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More information about the project and an interactive asset map may be found at www.rivervalleyccd.com. The plan was released in spring of 2023.

APPENDIX A

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COLUMBUS (GEORGIA) MSA

by

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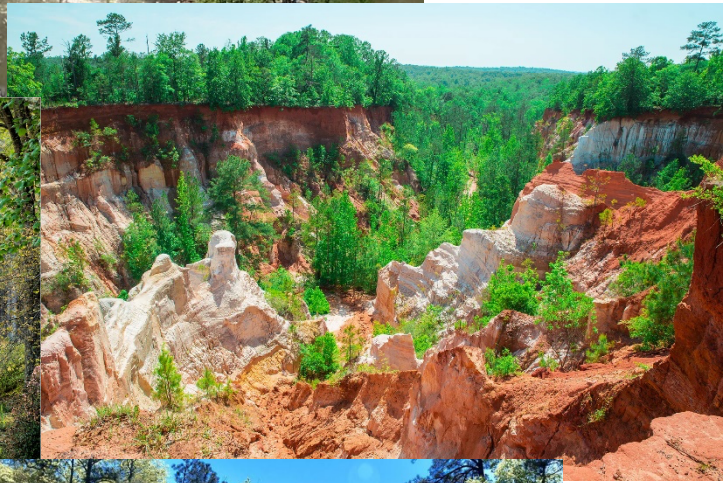
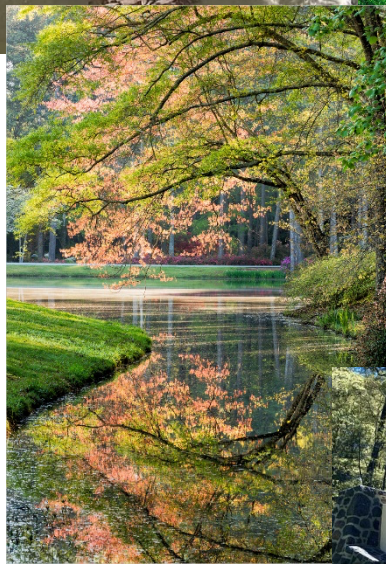
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Initial assessment of tourism contributions to the Columbus (Georgia) MSA

Tourism overview and background

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2023), tourism is defined as “a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure.” The impact of tourism globally can be seen in figures compiled by the World Travel and Tourism Council (2023). In 2021, tourism contributed to 6.1% of the global GDP (USD 5,812 billion) and supported 1 in 11 jobs (289 million jobs). That same year in the U.S., tourism contributed to 5.5% of the country’s GDP (USD 1,271.2 billion) and supported 11 million jobs. In terms of visitor spending in 2021 within the U.S., international visitor spending topped USD 40.3 billion while domestic visitor spending came in at USD 731.5 billion (WTTC, 2023). Americans spend exponentially more on tourism within the U.S. than do international visitors.

Tourism as a system

As many have critiqued the tourism industry for its ‘grayness,’ overlapping with other industries and the difficulty of seeing tangible impacts of travel, Goeldner and Ritchie (2012) approach the tourism industry from a systems-based approach (Figure 1). The most essential, foundational portion of the model—**Natural Resources and the Environment**—includes the physiography (i.e., nature and landscape aspects), its climate, and its people (i.e., residents and tourists). The next layer moving toward the core encompasses the **Built Environment**, that which has been developed or created by humans. This component involves tangible aspects (e.g., infrastructure, superstructure, and technology), intangible aspects (e.g., information and governance), and a combination of the two (e.g., culture). Moving further in, we get to the **Operating Sectors of the Tourism Industry**. Most people think of these sectors when they travel, which include accommodations, transportation, food services, entertainment, adventure and outdoor recreation, and events and attractions. At the core of the figure are the *private sector* components (e.g., national/state/provincial/regional/local tourism associations and convention and visitor bureaus) and *public sector* components (national/state/provincial/city/local government tourism department offices) responsible for **planning, developing, and promoting tourism**. Moving back to the outside layer, we find the **processes, activities, and outcomes of tourism** that take the form of research, policy, planning, development, marketing, philosophy, impacts, and monitoring.

Tourism at regional and local scales can have a profound impact on a community’s tax generation, most often facilitated by hotel occupancy tax (HOT). Couple this with the provision of employment opportunities and greater access to amenities and services for residents, and it is easy to understand how local communities rally behind the tourism industry, seeking to develop and promote it in areas rich in natural and cultural resources. Tourism development highlighting these resources then provides tourists with unique experiences and residents with stronger local and regional economies.

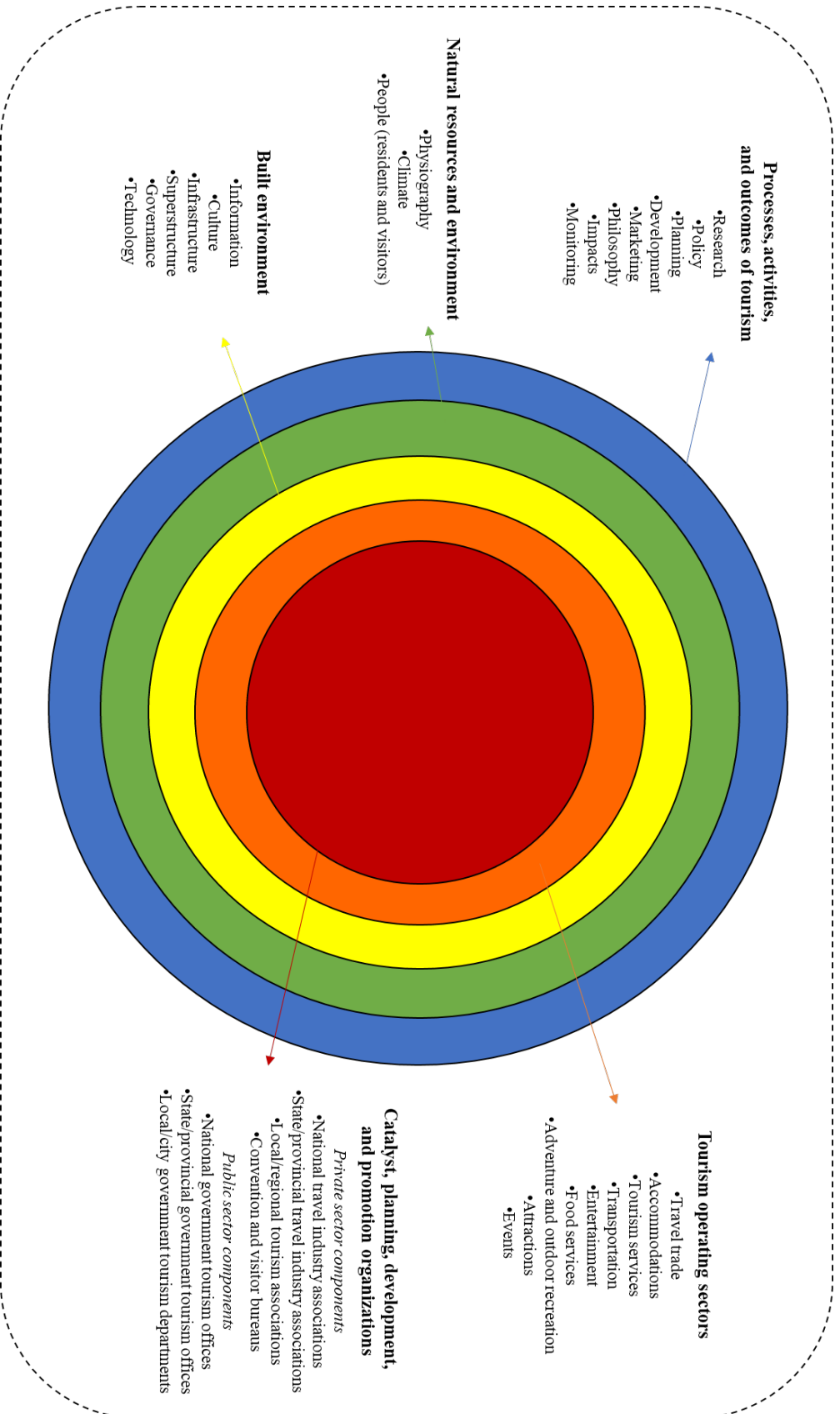


Figure 1. The tourism system and management (adapted from Goeldner and Ritchie, 2012)

Brief look at Georgia tourism transitioning to Columbus MSA

According to Explore Georgia (2023a), the office overseeing tourism throughout the state, Georgia welcomed 159.2 million domestic and 357,500 international visitors in 2021—ranking it 5th within the U.S. for overnight trips. Though these figures are largely driven by tourism opportunities in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta and the Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), the state is chockful of destinations pulling people in for their natural and cultural resource amenities. The Columbus MSA, colloquially referred to as the ‘Chattahoochee Valley,’ is one such place known for its rich history focused on nature and culture. Though the Columbus MSA includes seven counties (Figure 2), one of which is located within the State of Alabama and will not be considered moving forward in this report.

