Southwest Georgia Regional Commission consists of the 14 counties and the 43 cities located in Baker, Calhoun, Colquitt, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Terrell, Thomas and Worth Counties. Total estimated population in 2017 was approximately 348,300 and covers over 8,000 square miles.
Save the Date

* Dates, times, and locations are subject to change. The information below was true at the time of printing. Please call the contact listed to confirm.

July

26 **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting.** 181 E. Broad Street, Camilla, Georgia at the Joe B. Adams Conference Center. Council dinner at 6:30pm. Business meeting at 7:00pm. For more information call Heather White at (229)522-3552 or email hwhite@swgrc.org.

August

6 **Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) Application Due.** Call Dean Nelson, Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) with any questions (404)852-2160.

9 **Housing Task Force Meeting.** Southwest Georgia Regional Commission 181 East Broad Street, Camilla Georgia at the Joe B. Adams Conference Center. Call Kimberly Brooks at (229)522-3552 x1615 for more information.

30 **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting.** 181 E. Broad Street, Camilla, Georgia at the Joe B. Adams Conference Center. Council dinner at 6:30pm. Business meeting at 7:00pm. For more information call Heather White at (229)522-3552 or email hwhite@swgrc.org.

September

27 **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting.** 181 E. Broad Street, Camilla, Georgia at the Joe B. Adams Conference Center. Council dinner at 6:30pm. Business meeting at 7:00pm. For more information call Heather White at (229)522-3552 or email hwhite@swgrc.org.

Fun fact


We have also had 5145 downloads of our newsletters! Visit [http://www.swgrc.org/newsletter/](http://www.swgrc.org/newsletter/) to see what a good resource our publication is!
Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP)

Congratulations to the City of Cordele, the City of Dawson, and the City of Colquitt who were awarded CHIP funds for their communities. The awards were announced March 2, 2018. $306,000 was awarded to each community for the activities proposed in their applications.

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Staff works tirelessly to make certain each application that is being submitted is very competitive.

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Staff News

Southwest Georgia Regional Commission’s GIS Manager Heidi Penny was recognized for 10 years of service to the Commission at the May Council meeting. Executive Assistant Heather White was recognized for 5 years of service at the June Council meeting.

Executive Director Robert McDaniel presents GIS Manager with a 10 year service award. Ms. Penny has been with the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission since March 27, 2008.

Executive Director Robert McDaniel and Deputy Director Suzanne Angell presents Executive Assistant Heather White with a 5 year service award at the June 2018 SWGRC Council meeting.
What is a Business Incubator?

A business incubator enables new businesses to develop and grow without the usual outlay of money for business space, equipment, or even money for a receptionist.

The definition given by Entrepreneur magazine is:

‘Business incubators are organizations geared toward speeding up the growth and success of startup and early stage companies. They’re often a good path to capital from angel investors, state governments, economic-development coalitions and other investors.’

On June 27, 2017 it was reported that Colquitt County Economic Development Authority approved a resolution to accept a $1.8 million Economic Development administration Grant. It already approved a $1.5 million Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) to help fund their Business Incubator project. They hope to have 40,000 square feet that would house the incubator and would cover three to five acres in the business park property. There would be 20 to 25 loading bays and 10 to 12 office spaces.

In January Colquitt County was approved for a federal grant of $1.8 million to provide a safe, less-risky atmosphere for entrepreneurs begin their businesses. The county will use the SPLOST that had been passed the previous year for 30% of the cost and the federal grant will cover 70%.

Entrepreneurial tenants would potentially utilize the space to launch their businesses for one to two years until their business is viable and then move into an independent, larger space. The tenants will have wifi, internet, utilities, building maintenance, yard maintenance, and custodial services. This project will be ready to launch at the end of 2018 and already have businesses on a waiting list.

There are currently 12 business incubators listed on the Georgia.org site. The Colquitt incubator would be the first one for our region. The others listed are Carrollton, Norcross, Atlanta (4), Athens, Americus, Savannah, Rome, Kennesaw, and Augusta. Several have links with colleges or utilize the relationship with local educational institutions. The Burson Center in Carrollton advertises providing ‘business planning, expansion coaching, counseling, technical support, affordable office spaces and more.'
Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH)

Communities and neighborhoods need safe, affordable housing in order to thrive. The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) has been helping communities achieve this goal by improving quality of life and economic vitality through the development of locally-driven housing and revitalization strategies. The GICH program is a collaboration between the Georgia Municipal Association, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and The University of Georgia’s Housing and Demographics Research Center and Georgia Power.

GICH helps communities develop a strategy for housing by developing creative solutions, brainstorming ideas and networking with housing professionals, city officials and community volunteers.

