line. She looks forward to the journey to reaching her goals.

Shykeiria is the daughter of Cotillia and Matthew Carter.

**Brenda Lopez** is a junior at Mitchell County High School. She enjoys English and Algebra.

Brenda was interested in participating in the internship program at the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission in order to learn more about business and to learn how to better interact with other people in a business setting. In the next five years she plans on going to college and finishing up her education.

Brenda is the daughter of Francisco Lopez and Alma Espinoza.

**Kaia Williams** is a junior at Mitchell County High School. She is taking College classes in addition to her high school classes this year. Her favorite subject is writing. After high school she plans on going to Valdosta State University and earn a Master Degree with the American Library Association and a degree in Psychology. Her goal is to work as a librarian in New Hampshire.

When asked about what interested her about the internship program at the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission she said she wants to get the experience of being employed so she can be prepared for her future career. She believes it will help build her resume in a positive way.

Kaia is the daughter of Rufus and Tatanisha Williams.

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission partnered with the Mitchell County High School Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) Program to provide internship opportunity for the students. The internship program is designed to provide students with practical training and experience in the public and nonprofit sector before entering the job market. This partnership is working and to date we have provided ten (10) internship opportunities to high schools students.


Rural Housing Programs ~ Single-Family Housing Direct Home Loans ~ Single-Family Housing Loan Guarantees ~ Single-Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants ~ Mutual Self-Help Housing Technical assistance Grants ~ Multi-Family Housing Direct Loans ~ Rental Assistance ~ Multi-Family Housing Loan Guarantees ~ Housing Preservation Grants ~ Farm Labor Housing Loans and Grants

Community Facilities Programs ~ Community Facilities Loans and Grants~ Rural community Development Initiative Grants

Rural Utilities Programs ~ Electric Infrastructure Loans ~ Energy Efficiency and Conservation Loans~ Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans ~ Broadband Direct Loans and Loan Guarantees ~ Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants ~ Community Connect Grants ~ Water and Waste Disposal Program ~ Solid Waste Management Grants ~ Circuit Rider Program

![Georgia Water and Waste Disposal Funding](image)

The Water and Waste Disposal Program provides affordable direct loans, loan guarantees and grants to build, repair or improve public water systems and waste collection systems.
USDA Issues Report on Investments to Grow Georgia’s Rural Economy
FY 2016 Georgia Rural Development Progress Report Released


“From housing to essential community facilities, water systems to business programs, Rural Development is helping to improve the economy and quality of life in rural Georgia” said Jill Stuckey, Rural Development Georgia State Director.

Here is a quick snapshot of some of USDA’s 2016 accomplishments in Georgia:

- Invested $94 million in more than 64 essential community projects such as schools, hospitals, public safety facilities and community centers.
- Provided $47 million in loan guarantees to lenders who assisted rural businesses with expansion and job-creation initiatives.
- Assisted 60 businesses and agricultural producers with loan and grant funding to install renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements.
- Provided $45.8 million for water and wastewater infrastructure improvements in rural communities.
- Helped 4,300 rural Georgians buy, refinance or repair their homes.
- Provided $37 million in rental assistance to rural residents living in USDA-financed apartment complexes.

Since 2009, nationwide USDA Rural Development (RD) has helped more than 1.2 million rural Americans buy, refinance, or repair their homes, and it has helped ensure safe, affordable rental housing for hundreds of thousands of seniors, people with disabilities, farmworkers, and other low-income rural families. Six million rural Americans now have access to high speed broadband thanks to RD (USDA Rural Development).”

Jill Stuckey
GA Rural Development

“The USDA, “Peoples Department” and the Rural Development mission area in particular, continue to demonstrate unwavering commitment and dedication to the development and economic security of Georgia’s rural residents, businesses and communities.”

Thomas Vilsack
U. S. Agriculture Secretary

To find out more about USDA Grants that may benefit your community or organization, contact the Planning Department of the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission at 229-522-3552.