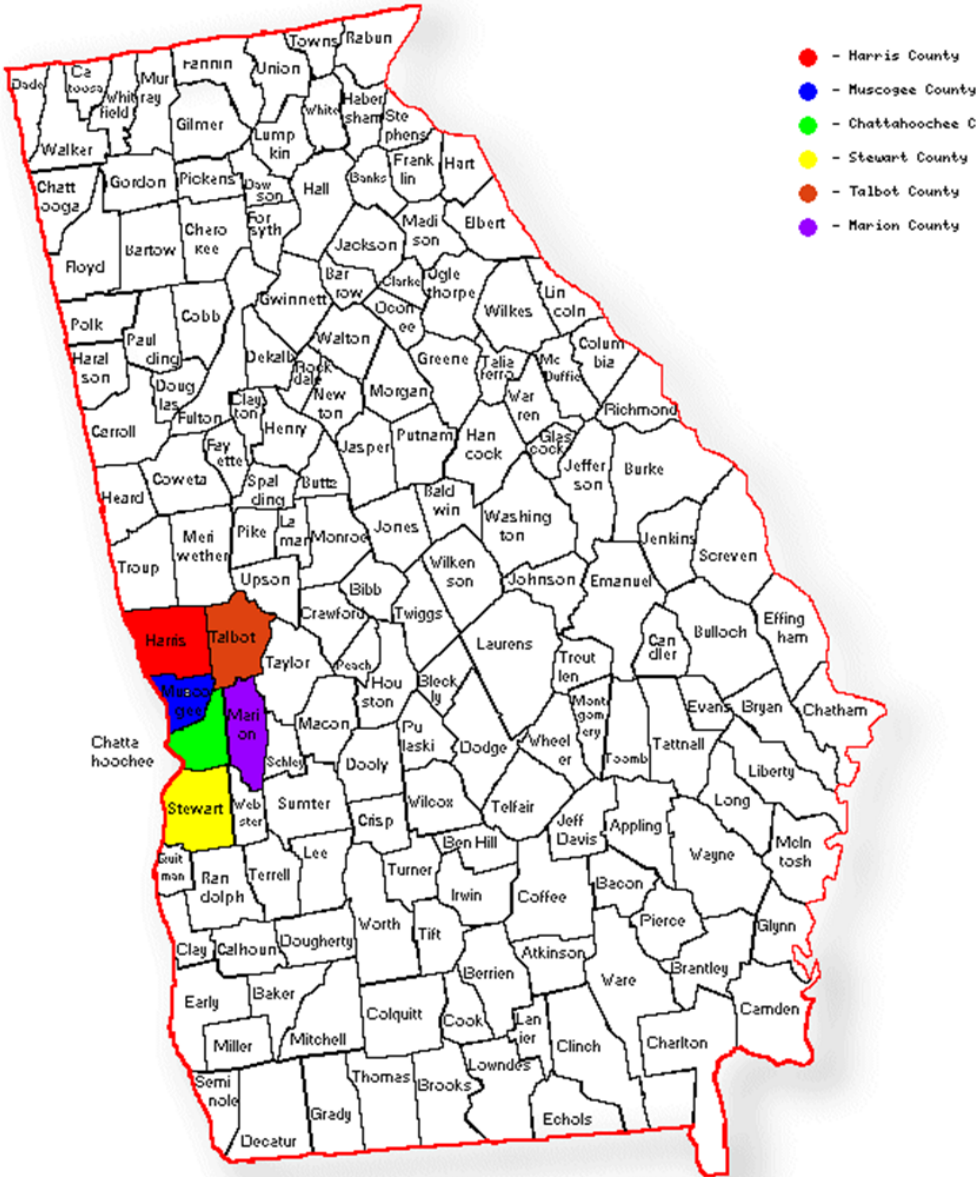


Figure 2. Columbus, GA Metropolitan Statistical Area (from <http://diymaps.net/userimages/926446.gif>, accessed January 2, 2023)

The six counties within the MSA, in order of population size (United States Census Bureau, 2023), are: Muscogee County (206,922); Harris County (34,668); Chattahoochee County (9,565); Marion County (7,498); Talbot County (5,733); Stewart County (5,314). Some of the *notable cultural sites* within the region are Bo Bartlett Center (Muscogee County), Coca-Cola Space Science Center (Muscogee County), Columbus Museum (Muscogee County), Historic Westville (Muscogee County), Liberty Theatre (Muscogee County), Richland Distilling Company (Stewart County), Springer Opera House (Muscogee County), Swamp Fox Distilling Company (Marion County). Those *notable natural sites* of the Columbus MSA are Callaway Gardens (Harris County), Chattahoochee River Rafting (Muscogee County), Chattahoochee RiverWalk (Muscogee County), Columbus Botanical Garden (Muscogee County), FDR State Park (Harris County), Florence Marina State Park (Stewart County), and Providence Canyon State Park (Stewart County).

Another major draw to the Columbus MSA is the U.S. Army Fort Benning and the Maneuver Center of Excellence, located within Muscogee and Chattahoochee Counties. The base is comprised of 182,000 acres, housing up to 120,000 active-duty personnel, family members, reservists, retirees, and civilian employees (Military Installations, 2023). Though the exact number of visitors to Fort Benning is not known, with two basic training graduations held nearly every Thursday and Friday morning, it is not difficult to understand the need for the 500+ restaurants and 4,800 hotel rooms in Columbus (Visit Columbus, GA, 2023).

Purpose of report and structure of remaining report

The remainder of this report will serve to initially tell a story about tourism within the Columbus MSA and across each of the six Georgia counties. We will do this through the utilization of data from various sources—Explore Georgia, national survey of potential visitors to Georgia, IMPLAN, Smith Travel Research, and Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites.

Visitor spending and brief economic impacts of tourism in Columbus MSA (2017-2021)

To determine visitor spending and economic impacts of tourism for the state of Georgia and its counties, Explore Georgia contracts with the company Tourism Economics. Prior to examining figures across the Columbus MSA and its corresponding counties over the last five years, it is however, important to speak briefly about the methodology that Tourism Economics follows (Explore Georgia, 2023b). Following a historic Travel Economic Impact Model (TEIM), Tourism Economics is able to provide the output measures that are presented as columns in Table 1: total tourism spending, direct labor income, direct tourism employment, federal/state/local taxes, and state/local tax savings from tourism. Some of the inputs to the traditional Input-Output (I-O) model undertaken using IMPLAN (www.implan.com) include syndicated questionnaire data from Longwoods International based on five spending categories (i.e., local transport, lodging, retail, recreation, and food and beverage) and type of visitor to Georgia, employment and wages by county (from the Bureaus of Economic Analysis and Labor Statistics), lodging performance data on room demand and room revenue by county (from Smith Travel Research), hotel occupancy tax by county, sales tax by industry for Georgia (from GA Department of Revenue), seasonal second homes by county (from U.S. Census Bureau), business sales by industry (from U.S. Census Bureau), gasoline price data (from U.S. Energy Information Administration), international inbound traveler visits and expenditures, and aviation-related spending for visitors based on airport and passenger data.

Table 1. Visitor spending and economic impacts of tourism in Columbus MSA (2017-2021)

	Total Tourism Spending	Direct Labor Income	Direct Tourism Employment	State/Local Tourism Taxes	Federal Tourism Taxes	State/Local Tax Savings from Tourism
<i>State of Georgia</i>						
2021	\$28,486.8M	\$8,220.3M	232,537	\$2,295,140K	\$1,743,226K	\$599
2020	\$21,058.4M	\$6,970.6M	210,187	\$1,665,788K	\$1,304,571K	\$443
2019	\$30,519.5M	\$8,570.6M	267,460	\$2,281,168K	\$2,352,273K	\$607
2018	\$28,811.3M	\$8,104.7M	264,903	\$2,135,257K	\$2,224,892K	\$576
2017	\$27,428.5M	\$7,676.6M	257,433	\$2,019,094K	\$2,105,614K	\$551
<i>Columbus MSA*</i>						
2021	\$618.4M	\$183.0M	7,285	\$49,275K	\$39,250K	\$1,959
2020	\$466.1M	\$150.7M	6,414	\$35,773K	\$28,606K	\$1,396
2019	\$577.0M	\$172.0M	7,951	\$44,714K	\$47,716K	\$1,745
2018	\$562.0M	\$166.9M	8,117	\$42,838K	\$46,332K	\$1,742
2017	\$580.3M	\$165.7M	8,081	\$43,492K	\$46,004K	\$1,629
<i>Chattahoochee Co.</i>						
2021	\$12.3M	\$3.5M	151	\$1,362K	\$747K	\$534
2020	\$8.8M	\$2.7M	137	\$872K	\$520K	\$339
2019	\$8.8M	\$2.7M	137	\$961K	\$751K	\$374
2018	\$10.4M	\$2.7M	150	\$974K	\$755K	\$382
2017	\$9.4M	\$2.1M	132	\$569K	\$605K	\$227
<i>Harris County</i>						
2021	\$83.4M	\$28.4M	1,098	\$6,109K	\$6,040K	\$491
2020	\$69.6M	\$24.1M	964	\$4,727K	\$4,541K	\$389
2019	\$82.5M	\$30.5M	1,321	\$6,698K	\$8,337K	\$551
2018	\$85.7M	\$32.6M	1,362	\$6,893K	\$8,889K	\$567
2017	\$91.4M	\$32.5M	1,375	\$7,239K	\$8,864K	\$599
<i>Marion County</i>						
2021	\$12.9M	\$4.6M	161	\$939K	\$978K	\$274
2020	\$8.3M	\$4.1M	127	\$623K	\$760K	\$183
2019	\$9.9M	\$4.3M	131	\$756K	\$1,153K	\$222
2018	\$11.0M	\$3.5M	130	\$738K	\$958K	\$222
2017	\$10.2M	\$3.7M	124	\$718K	\$991K	\$220
<i>Muscogee County</i>						
2021	\$505.6M	\$145.8M	5,841	\$40,632K	\$31,327K	\$552
2020	\$376.4M	\$119.2M	5,160	\$29,382K	\$22,663K	\$404
2019	\$471.9M	\$133.8M	6,329	\$36,082K	\$37,268K	\$496
2018	\$451.0M	\$127.5M	6,444	\$34,018K	\$35,551K	\$466
2017	\$465.8M	\$126.6M	6,416	\$34,751K	\$35,314K	\$475
<i>Stewart County</i>						
2021	\$2.3M	\$0.4M	20	\$136K	\$96K	\$74
2020	\$1.8M	\$0.4M	15	\$107K	\$83K	\$59
2019	\$2.3M	\$0.5M	19	\$127K	\$139K	\$70
2018	\$2.6M	\$0.4M	19	\$146K	\$124K	\$80
2017	\$2.4M	\$0.6M	22	\$154K	\$175K	\$86
<i>Talbot County</i>						
2021	\$1.9M	\$0.3M	14	\$97K	\$62K	\$34
2020	\$1.2M	\$0.2M	11	\$62K	\$39K	\$22
2019	\$1.6M	\$0.2M	14	\$90K	\$68K	\$32
2018	\$1.3M	\$0.2M	12	\$69K	\$55K	\$25
2017	\$1.1M	\$0.2M	12	\$61K	\$55K	\$22

*Only Georgia counties within Columbus MSA

Key findings and trends of visitor spending and economic impacts

Based on Table 1, some major takeaways are worthy of mentioning:

- The Columbus MSA mirrored the state of Georgia in total tourism spending, direct labor income, state/local tourism taxes, and state/local tax savings from tourism all being higher in 2021 than in pre-COVID-19 times.
- Muscogee County was responsible for 80-82% of total tourism spending, 76-80% of direct labor income, and 79-81% of direct tourism employment in the Columbus MSA (from 2017-2021).
- Harris County (a distant second) was responsible for 14-16% of total tourism spending, 16-20% of direct labor income, and 15-17% of direct tourism employment in the Columbus MSA (from 2017-2021).
- For Columbus MSA overall, total tourism spending, direct labor income, and state/local tax savings from tourism in 2021 are all ahead of pre-COVID-19 pandemic figures.
- Total tourism spending, direct labor income, and state/local tourism taxes for Chattahoochee, Marion, Muscogee, and Talbot was higher in 2021 compared to pre-COVID-19 pandemic figures.

Using IMPLAN to analyze the tourism sectors within the Columbus MSA

IMPLAN was created by academics for the U.S. Forest Service in the 1970s. It is an economic modeling database that utilizes information from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and the U.S. Census Bureau. The database is used by economic development researchers, local governments, academicians, and business professionals to examine an industry's economic contribution to a geographic location. IMPLAN aligns all U.S. businesses to 546 aggregated industry sectors and they are in similar classification to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). However, where NAICS identifies 1,170 industry sectors, IMPLAN aggregates NAICS categories to the reduced 546 industries.