Applications are being accepted for participation in this three-year program. Information about the application and other requirements can be found at www.fcs.uga.edu/fhce/gich. Interested cities are encouraged to submit a letter of intent by July 9th. Applications are due by August 6, 2018. Five cities will be selected, and these will be announced in early October.

The GICH Alumni requirements effective this year require the following to remain viable:

- Annual Performance—Regular meetings with the GICH team must be completed and documented, the Housing Plan must be updated, and the Alumni team must document their interactions with the local government;

- GICH Team Continuity—The Team must submit an updated Team Roster. This information should be forwarded each time any changes are made to the team;

- Continued Education—The Alumni Team must document participation in at least one GICH Retreat a year, workshops, trainings, webinars or other educational opportunities that enhance the local teams knowledge on affordable housing, funding opportunities and programs.

Communities that failed to meet these requirements must go through the 3 year process again and will lose their GICH Alumni status. Each community should have a primary and secondary GICH contact the updates information and reports changes. The link for the team contact can be found on the resource page of the GICH website, http://www.fcs.uga.edu/fhce/gich-resources.

Alumni that have questions about their status should contact Dean Nelson, Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Housing Outreach Coordinator at (404)852-2160 or a GICH representative.
Regional Partners
Network Inc.

2018 Southwest Georgia Youth Summit
Building Blocks for the Future

The 2018 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 Tuesday, February 28, 2018 at Southwest Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) in Camilla, GA. The Summit brought together nearly 66 youth in grades 11th and 12th from 5 counties in Region 10. Students enrolled in public and private schools in any of the 14 counties in Region 10 were invited as well as those students who were home schooled. The theme for this year’s Summit was Building Blocks for the Future.

The Summit’s goal is to bring economic development and other opportunities to Southwest Georgia for all students in the region. The high impact event was filled with motivational speakers, real world experiences and a panel of college students that students has the opportunity to interact with and gain insight about college. 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 Jay Sharpe, Co-Owner for U Save-It Pharmacy, encouraging attendees to find their purpose and achieve their goals. The panel of college students included: Joshua Moore, Mitchell County High School Senior & Albany State University Junior, Business Management Major; Kayla Oneal, Future Albany State Student; Kaczarea Sims, Albany State University, Sophomore, English Major; and Ja’Kharis Burns, Sophomore, Albany State University, Political Science Major. The panel answered questions from the students about how to have a successful freshman year and the lesson learned from their first year of college. This lively discussion ended with questions still coming from the students after more than an hour. The take away for students was to remember the reasons they decided to go to college and follow their dreams, purse careers they are passionate about and things they enjoy. The youth attended sessions on federal documentation, financial literacy, 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 successfully in their careers.
The day ended with students participating in an escape room based on real life scenarios. Youth had to select the correct scenario to “escape from the room”. Those that successfully escaped were rewarded prizes.

This is an annual event that would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. Sponsors for the 2017 Youth Summit were Waffle House, Debbie’s Main Street, 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: Jay Sharpe, U Save-It Pharmacy; Karen McWhite, McWhite Law Office; Betty Jackson Burton, Loan Officer II/Counselor, City of Albany Department of Community Economic Development (DCED); Patricia Fletcher Edwards, National Investment Division (NID) Housing Counseling Agency and Melody Pierce, WorkSource Southwest Georgia.

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.
Director Debbie Blanton from the SOWEGA Council on Aging spoke to the council and guests at the June Council meeting. She spoke of the resources available to the aging population in Southwest Georgia. She made it clear that all of us are aging so this is not exclusive to the 65+ community.

The programs and assistance offered by SOWEGA Council on aging includes and is not limited to wellness opportunities and technology assistance.

She mentioned that some of the most current research in Parkinson’s Disease indicates that fast pedaling on a bicycle/stationary bicycle alleviated the shaking or tremors that are caused by the disease. The Council on Aging has purchased stationary bicycles and is offering an exercise and support group at the Kay H. Hind Senior Life Enrichment Center. The first 8 week sessions are free and then repeat sessions are only $30. Participants must be cleared by their physician to participate. Robin McCord can be called for a seat reservation at 229-435-6789.