Contact:
Deborah Callahan, (706) 552-2595
Deborah.Callahan@ga.unda.gov
The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission hosted Legislators for the Annual Legislative Reception held in October. In attendance were Darrel Ealum and Sanford Bishop. Each addressed the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council and expressed the importance citizens have and that each have an open door policy and welcome input from their constituents.
The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission website provides a list of Transit Providers, information on how to utilize the transit system and fare information. Also there are travel and safety tips along with office hours and information on providing feedback. Visit [http://www.swgrc.org/regional-transit/](http://www.swgrc.org/regional-transit/)

**Providers:**

- **Arlington (City)** 229-725-0099
- **Baker County** 229-336-1600
- **Colquitt County** 229-985-1663
- **Dawson (City)** 229-431-0000
- **Decatur County** 229-246-6758
- **Dougherty County** 229-431-0000
- **Early County** 229-724-7433 (RIDE)
- **Grady County** 229-377-6797
- **Lee County** 229-431-0000
- **Miller County** 229-724-7433 (RIDE)
- **Mitchell County** 229-336-1600
- **Seminole County** 229-246-6758

*The transit system reserves the right to refuse service or remove anyone who jeopardizes the safety and/or comfort of other passengers.*

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**Region 10 Clerks News**

Hope Amador of Norman Park received her Certified Municipal Clerk status (CMC) from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC). Ellenton City Clerk Vicki Bunn and Colquitt County Clerk Melissa Lawson, Colquitt County Clerk received their Clerk Certification from Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) last week at the Clerks Conference.

Congratulations to Grady County Clerk Carrie Kines-Croy. In May she will become District 10 Director of the Georgia County Clerks Association. Mrs. Croy has been the Grady County clerk since July 2008. She will be taking over for Dougherty County Clerk Jawahn Ware.

We offer our deepest sympathy to the city of Sylvester’s employees and community who are mourning their city clerk, Kathy Wise. Ms. Wise worked for the city of Sylvester for a total of 36 years. Her dedication and professionalism will always be remembered as will her warm smile. Many of her co-workers thought of her of more than a co-worker but as a friend. She will be dearly missed by not only her family, but her community of Sylvester and her community of fellow clerks as well.

Visit our Website at [www.swgrc.org](http://www.swgrc.org) to download copies of this newsletter. Also, there are constant updates made to our [Digital Directory](http://www.swgrc.org) where you can find local information such as contact information for Councilmen, Commissioners, State Officials, State Organizations, and more.
2017 Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Appointees

**Baker County**
- Chris Moore
- John Spann
- Eddie Hopkins

**Calhoun County**
- Charlie Williams (VACANT)
- Bennie Watts Jones

**Colquitt County**
- Paul Nagy
- Ferrell Ruis
- Dollie Crumley
- Henry Crumley

**Decatur County**
- Dennis Brinson (Vacant)
- Revonn Miller
- Billy Poppell

**Dougherty County**
- Anthony Jones
- Bobbie Coleman
- Freddie Grimsley
- Raymond Breaux

**Early County**
- June Merritt
- Al Hutchins
- Freddie Speight
- Keith Moye
- Jim Sellers
- Joe Walden

**Lee County**
- Dennis Roland
- Dwight Hickman
- Chad Griffin

**Miller County**
- Jerry Bush
- Carlos Williams

**Mitchell County**
- Ben Hayward
- Danny Palmer

**Seminole County**
- Brenda Peterson
- Mitchell Blanks
- Tracie Beard

**Terrell County**
- Ernest Johnson
- Ed Wade
- Jack Powell

**Thomas County**
- Ken Hickey
- Terry Scott
- Donnie Baggett

**Worth County**
- Fred Dent
- Randy Hill
- Karen Rackley

**Governor’s Appointment**
- David Mosely
- Courtney Brinson
- Norma Gilpatrick

**Lt. Governor’s Appointment**
- Vacant

**Speaker of the House Appointment**
- Vacant

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**Chamber of Commerce Listings**

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<td>229-434-8700</td>
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Partners Needed!

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission is currently seeking communities that have brownfields and would like to participate in the Regional Brownfield Area Wide Grant Opportunity (BF AWP). The grant will be used to identify and assess brownfield areas in the region for cleanup and redevelopment. The maximum amount for each community will be $200,000 and no match is required. The RC will write and administer the two year grant and provide fiscal, administrative and programmatic oversight. All interested communities should contact Steve O’Neil at (229) 522-3552 or email him at soneil@swgrc.org.

Communities interested in applying for the Brownfield AWP Grant should contact Steve O’Neil.
Robert McDaniel
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rmcdaniel@swgrc.org

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Deputy Director
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Your Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Staff