For this analysis, we examined two primary components of the IMPLAN database—total output and wage and salary employment. An industry's total output represents the value of industry production. The tourism industry sectors are considered service sectors therefore the value of overall production reflects total sales by the industry. Wage and salary employment is defined as the mix of full-time, part-time, and seasonal employment for the sector on an annual basis. It is the same definition used by BEA and BLS. IMPLAN employment is not equal to full-time equivalents.

As described earlier, the tourism industry is a system comprised of varying parts. Destinations have characteristics that inspire individuals to travel to a specific location. However, the operating sectors are where the business of travel occurs. While many IMPLAN sectors are incorporated into comprehensive tourism economic research, 11 sectors are consistently included in travel economic research. The sectors below are considered a primary contributor to a region's tourism economy. We aggregated the individual industry sectors to define a larger hospitality and tourism sector. Those sectors are: 1) museums, historical sites, zoos, and parks, 2) amusement parks and arcades, 3) gambling industries (except casino hotels), 4) other amusement and recreation industries, 5) fitness and recreational sports centers, 6) hotels and motels, including casino hotels, 7) other accommodations, 8) full-service restaurants, 9) full-service restaurants, 10) limited-service restaurants, and 11) all other food and drinking places.

Table 2: Total output and wage and employment and % share for hospitality and tourism in MSA (2017-2021)

	Total Output	% Share	Total Wage and Employment	% Share
<i>Columbus MSA (GA Counties Only)</i>				
2021	\$1,123,562,688.13	100.0%	11790.3	100.0%
2020	\$823,033,935.09	100.0%	11396.1	100.0%
2019	\$1,006,181,312.03	100.0%	12884.2	100.0%
2018	\$957,209,229.47	100.0%	12704.7	100.0%
2017	\$911,867,249.53	100.0%	12343.8	100.0%
<i>Chattahoochee County</i>				
2021	\$12,762,173.89	1.1%	159.8	1.4%
2020	\$8,761,316.54	1.1%	128.9	1.1%
2019	\$6,714,896.99	0.7%	112.3	0.9%
2018	\$7,108,797.89	0.7%	108.6	0.9%
2017	\$5,927,340.08	0.7%	85.1	0.7%
<i>Harris County</i>				
2021	\$52,474,500.85	4.7%	496.3	4.2%
2020	\$38,397,391.05	4.7%	422.3	3.7%
2019	\$55,447,720.97	5.5%	564.2	4.4%
2018	\$57,604,804.24	6.0%	602.2	4.7%
2017	\$45,352,213.47	5.0%	476.0	3.9%
<i>Marion County</i>				
2021	\$8,088,238.84	0.7%	77.0	0.7%
2020	\$5,482,804.90	0.7%	55.5	0.5%
2019	\$5,235,601.57	0.5%	50.4	0.4%
2018	\$4,276,102.03	0.4%	46.1	0.4%
2017	\$4,643,294.90	0.5%	45.4	0.4%
<i>Muscogee County</i>				
2021	\$1,033,403,460.66	92.0%	10890.8	92.4%
2020	\$759,625,371.89	92.3%	10677.2	93.7%
2019	\$924,227,683.87	91.9%	12000.1	93.1%
2018	\$883,302,745.12	92.3%	11906.1	93.7%
2017	\$852,165,441.78	93.5%	11701.8	94.8%
<i>Stewart County</i>				
2021	\$15,370,200.13	1.4%	158.0	1.3%
2020	\$9,895,166.86	1.2%	105.1	0.9%
2019	\$13,778,271.07	1.4%	151.2	1.2%
2018	\$4,155,472.44	0.4%	37.7	0.3%
2017	\$3,117,498.34	0.3%	30.0	0.2%
<i>Talbot County</i>				
2021	\$1,464,113.76	0.1%	8.4	0.1%
2020	\$871,883.85	0.1%	7.1	0.1%
2019	\$777,137.56	0.1%	6.1	0.0%
2018	\$761,307.75	0.1%	4.0	0.0%
2017	\$661,460.96	0.1%	5.5	0.0%

For the Columbus MSA (Georgia counties only) region, Table 2 shows that Muscogee County retains the largest share of the total output for the combined hospitality and tourism sector. For the last five years, it has contributed over 90% of the total sector revenue to the region and in 2021, accounted for 92% of all sales. Harris County contributed approximately 5% over the same period. Chattahoochee, Marion, Stewart, and Talbot made the smallest economic contributions to the hospitality and tourism Sector. The % share contribution mirrors the earlier pattern indicating that most of the region’s tourism spending occurs within Muscogee County.

Total wage and employment reflects the pattern of total output. Of the 11,000+ jobs within the region, Muscogee County contains over 90% of the positions for the region. Harris County contains approximately 500 jobs (4.2%) and the remaining job contributions come from the other counties in the MSA (Figure 3).

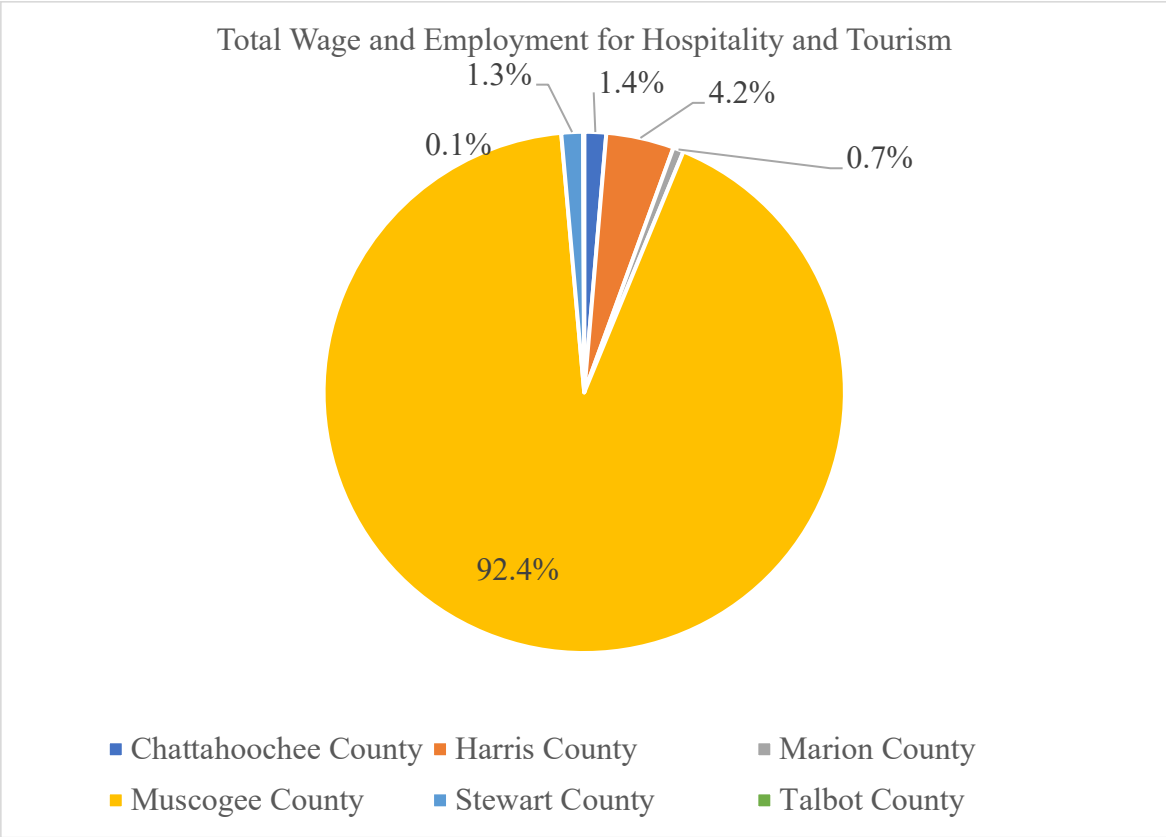


Figure 3: Total wage and employment for the region’s hospitality and tourism sector

According to the Georgia 2021 Tourism Economic Impact report, over 45% of visitor spending occurs within the accommodation and foodservices sector. Therefore, we isolated only the IMPLAN sectors related to accommodation and foodservices. The sector accounts for the largest category of visitor spending and is at the core of the tourism industry. Spending in this sector also strongly contributes to the overall tourism-related taxes collected by a community. Additional spending occurs connected to nature-based activities and outdoor recreation within natural areas and parks. In Table 3, we bridged the NAICS classification for natural areas/parks with the aligned IMPLAN sector to produce the estimated total output for nature-based tourism. The table reflects the total output for the accommodations and foodservices sector and nature-based tourism.

Similar to what is represented in Table 2, Muscogee County contributes to over 90% of the total sales for the accommodations and Foodservices sector for 2021. This is followed by Harris at 4.3% and Stewart at 1.3%. However, for nature-based tourism, the Muscogee County contribution decreased to 61%, while Harris County showed a 24% contribution to the sector for the same year.

Table 3: Analyzing total output for accommodations and foodservices and nature-based tourism

	Total Output for Accommodations and Food	% Share	Total Output for Nature-Based Tourism	% Share
<i>Columbus MSA (GA Counties Only)</i>				
2021	\$1,035,302,455.63	100.0%	\$1,022,797.44	100.0%
2020	\$766,746,573.12	100.0%	\$957,520.59	100.0%
2019	\$928,870,324.32	100.0%	\$1,379,297.85	100.0%
2018	\$889,431,711.50	100.0%	\$779,412.18	100.0%
2017	\$842,354,011.67	100.0%	\$769,939.24	100.0%
<i>Chattahoochee County</i>				
2021	\$12,496,700.34	1.2%	\$5,426.99	1%
2020	\$8,601,921.86	1.1%	\$478.53	0%
2019	\$6,625,078.95	0.7%	\$1,761.42	0%
2018	\$6,547,908.11	0.7%	\$1,762.62	0%
2017	\$5,142,908.70	0.6%	\$0.00	0%
<i>Harris County</i>				
2021	\$44,633,529.72	4.3%	\$247,677.18	24%
2020	\$32,757,514.58	4.3%	\$198,487.10	21%
2019	\$45,077,454.85	4.9%	\$427,441.08	31%
2018	\$48,173,813.14	5.4%	\$93,737.39	12%
2017	\$37,228,604.90	4.4%	\$148,319.48	19%
<i>Marion County</i>				
2021	\$7,561,943.59	0.7%	\$1,610.67	0%
2020	\$5,150,546.92	0.7%	\$1,638.13	0%
2019	\$4,861,872.91	0.5%	\$0.00	0%
2018	\$3,963,328.12	0.4%	\$0.00	0%
2017	\$4,321,337.32	0.5%	\$0.00	0%
<i>Muscogee County</i>				
2021	\$956,027,440.00	92.3%	\$628,032.12	61%
2020	\$711,642,042.02	92.8%	\$611,826.44	64%
2019	\$861,356,009.49	92.7%	\$696,437.06	50%
2018	\$827,307,026.33	93.0%	\$574,049.50	74%
2017	\$793,178,562.81	94.2%	\$543,496.43	71%
<i>Stewart County</i>				
2021	\$13,360,377.95	1.3%	\$140,050.48	14%
2020	\$8,012,208.21	1.0%	\$145,090.39	15%
2019	\$10,522,359.34	1.1%	\$253,658.30	18%
2018	\$2,761,427.25	0.3%	\$109,862.67	14%
2017	\$2,101,632.04	0.2%	\$78,123.33	10%
<i>Talbot County</i>				
2021	\$1,222,464.03	0.1%	\$0.00	0%
2020	\$582,339.53	0.1%	\$0.00	0%
2019	\$427,548.78	0.0%	\$0.00	0%
2018	\$678,208.55	0.1%	\$0.00	0%
2017	\$380,965.90	0.0%	\$0.00	0%