The assistive technology assistance the Council on Aging offers enhances the abilities and the quality of life for those living with disabilities. In the SOWEGA Council on Aging Senior Center these individuals can get assistance with devices that will help them live a better life. They can try these devices to see if they would work for them. Some of these devices are for vision, hearing, daily living, healthcare, mobility, communications, computer software and much more.
There are three locations with Assistive Technology Labs:

**Kay H. Hind Senior Life Enrichment Center**
335 W. Society Avenue, Albany, GA 229-435-6789

**R. S. Boney Senior Center**
141 Park Street, Leesburg, GA 229-757-0909

**Dawson Senior Center**
741 Forrester Drive SE, Dawson  229-518-9567

Executive Director Blanton was joined with Juli Bruner who works at the Council on Aging as well. Ms. Bruner spoke of the service the Council on Aging has called the Georgia’s Resource Connection. This helps those who are 55 and older and in a nursing home that are ready to transition back to their own home. They must have been in the nursing home for at least 30 days, have proof of citizenship or legal status, have a risk assessment, and their gross monthly income must be less than average nursing home private pay rate. This program assists with mobility ramps, medical supplies, grab bars and other safety equipment.
Georgia Department of Revenue Commissioner Lynne Riley
Addresses the SWGRC Council at June Meeting

Georgia Department of Revenue Commissioner Lynne Riley spoke to a very full room during the June meeting at the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission. She brought several staff from her compliance division. She delivered a message of positive changes happening at the GDOR. One of those messages was about House Bill 61 from Wayfair vs South Dakota and how it includes an internet sales tax that will bring revenue to local Georgia communities that would get that tax stimulation if the money were spent locally. She gave Representative Jay Powell (who was also a guest at the meeting) kudos for his diligent work in getting this bill passed.

She spoke of significant tax reforms that were passed last December. The most significant change was the reduction in income tax rate from 6% to 5 3/4%. This will begin January 1st 2019. This affects not only individuals but corporations as well. It is hoped that this will stimulate the economy. By 2020 the hope is this will decrease even further to 5 1/2%.

The Commissioner encouraged everyone to participate in tax planning ahead of changes.

Up to $60 million dollars in tax donations there is a little more than $30 million dollars that is already spoken for. As of July 1st donors may donate an unlimited amount to local community hospitals and receive tax benefits for the tax year 2018. Contact the GA. Dept. of Revenue for any questions and to make sure your donation will qualify before making it.

Commissioner Riley spoke of changes that will be occurring in the future with the Department of Motor Vehicles. The modernization of motor vehicle tax and titles will go live in May of 2019. All changes in this department will be deferred until that time. The second phase will be modernizing the department of driver’s services. At the end all of the transactions will be able to happen on mobile devices and no one will have to visit either of these offices in person.
Georgia Department of Revue Website Offers Comprehensive Assistance

GEORGIA TAX CENTER

If you have questions about how to change your address, how to check your balance, where your refund is, or are in need of tax templates, just to name a few of the services, visit the below link to the Georgia Department of Revenue on line Georgia Tax Center Help page. Gone is the day where your only option is to remain on hold for extended periods of time for simple questions to be answered.

Unsure about how to sign up for this service? Under how to videos you can watch a video on how to sign up for Online Access whether you are a company or an individual.

https://dor.georgia.gov/georgia-tax-center-help

MOTOR VEHICLES

Also on the GDOR website you can visit the section on Motor Vehicles. Many useful tools are on this section of the site. There is a new advalorium tax calculator https://dor.georgia.gov/tavt-calculator. It will provide you with an estimation of taxes due. It cannot, however, take into account any exemptions or reduced rates.

Are you unaware where your local tag office is? There is a locator on this page as well. Are you planning on getting a vanity tag? You can check ahead of time if that tag is available! Are you purchasing a used vehicle and would like to check the Vehicle Identification number to see if it was salvaged, rebuilt or damaged in a flood? For a fee you can do this on line using one of the approved National Motor Vehicle title Information System Data Providers. There is a VIN Check section that educates consumers on what a Salvage Title, Water/Flood Damage Title and a Rebuilt Vehicle Title is.

ALCOHOL & TOBACCO

Are you a business looking for alcohol licensing and or tobacco licensing? You can get your questions answered on this department of revenue page: https://dor.georgia.gov/alcohol-tobacco.

This covers in-state manufacturers/brokers, out-of-state manufacturers/brokers, wholesalers, distributors, retainers, special events licensing, farm wineries, churches sacramental wine licensing and wholesalers and brewpubs. Not only does the site cover licensing, you can access laws and regulations, price postings, and access shipment forms and reports.

These are only some examples of how the Georgia Department of Revenue website makes navigating taxes, licensure, current tax laws and regulations easier.
# Sample Plans

**Basic**
- City/County boundaries
- Future Land Use
- Zoning Districts

**Public Interest**
- Municipal buildings (city hall, fire, police, recreation parks, post offices, other buildings of governmental interest)
- School administration buildings and facilities including elementary, middle, high, charter, and private schools, trade schools and colleges

**Infrastructure**
- Wastewater and Facilities
- Potable Water and Facilities
- Transportation Networks (bridges, control signals, signs, transit routes)

**Economic**
- Enterprise Zones
- Brownfields
- Redevelopment Districts

**Emergency Management**
- Patrol Areas
- Crime Hot Spots
- E911 Address Point Locations

**Utility**
- Electrical
- Telephone
- Cable Television
- Natural Gas
- Communication Towers
- Sewer Water
- Waste Providers (routes)

**Governmental**
- Census Tracts
- Educational Districts
- Jurisdictions
- Judicial Districts
- Political Districts

## 2020 Census Update

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission has been assisting cities and counties that have requested assistance with their LUCA (local update of census addresses). The GIS (Geographic Information System) Department of the Regional Commission has been responsible for this task. They have completed 41 submissions that are currently being reviewed.