Key findings of IMPLAN analysis

Using IMPLAN to analyze the region’s tourism activity shows that Muscogee County contributes the lion’s share of hospitality and tourism, Accommodations and foodservices, and nature-based revenues to the Columbus MSA region. Additionally, Muscogee County employs the most positions related to hospitality and tourism. This is similar to Table 1, indicating that Muscogee County had the highest visitor spending and jobs within the region. However, for nature-based tourism, Harris County has an increased output share contribution which is likely due to the spending at both Callaway Gardens and F.D. Roosevelt State Park.

Regional hotel-motel excise tax revenue analysis

Local governments imposing a hotel-motel tax are required by state law to file a hotel-motel tax report. The hotel-motel tax report is due each year within 180 days of a government’s fiscal year end date. Georgia Department of Community Affairs reported in July 2022 that 273 communities submitted their respective hotel-motel tax information, of which 76 were at the county-level. For 2018-2021, revenues were reported for the Columbus MSA communities below.

- Columbus/Muscogee Consolidated Government
- Cusseta-Chattahoochee Consolidated Government
- Hamilton City
- Harris County
- Manchester City
- Richland City

For the four-year period, the Columbus/Muscogee Consolidated Government contributed 88% to 93% of the total hotel-motel tax for the region, while the Cusseta-Chattahoochee Consolidated Government contributed 6-7% and Harris County 1-5% respectively. Hamilton, Manchester, and Richland cities had negligible contributions to the region’s tax collections. For 2021, over \$4.3 million in hotel-motel taxes were collected for the region and 87.5% was generated by the Columbus/Muscogee Consolidated Government, 7.4% by the Cusseta-Chattahoochee Consolidated Government, and 4.8% by Harris County (Figure 4). Hamilton, Manchester, and Richland cities continue to have minimal impacts on the overall 2021 regional tax collections.

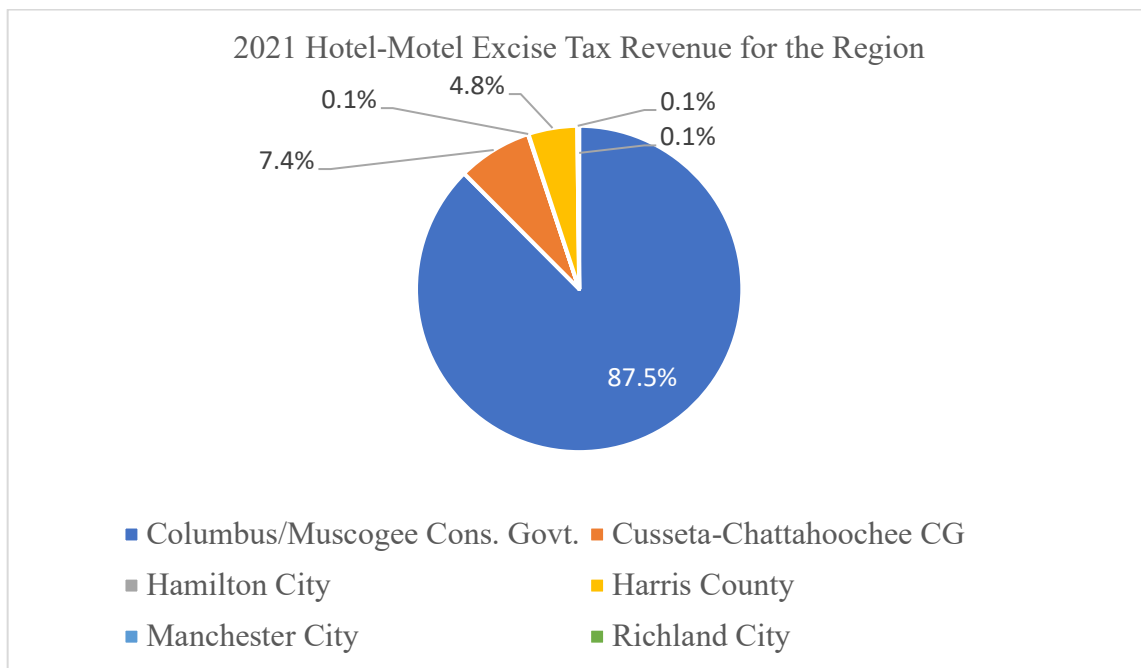


Figure 4: 2021 hotel-motel tax revenues

Key findings of hotel-motel tax revenue analysis

The hotel-motel excise tax revenue collections for the region also show that Muscogee County contributes the greatest share of revenue to the region. This is followed by the Cusseta-Chattahoochee Consolidated Government and Harris County.

Smith Travel Research (STR) regional hotel analysis

STR is the hotel industry leader in marketplace analytics. The organization maintains key performance indicators for hotels throughout the world. The company produces daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual reports depicting hotel performance statistics self-reported by hotel companies and independent hoteliers. STR collects data from more than 67,000 hotels throughout the world and is considered a primary hotel business barometer for the travel industry.

According to STR, three of the region’s counties (Muscogee, Harris, and Stewart) are identified as having a hotel room supply totaling 5,669 rooms for sale each month. For 2017-2021, the region’s hotel occupancy ranged from 57% in 2017 to 58% in 2021. During the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the region’s occupancy dropped to 47% (Figure 5).

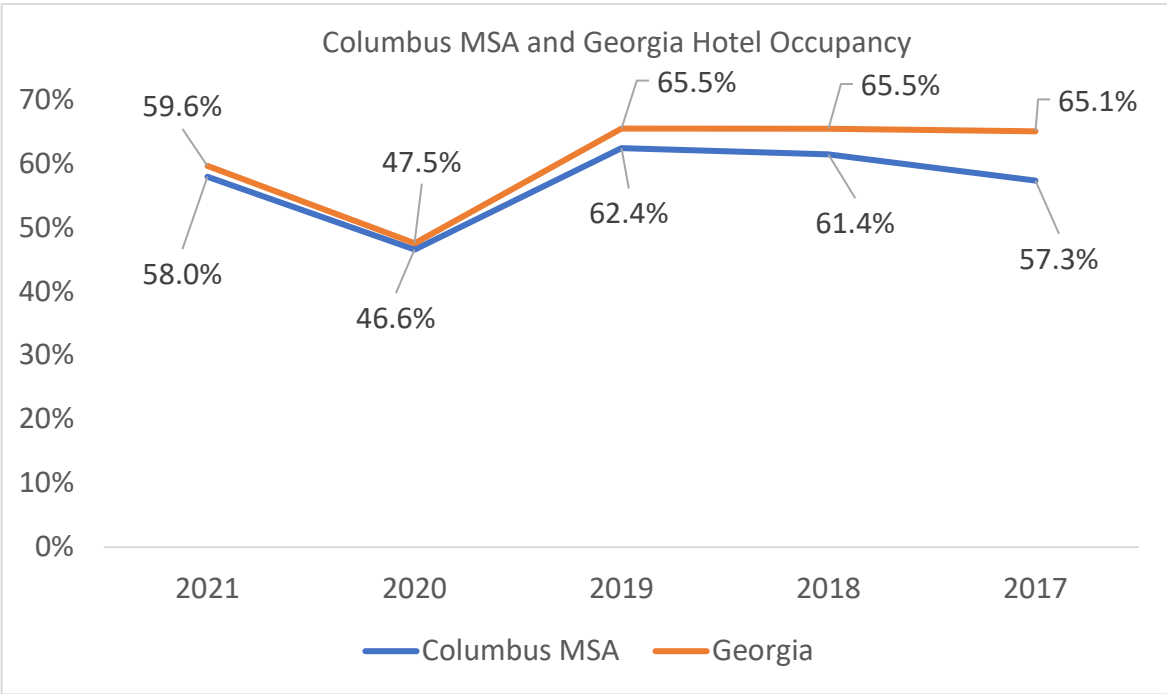


Figure 5. STR hotel occupancy between State of Georgia and Columbus MSA

For 2021, Muscogee County had an average of 53 hotels with a total of over 4,600 rooms available for sale each month. Harris County had seven hotels with 1,049 rooms for sale, and Stewart County had one with 20 available rooms per month. STR did not report any hotels for Chattahoochee, Marion, and Talbot Counties.

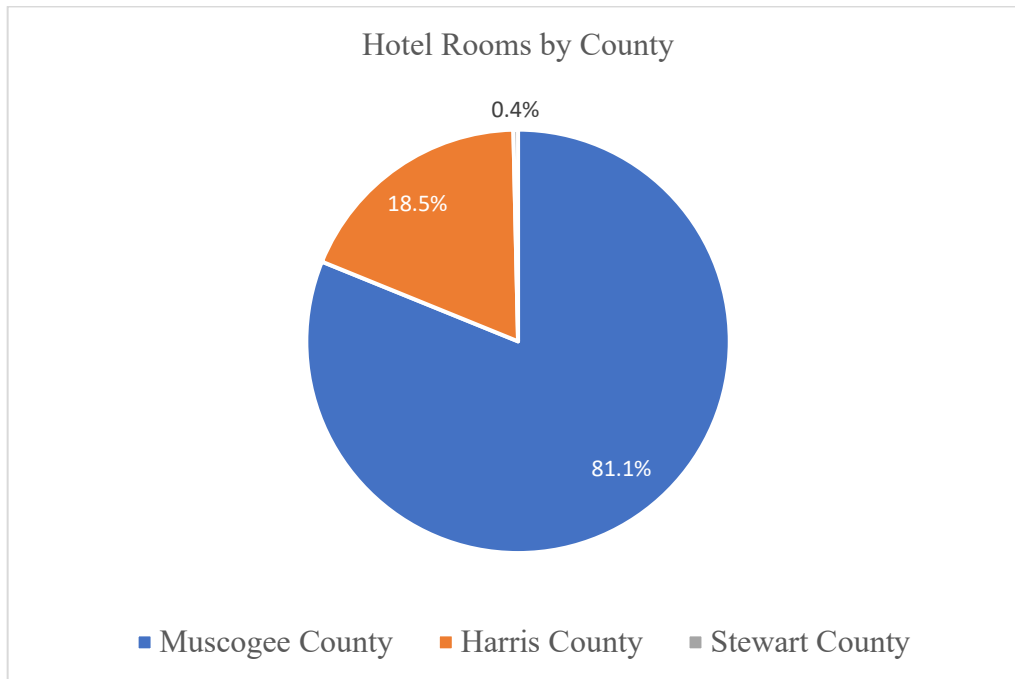


Figure 6: Hotel room percent share by county

Key findings from STR analysis

STR data shows that the Columbus MSA region hotel occupancy has improved since the COVID-19 Pandemic. While the occupancy patterns are similar to the Columbus MSA patterns in the earlier tables, hotel occupancy in the region has not returned to pre-pandemic occupancy levels. However, the previous hospitality and tourism total output for the region indicates that the revenues have exceeded the pre-pandemic revenues for the sector. This is a result of the hotel industry generating more revenues on a per-room basis compared to per-room sales pre-pandemic. Figure 6. continues to provide evidence that Muscogee County contains the majority share of all hotel rooms in the region, while Harris County has almost 19% of the total rooms. This continues to provide evidence that Muscogee County is at the center of the region’s tourism economy.

Annual visitation at Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites within the Columbus MSA

The Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites (GSPHS) Division is one of six within the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Across the state (and its six regions), the GSPHS manages 64 properties. Each year, visitor use personnel record the number of visitors to the parks. Within the Columbus MSA, the GSPHS manages four properties: F.D. Roosevelt State Park (Harris County), Florence Marina State Park (Stewart County), Providence Canyon State Park (Stewart County), and Standing Boy Creek State Park (Muscogee County). The Georgia Department of Natural Resources provided us with annual visitation numbers for each of the 64 properties that the GSPHS manages. As can be seen in Table 4, visitation figures are provided from 2017 through 2021.

Table 4. Annual visitation numbers at Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites within the Columbus MSA (2017-2021)

	State Park Visitation	% Share
<i>All Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites*</i>		
2021	12,225,741	100%
2020	9,918,853	100%
2019	9,427,743	100%
2018	9,003,275	100%
2017	8,941,780	100%
<i>F.D. Roosevelt State Park (Harris Co.)</i>		
2021	646,940	5.3%
2020	534,051	5.4%
2019	370,861	3.9%
2018	327,557	3.6%
2017	365,946	4.1%
<i>Florence Marina State Park (Stewart Co.)</i>		
2021	107,323	1.0%
2020	104,767	1.1%
2019	87,621	1.0%
2018	96,297	1.1%
2017	143,328	1.6%
<i>Providence Canyon State Park (Stewart Co.)</i>		
2021	383,174	3.1%
2020	248,803	2.5%
2019	254,888	2.7%
2018	251,791	2.8%
2017	206,567	2.3%

*Visitation numbers for Standing Boy Creek State Park were not available from the GSPHS

Key findings from visitor numbers at Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites within the Columbus MSA

- In each of the last five years, visitation numbers at Georgia State Parks have increased; up 36.72% from 2017 to 2021.
- In 2021, visitors to F.D. Roosevelt State Park, Florence Marina State Park, and Providence Canyon State Park accounted for 9.4% of the total number of visitors to Georgia State Parks.
- In each of the three state parks, visitation numbers in 2021 were above pre-COVID-19 figures (i.e., 2019).
- At F.D. Roosevelt State Park and Providence Canyon State Park, visitation has nearly doubled since 2017.

Summary of the current tourism activity with the Columbus MSA

Our data shows that overall hospitality and tourism activity within the Columbus MSA region has increased since the COVID-19 Pandemic. The largest percent share of annual visitation, annual hospitality and tourism economic output, wage and salary employment, accommodations and foodservices output, and nature-based economic output is consistently represented by Muscogee County. Harris County is second to Muscogee in all the data categories which were analyzed. However, though Harris County’s population is approximately 17% of the Muscogee County population in 2021, nature-based tourism activity is nearly half or approximately 46% of

Muscogee’s 2021 annual nature-based economic output. This indicates that there is existing tourism demand (specifically nature-based recreation) within Harris County. With Stewart County containing some of the area’s larger nature-based recreation areas, the county contributes 14% to the region’s outdoor tourism activity-demonstrating a significant contribution to the Columbus MSA region. Though Muscogee County is the primary driver of the region’s overall tourism activity, Harris and Stewart Counties significantly contribute the area’s outdoor tourism experience.

On an annual basis, overall tourism activity is beginning to return to pre-COVID 19 Pandemic levels. While visitor spending, and accommodations and foodservices output have increased above pre-COVID spending, hospitality and tourism wage and salary employment has not returned to pre-COVID levels. The aspect of tourism which has been consistent in growth before, during, and after the pandemic has been nature-based tourism output. Figure 7. compares all the data within the same graph examining the annual percent share of the region’s tourism activity to its overall 5-year tourism activity total.

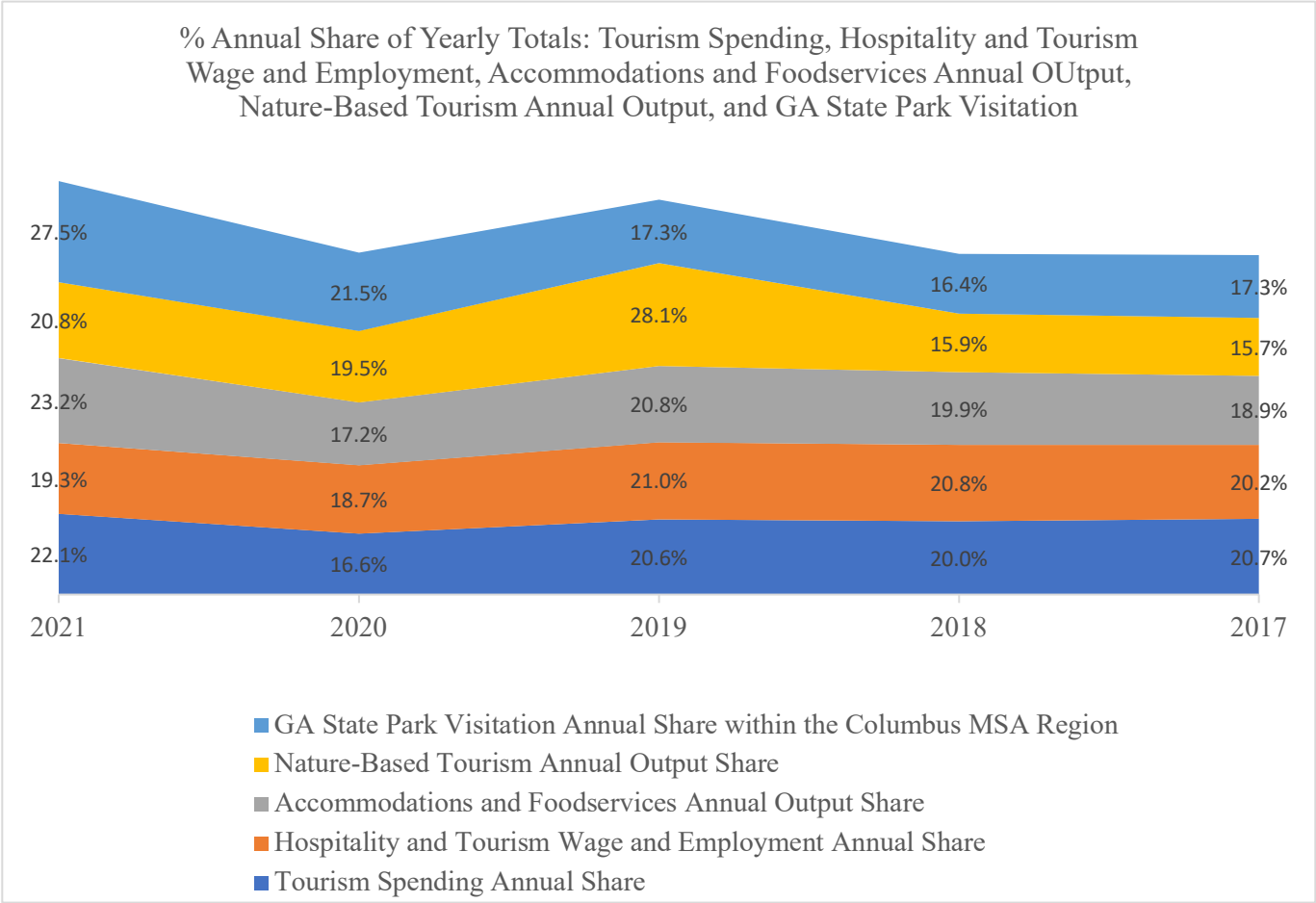


Figure 7. Percent annual share of yearly totals

Results from the 2021 University of Georgia travel sentiment survey

In 2021, the University of Georgia conducted a U.S. travel sentiment survey to explore the demand for Georgia tourism. In collaboration with Qualtrics XM, over 1,000 completed questionnaires were randomly collected from U.S. residents. Of those, 505 questionnaires were submitted by randomly selected U.S. residents, and 504 questionnaires were collected from Georgia residents. This analysis examines the responses from the 504 randomly selected Georgia residents.

Three questions focusing on past leisure travel experiences and future travel planning for leisure trips were developed. Below are the questions included in the travel sentiment survey which provide support for nature-based recreation experiences.

1. When traveling for recreation or leisure purposes, how often do you participate in the following experiences?
2. How important are the following attributes to you, in choosing a leisure vacation destination?
3. When traveling for recreation or leisure, how important are the following types of trails to you on your trip?

For each of the three items, a 5-point scale was utilized to capture respondents' sentiment rating. For question 1, a frequency scale was implemented where 1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *often*, and 5 = *always*. For questions 2 and 3, an importance scale was used where 1 = *not at all important*, 2 = *unimportant*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *important*, and 5 = *very important*.

Past participation experiences of Georgia travelers

Often stated in marketing research is that past behaviors best predict future behaviors. Depicted in Figure 8. are the top two frequency responses (i.e., *often* and *always*) for Question 1. The majority of Georgia residents (53%) participated in relaxing, indulging, health, and indulging-related travel activities during their previous recreation and leisure trips. This is followed by nature activities (50.7%) and touring (45.6%).