According to the census.gov website, as of July 10, 2018 at 11:30 am there were 328,101,359 people in the United States. One birth every 8 seconds. One death every 12 seconds. One international migrant every 29 seconds giving the United states a net gain of one new person every 12 seconds.
The Planning Department of the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission has been very busy as usual completing Hazard Mitigation Planning, Grant Writing, Comprehensive Plans and much more. They have been approved for an Immediate Threat and Danger Grant for one community in the amount of $14,746 for repairs to a well.

The State Road and Tollway Authority’s Georgia Transportation infrastructure Grant provided funding to Grady, Thomasville and Worth County. This grant provides additional funding to help communities initiate and complete transportation projects; priority given to bridge and road projects that are close to the start or under construction.

Pre-Hazard Mitigation Plans are in various stages of completion for Terrell County and Grady County. Bainbridge and Colquitt County’s Solid Waste Plans are in progress as well.

The planners are also updating regional Bike & Pedestrian corridors. They have conducted Complete Streets training. They have conducted sidewalk inventories in e counties, completing Grady County. The Transportation Element on Comprehensive Plans have been completed. They participated in Georgia Department of Transportation Transportation Planning as well.

The following contracts are in progress;

- City of Albany – Public Service Grant – In Progress
- Camilla Zoning Contract – Draft under review by City
- City of Sylvester Housing Projects – In Progress
- City of Sylvester – TA for Rural Zone - In Progress
- City of Moultrie – Urban Redev. Plan Update– Completed
- City of Bainbridge – Solid Waste – In Progress
- Colquitt County Solid Waste – In Progress

City of Arlington – Technical Assistance for development of Housing Plan and Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) Application

All plans and Service Delivery Strategies are in progress.

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission is expecting new students to intern in the Fall.

http://www.swgrcplanning.org/
At the end of March we, Southwest Georgia got the bad news. Southeastern Grocers was going to close several Harveys, Winn Dixies, and BiLo stores as a result of filing bankruptcy. This means displaced workers and many financial issues for those displace workers and their families. We have no idea how many workers will be ‘let go’ but we are certain it is more than 20 per store.

In the middle of April we, Southwest Georgia got the good news Taurus, one of the leading manufacturers of firearms would be relocating their headquarters and building a multimillion dollar manufacturing plant in Bainbridge. They will be hiring an estimated 300 workers.

At the March Southwest Georgia Regional Commission meeting we had a speaker from WOAA, the director Melody Pierce. Her message is always inspiring and hopeful as she tirelessly energizes any room she is advocating in for displaced workers. WOAA encourage potential employers to take these potential employees under their wing. WOAA creates training opportunities and does not let there be any excuse for a displaced worker to not being able to gain useful skills for gainful employment. Ms. Pierce has solutions to obstacles that would get in the employees way to success. Whether it be the cost of transportation to educate or training, the cost of childcare, or any other reason someone can think of that would create an obstacle between then and the abundant opportunities, Ms. Pierce will readily have solutions for them.

Let us hope that there will be a flow of opportunities and jobs and that our workforce will see opportunities in the skill training that will make them more marketable for jobs that are in demand.
2018 Southwest Georgia Regional Commissioners

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

**Calhoun County**
- Charlie Williams
- Deidre Evans-Severson
- Bennie Watts Jones

**Colquitt County**
- Paul Nagy
- Ferrell Ruis
- **Vacant**
  - Preston Jimmerson

**Decatur County**
- Steve Brock
- Kregg Close
- Revonn Miller
- Billy Poppell

**Dougherty County**
- Anthony Jones
- Matt Fuller
- Freddie Grimsley
- Raymond Breaux
- Matt Reed

**Early County**
- Jeffery Haynes
- Al Hutchins
- Freddie Speight

**Grady County**
- Keith Moye
- Jim Sellers
- Joe Walden

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

**Miller County**
- Allen Worsley
- Carlos Williams
- Jayme Smith

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

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

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

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

**Worth County**
- Fred Dent
- Charles Jones
- Karen Rackley

Governor’s Appointment
- 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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A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words