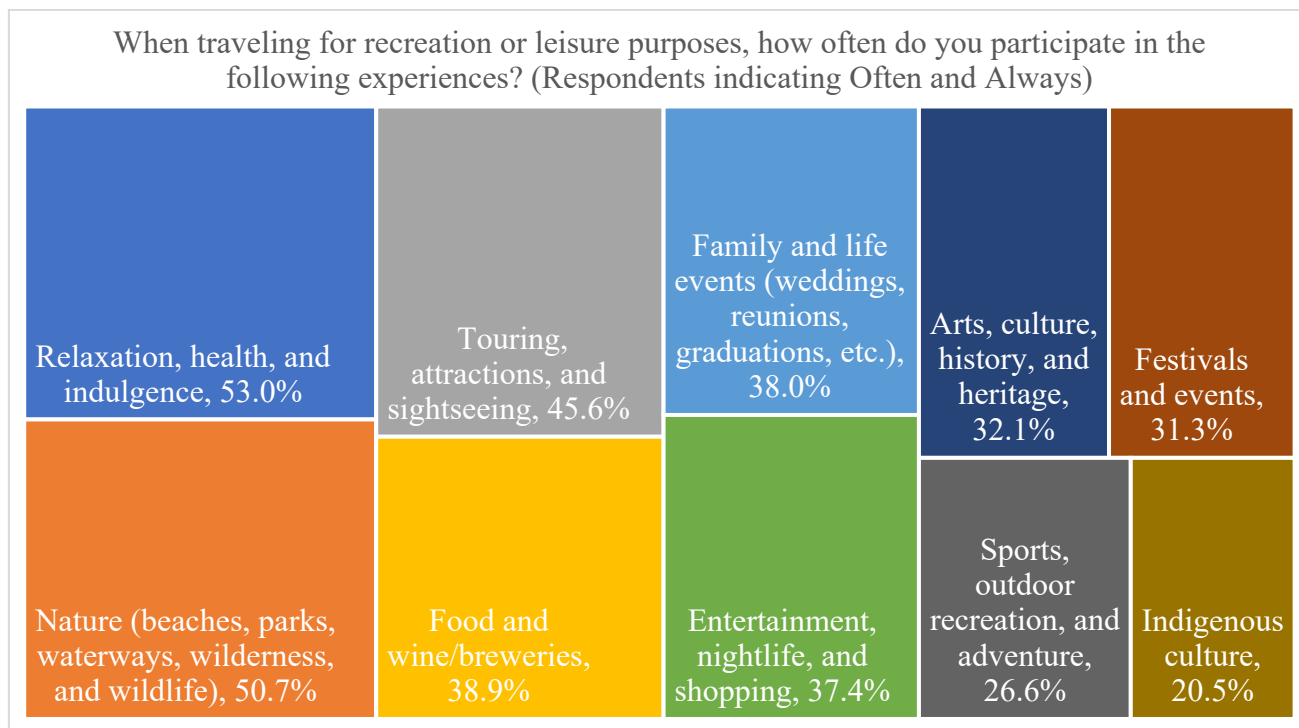


Figure 8. Desired experiences among Georgia visitors

Importance of landscapes

As described in Figure 1, natural resources and the environment are part of the tourism ecosystem and play a significant role in destination choice. Figure 9. shows the percent of individuals indicating the top two level of importance response items (i.e., *important* and *very important*) for Question 2. The majority of Georgia residents (60.3%) find that coastal landscapes are important or very important when choosing a leisure vacation destination. This is followed by river/lake landscapes (58.9%) and mountain landscapes at 57.7%.

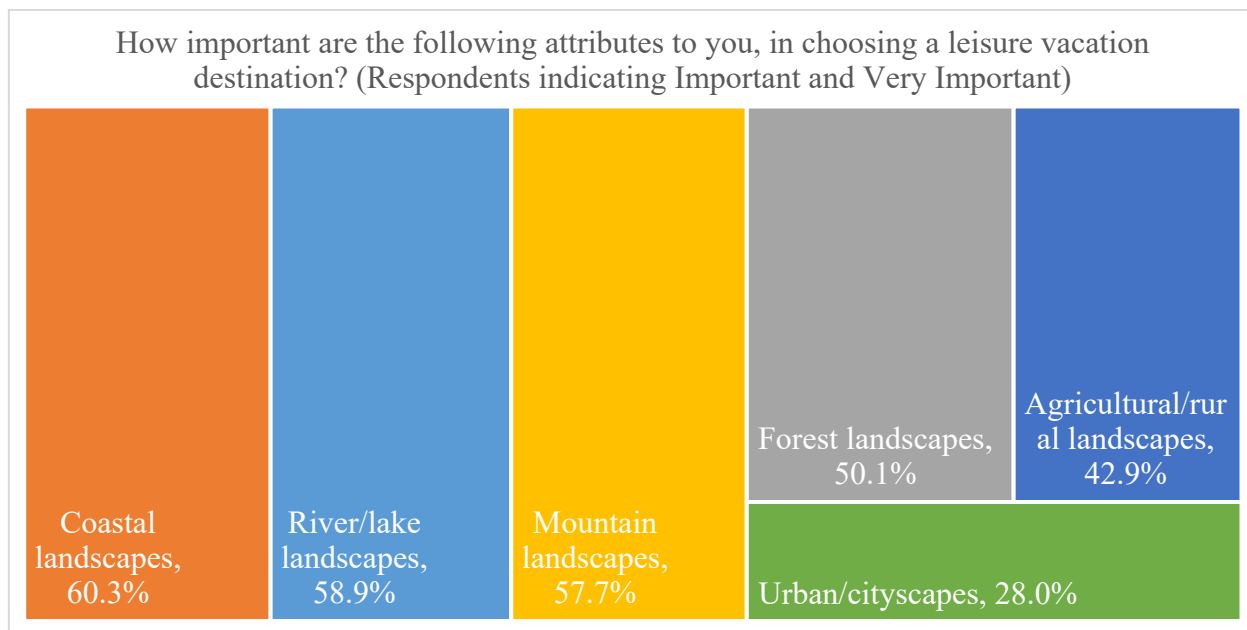


Figure 9. Desired landscapes among Georgia visitors

Importance of trails

Tourism trails are often developed to define a tourism destination context for a specific location. Trails such as wine trails or history trails can be created that theme a geographic location to promote a destination experience. Figure 10. shows the percent of individuals indicating the top-two levels of importance response items (i.e., *important* and *very important*) for Question 3. The majority of Georgia residents (56.6%) find that Scenic Driving Trails are either important or very important when choosing a leisure vacation destination. This is followed by waterfall trails (55.6%) and history trails at 44%.

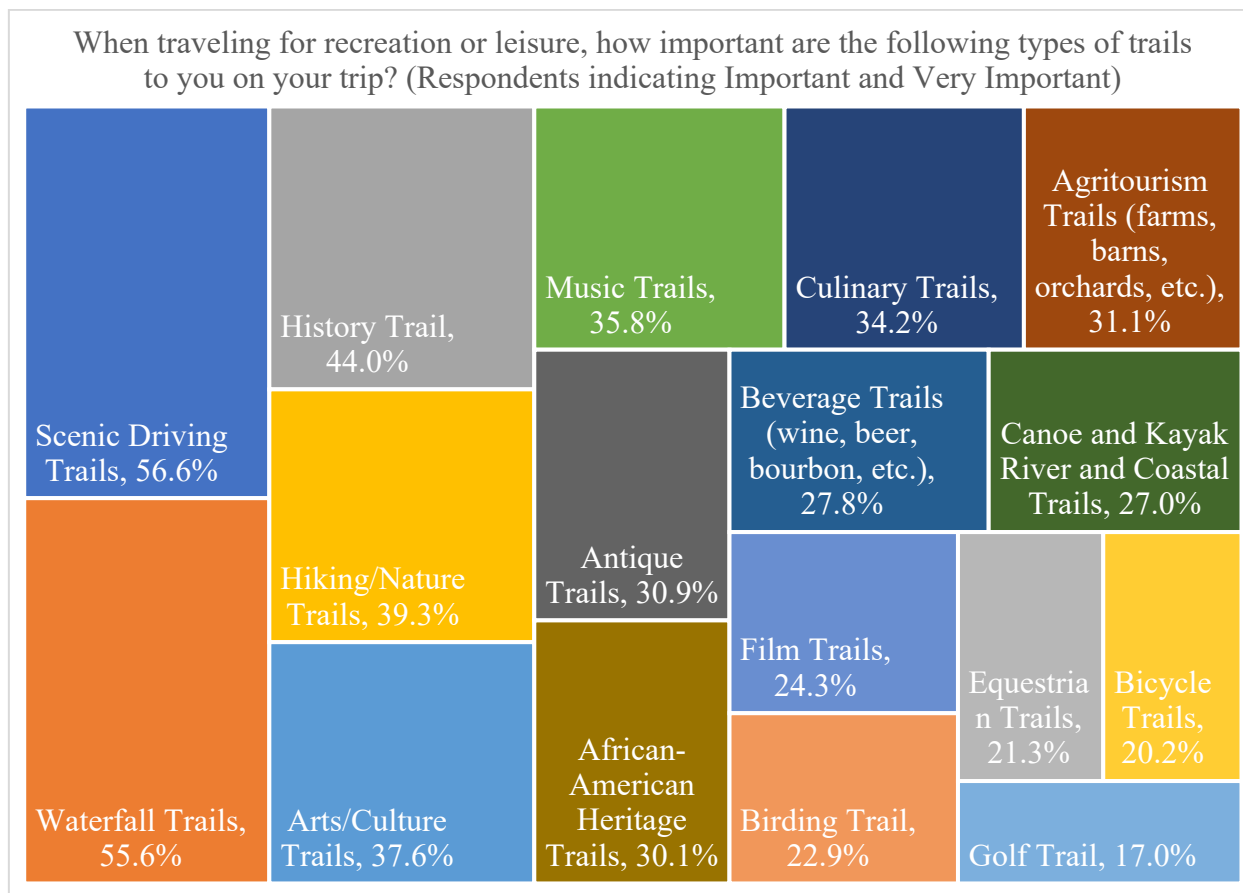


Figure 10. Desired trails among Georgia visitors

Conclusions and future directions for the Columbus MSA

The aim of this report is to capture as best as possible, the role of tourism within the six Georgia counties comprising the Columbus MSA. In so doing, we relied on secondary data from various sources—Explore Georgia, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau, Smith Travel Research, Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites, and the University of Georgia’s travel sentiment survey of Georgia travelers.

Drawing on the key findings from each of the analyses undertaken, we would like to highlight some conclusions and make suggestions for tourism planning and development within the six counties. Muscogee County is responsible for the lion’s share (approximately 80%) of tourism activity in the way of overall tourism spending, direct labor income, and direct tourism employment. Harris County, a distant second in each of these categories bring the totals to around 95% for the Columbus MSA. These findings are echoed in the IMPLAN analysis revealing comparable percentages for total output and total wage and employment within the region’s hospitality and tourism sector. In looking closer at the data, it is apparent that the trend moving forward will be that these two counties will continue to lead the way for tourism, especially considering their share of hotels and motels. When examining nature-based tourism activity, we noted that Harris and Stewart Counties made a sizable contribution to overall tourism within the MSA. For instance, F.D. Roosevelt State Park (Harris County), Florence Marina State Park and Providence Canyon State Park (both in Stewart County) accounted for nearly 10% of all visitors to Georgia state parks in 2021. We feel when you couple this with

visitation to places like Callaway Gardens (Harris County), the contribution nature-based tourism will make in the future will continue to grow.

What all of these findings point to is the notion that Muscogee County is the hub of tourism within the MSA and the other counties serve as spokes that either: 1) are currently growing from the appeal of Columbus (i.e., Harris County) or 2) have the potential to tap into the tourism sector in developing tourism and attracting tourists from Columbus (i.e., Stewart County and the remaining three counties). The way in which Chattahoochee, Marion, and Talbot Counties can consider tapping into tourism largely center on showcasing their natural and cultural resources. Based on our findings from the Georgia visitor sentiment study, much of what individuals are interested in can be found throughout the six counties—opportunities for relaxation, nature experiences, touring attractions, food/wine/breweries, arts/culture/history/heritage (Figure 8); river/lake landscapes, agricultural/rural landscapes, and urban/cityscapes (Figure 9); and scenic driving trails, history trails, hiking/nature trails, arts/culture trails, music trails, agritourism trails, canoe/kayak river trails (Figure 10).

In closing, the potential exists in diversifying tourism offerings throughout the MSA (by tapping into the five counties surrounding Muscogee County) but it will take the collaborative involvement of chambers of commerce, tourism boards, town/city planning organizations, community and economic development groups, and private stakeholders to discuss how to work together to further capitalize on this hub and spoke phenomena occurring within the MSA.

What's more, while we provide a fairly robust assessment of tourism activity in the Columbus MSA, we briefly scratched the surface of tourism demand within the six counties. To further examine such demand, we recommend an economic impact analysis of not only the MSA overall but for each county to determine direct, indirect, and induced impacts based on visitor expenditures. To do this will require primary data collection occurring over multiple months from visitors to key attractions throughout each of the six counties.

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More information about the project and an interactive asset map may be found at www.rivervalleyccd.com. The plan was released in spring of 2023.

APPENDIX B

CONSERVATION AND TAXATION IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT: FORT MOORE'S ACUB PROGRAM IN GEORGIA



**Conservation and Taxation Impact Assessment Report:
Fort Moore's ACUB Program in Georgia**

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Introduction

This report assesses the local property tax impacts from land conservation efforts in a five-county region in Georgia due to Fort Moore's Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program. It was conducted as part of the *River Valley Compatible Community Development Plan*, a two-year project designed to assist local governments surrounding Fort Moore — renamed from Fort Benning in 2023 — to develop plans and strategies to promote land uses compatible with the military mission, natural resource protection, and sustainable economic development that protects rural character and supports quality of life.

While protecting these areas through the ACUB program is vital to the sustainability of Fort Moore, conserving these lands creates both opportunities and challenges for surrounding rural communities. Properties acquired by the state or nonprofit entities are no longer on the tax rolls, and conservation easements on private property can also reduce the amount of tax revenue local governments and school systems are able to collect. Specifically, this report estimates impacts of these efforts on local property taxes since this program began at Fort Moore in 2009. It then provides an estimate of the annual costs to the tax base from projected land conservation efforts in the future.

Key findings from this report are divided among two areas known as ACUB priority areas. Priority Area 1 comprises Marion, Talbot, and Taylor counties, where the approach is primarily fee simple acquisitions and conservation easements. Priority Area 2 includes Chattahoochee and Stewart counties, where the approach primarily involves conservation easements.

Key Findings

Priority 1 Area: Fee Simple Acquisitions and Conservation Easements

Since 2009, the Department of Defense has reimbursed Marion and Talbot counties approximately \$765,250 for taxes that otherwise would not have been paid on lands acquired for the ACUB program, which has mitigated the potential total losses. Nonetheless, since 2015, land acquisition in support of the ACUB program have cost Marion and Talbot counties an estimated total of \$827,149.

Marion County. As of 2022, the ACUB program has decreased potential property tax revenues by an **estimated total of \$541,144 to date** through fee simple acquisitions. These acquisitions currently cost the county an estimated \$136,142 per year. These impacts will increase over the coming years as additional lands are protected, eventually costing the county as much as **\$233,742 per year** in lost property tax revenues.

Talbot County. As of 2022, the ACUB program has decreased potential property tax revenues an **estimated total of \$286,005 to date** through fee simple acquisitions. These acquisitions currently cost the county an estimated \$41,029 per year. These impacts will increase over the coming years as additional lands are protected, eventually costing the county as much as **\$55,401 per year** in lost property tax revenues.

Taylor County. No lands have been acquired under the program to date. If future acquisitions do reach this far east, the impacts could be as much as **\$5,127 per year**.

Priority 2 Area: Conservation Easements

Chattahoochee County. Future acquisitions of conservation easements over large areas of the county may impact future tax revenues. Because the properties in question are already valued through the Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA) program, the methods used to value the impacts of conservation easements will depend on the professional judgement of the local tax assessor. Depending on the method used to value the impacts of a perpetual easement, this could be as much as **\$14,766 per year**.

Russell County. Future acquisitions of conservation easements could impact future tax revenues. Depending on the processes used to value the impacts based on the property tax valuation method in Alabama, this impact was estimated at **\$14,356 per year**.

Stewart County. Future acquisitions of conservation easements over large areas of the county may impact future tax revenues. Depending on the processes used to value the impacts of a perpetual easement on a CUVA property, this could be as much as **\$11,485 per year**.

This report next provides an overview of the ACUB program and background on this project. It then describes the project's study area, Fort Moore's ACUB buffer, which is divided into Priority Areas 1 and 2. Next, the report describes the project's methodology. An analysis of estimates of past tax revenue impacts and projected future tax revenue impacts then follows.

Overview and Project Background

The unique habitat in the area and increasing development outside of the fence line create challenges for Fort Moore's training mission on post.¹ Land within and nearby Fort Moore provides critical habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, the gopher tortoise, and

several endangered, threatened, and candidate species.² Conservation and sustainability of natural systems inside and outside the installation boundary is strategically important to military readiness and sustaining the military mission by ensuring the installation can provide a realistic training environment within its perimeter. For almost 20 years, Fort Moore and the Department of Defense (DOD) have worked with a broad consortium of state and federal agencies and private-sector partners to encourage private and public land conservation efforts in the region that will support the military mission within the installation. Known as Fort Moore's Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program, the effort has had concrete results for protecting endangered species, restoring critical habitat, and preserving ecosystems of environmental, historical, and cultural importance.

ACUB's goal is to protect approximately 75,000 acres in the region to support compatible land activities near the installation's boundaries. To date, approximately 36,000 acres surrounding the installation have been protected as private landowners have voluntarily sold their land to conservation organizations (neither the Army nor DOD own any of this land) or entered into conservation easements. This work has not only benefited the installation and the sustainability of its mission, but it has also played a crucial role in the state of Georgia's overall effort to protect the gopher tortoise and keep it and other species from being listed under the Endangered Species Act, which would have profound impacts for promoting economic development across this region and the state as a whole.³ Species listings can also adversely impact military missions.

Ultimately, ACUB's buffer program is designed to address what are known as "encroachment threats" on the installation's ability to test, train, and conduct operations.⁴ Benefits of buffer projects to the military include preserving live-fire and maneuver training, reducing workarounds and lost training days, preserving night vision capabilities, and mitigating noise and smoke conflicts.⁵ The buffer areas created also reduce the negative impacts military activities have on civilians related to noise, smoke, and air traffic, and they support the installation's responsibilities to comply with environmental regulations for clean water, endangered species protections, and other issues. ACUB programs allow the Army to collaborate with partners such as land conservation groups to work with willing landowners who volunteer to establish conservation easements or sell their property to the state or partnering nonprofit organizations to be conserved and protected in a strategic way to create an effective ACUB buffer. ACUB programs exist across the country, and they are part of a larger DOD program known as the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program.⁶

Fort Moore's ACUB Program has been a tremendous conservation success. However, while all of the acquisitions and conservation easements that make up the ACUB buffer involve willing landowners working with ACUB partners on a voluntary basis, limiting development on these strategically sensitive lands presents potential challenges for local communities. These land

acquisitions and the purchase of land development rights through conservation easements removes land from the local tax rolls or reduces its taxable value.

Across the United States, a lack of diverse economic revenue portfolios leads smaller, rural counties to rely heavily on local property taxes as their main source of income.⁷ Rural Georgia counties are no different. In Marion County, for example, property taxes account for the largest portion of revenues it receives.⁸ In fact, between the years 2008 and 2015, property taxes accounted for approximately 60.7% of Marion County’s tax revenue.⁹

Fort Moore is well aware of the need to understand ACUB’s impact on local government budgets, and this assessment is in response to that need. It is also part of a larger project funded by the Department of Defense known as the River Valley Community Compatible Development (RVCCD) Project, which is designed to assist local governments in a six-county area promote economic development and its relation to the many natural and cultural resources in the area.

RVCCD Project Communities

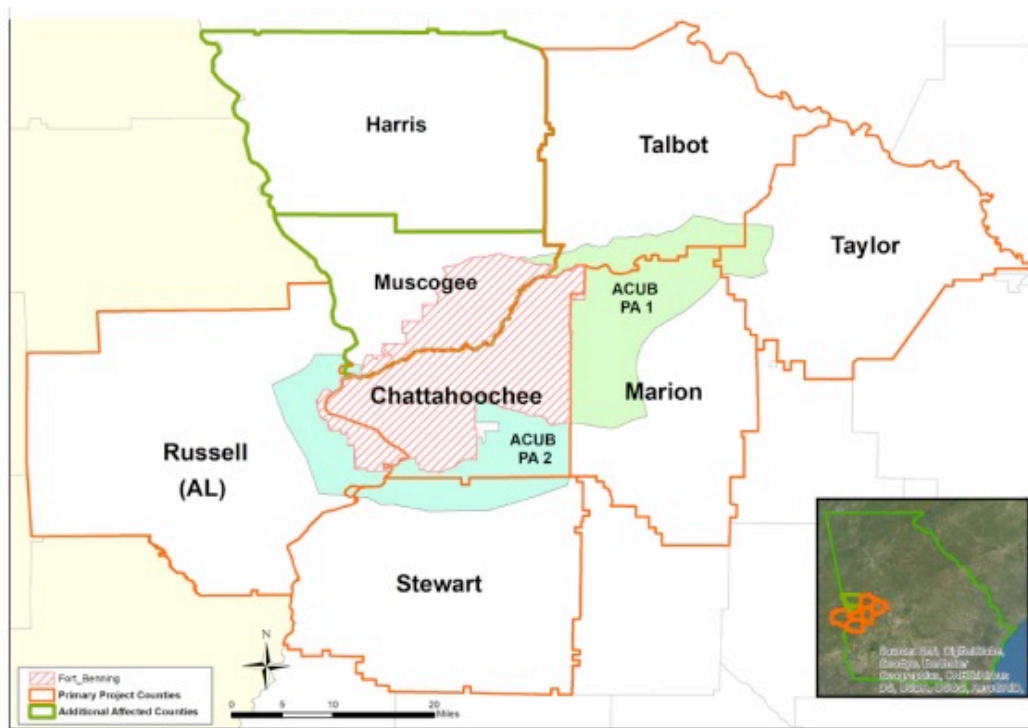
Rural Counties	Population (2019 est.)	Area (sq. miles)	Cities
Chattahoochee, GA	10,907	251	Cusseta (consolidated government)
Marion, GA	8,359	367	Buena Vista
Stewart, GA	6,621	464	Lumpkin, Richland
Talbot, GA	6,195	395	Talbotton, Woodland, Junction City, Geneva
Taylor, GA	8,020	380	Butler, Reynolds, Howard
Russell, AL	57,947	647	Phenix City

RVCCD Project team members have been working directly with community members to identify and implement opportunities to promote job growth, new sources of tax revenue, and prosperity for local citizens that also support the long-term mission of Fort Moore, the region’s largest economic driver. The RVCCD Project is a partnership between the Carl Vinson Institute at the University of Georgia, the River Valley Regional Commission, Fort Moore, and others, with funding from the Department of Defense.

STUDY AREA: THE ACUB BUFFER

The areas targeted for conservation are adjacent to the perimeter of Fort Moore in order to protect it from development that would limit the installation’s operational capabilities and mission. These lands also provide natural resource protection and restoration opportunities that address the environmental pressures that limit the military operations inside Fort Moore’s existing fence line. These areas are defined in two priority areas.

Fort Moore – Local Governments, Compatible Development and Conservation Plan



Priority Area 1 extends east of Fort Moore, primarily through Marion County, and includes the southernmost portion of Talbot County and a small portion of the westernmost portion of Taylor County. A very small part of Columbus–Muscogee County is also included. Priority Area 1 has been the primary focus of conservation activities to date and is where most of the conservation activities will occur in the future. Historic and future acquisitions involve completely voluntary transactions for both fee simple purchases of property and the purchase of conservation easements.

In Priority Area 1, approximately 36,000 acres have been protected as of 2022. If the Army’s conservation goals are achieved, an additional 24,000 acres will be protected, and a majority of the conserved properties are likely to be fee simple acquisitions with few conservation easements. The bulk of the ACUB program affects communities in the Priority 1 Area and in Marion County in particular, as it makes up the majority of the area directly adjacent to Fort Moore.

Priority Area 2 extends to the south and west of Fort Moore. It encompasses most of Chattahoochee County outside of the area around Cusseta, the northern part of Stewart County, and a portion of the eastern end of Russell County, Alabama. In Priority Area 2, only one small parcel in Russell County has been protected as of 2023. Approximately 15,000 additional acres are anticipated to be protected in Priority Area 2. Plans call for the majority of these properties to be protected with conservation easements.

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Property taxes in Georgia are based on the tax rate or “millage rate” multiplied by the “tax assessed value.”¹⁰ The millage rate, or tax rate, in each county is set by the board of county commissioners, or other governing authority of the taxing jurisdiction, and by the Board of Education.¹¹ The millage rate is the amount of taxes per \$1,000 of tax assessed value. The tax assessed value is 40% of the fair market assessment value.

$$\text{Property Taxes Owed} = \text{Acreage} \times \text{Tax Assessed Value} \times \text{Millage Rate}$$

How to Figure Tax: The assessed value (40% of the fair market value) of a house worth \$100,000 is \$40,000. In a county where the millage rate is 25 mills, the property tax on that house would be \$1,000: \$25 for every \$1,000 of assessed value, or \$25 multiplied by 40 is \$1,000.

Source: Georgia Department of Revenue: Property Tax Millage Rates, dor.georgia.gov/local-government-services/digest-compliance-section/property-tax-millage-rates

Notably, in the study area, none of the lands conserved to date and all of the lands conserved in the future are not taxed based on “fair market value” but instead on values set through the Conservation Use Valuation Assessments (CUVA) program.¹² CUVA reduces property taxes on properties committed to a bona-fide conservation use, in this case agriculture or forestry, to reduce pressures to convert these lands to commercial or residential uses.

From these fundamentals of property tax assessment in Georgia, the methodology used to analyze the tax revenue impact differed based on whether the research team examined historic versus future projected trends. Each are analyzed below.

Historic Tax Revenue Impacts

Because DOD reimbursed partners who paid local governments for lost revenue from acquisitions between 2009 and 2018 in Marion and Talbot counties, determining the historic tax impact of the conservation efforts was relatively straightforward. Beginning with the initial ACUB acquisitions in 2009, The Nature Conservancy paid the local property taxes owed on the acquired properties, and then DOD reimbursed the conservation organization for these payments. Beginning in 2018, however, DOD changed its policies and no longer funded property tax reimbursements, and they were phased out between 2018 and 2020.

The totals of the reimbursement payments are reported below. Because different properties are taxed differently and reimbursements are not uniform across years, this report’s estimates of past lost revenue used these figures to determine the average property tax value per acre, which was then used to calculate the lost tax revenue.

For the purposes of this analysis, the research team selected 2017 as the representative year for calculating this representative average as that year had the largest number of parcels included in the reimbursement, though previous years had more acres included. Using the year with the most parcels included offers the most robust sample of conservation lands. The average value for 2017 was \$4.88 per acre, which was used to calculate revenue losses. Because these amounts began to decline starting in 2018 after DOD changed its tax reimbursement policies, the analysis then includes an estimate of the gap that occurred between what was paid prior to this time and what could have been paid if DOD policy had not changed.

Marion County

Timeframe	Acquired Acreage Cumulative	Annual Property Tax Payment	Property Tax Revenue Per Acre	Estimated Lost Tax Revenue
2009	1,444 acres	\$16,488	\$11.41	\$0
2017	10,560 acres	\$51,536	\$4.88	\$0
DOD Tax Reimbursement Policies Change				
2018	27,643 acres	\$31,726	\$1.147	\$103,186
2019	27,643 acres	\$24,634	\$0.89	\$110,278
2020	27,643 acres	\$13,336	\$0.48	\$121,576
2021	27,898 acres	\$0	\$0	\$136,156
No Tax Reimbursements Received Due to Nature of Transaction				
2013–2021	9,993 acres	\$0	Estimated at \$0.87 per acre, or \$8,743 annually	\$69,948
Total				\$541,144

Talbot County

In 2012, the ACUB partners acquired two properties in Talbot County covering a total of 8,288 acres. DOD reimbursed Talbot County \$39,718 for property taxes on these properties in 2013, which equals approximately \$4.79 per acre. The properties were transferred to the state in 2015, which exempted them from further taxation. This transfer led to a loss of \$39,718 in 2015. Also, an additional 288 acres were purchased in 2015, bringing the total to 8,566 acres. This brings the estimated annual loss to \$41,088 per year beginning in 2016. Therefore, in total, from 2015 to 2022, the ACUB program has decreased potential property tax revenues in Talbot County a total of approximately \$286,005.

Estimates of Future Tax Revenue Impacts

To estimate the future tax impacts, the research team first determined the total amount of potential land protection likely to occur in each of the project counties. In addition to the land

already conserved, to reach the goal of protecting 75,000 acres across the two priority areas, a total of 39,000 additional acres are anticipated to be protected. Of these additional acres, 24,000 will be protected primarily through fee simple acquisition in Priority Area 1, and 15,000 acres will be primarily protected through conservation easements in Priority Area 2. For this analysis, these acres were allocated across the counties roughly based on the percentage of the priority areas they contain:

Priority Area 1¹³

County	Future Cons. Acres
Marion	20,000
Talbot	3,000
Taylor	1,000
TOTAL	24,000

Priority Area 2¹⁴

County	Future Cons. Acres
Chattahoochee	10,000
Stewart	5,000
TOTAL	15,000

Combining the acreage to be protected in the future with the acreage currently protected yields the following totals of conservation area by county:

Total Conservation Area

County	Future Cons. Acres	Current Cons. Acres	Total Acres
Marion	20,000	27,898	47,898
Talbot	3,000	8,566	11,566
Taylor	1,000	0	1,000
Chattahoochee	10,000	0	10,000
Stewart	5,000	0	5,000
TOTAL	39,000	36,464	75,464

Where historic tax payments for the conservation properties are available, the research team used those same values to estimate the future costs of their permanent conservation. For the fee simple acquisitions in Priority Area 1, this was deemed the most reliable method as it is based on actual taxes paid on a large sample of the types of parcels being acquired. Note that these are annual costs in addition to the past costs discussed above, but they are not immediately effective. The annual costs will grow as parcels are acquired, and these figures represent the full

costs once all the acquisitions have been completed. The maximum annual tax impacts based upon the current future conservation goals are estimated to be:

Future Conservation Impact

County	Total Acres	Tax Value Per Acre	Future Annual Costs
Marion	47,898	\$4.88	\$233,742
Talbot	11,566	\$4.79	\$55,401

In Taylor, Chattahoochee, and Stewart counties, where there have not been any acquisitions to date, the research team had to use a different method to calculate expected future costs. To estimate the tax implications of this effort, the research had to determine the taxable value of the lands involved.

As noted above, all of the land in the ACUB buffer are timber and agricultural lands that are taxed based on values set through CUVA. CUVA valuations are determined based on a number of factors related to agricultural and timber productivity, and the Georgia Department of Revenue publishes the values county tax assessors are to use each year.¹⁵ The state is divided into nine regions, with different use valuations published for each region. Chattahoochee County is in region #4, and Stewart County is in region #7. Furthermore, within each region, lands are arranged into nine classifications based on soil productivity, with the best soils, class 1, receiving the highest values and the poorest soils, class 9, receiving the lowest. To account for the variety of classifications of potential acquisitions, the research team used the middle value of \$588 per acre, though anecdotal historical evidence indicates that less commercially productive lands are generally more available for conservation.

CUVA Timberland Assessment Values Region #4

FLPA	
W1	\$908
W2	\$813
W3	\$737
W4	\$676
W5	\$588
W6	\$548
W7	\$476
W8	\$412
W9	\$334

Again, property taxes in Georgia are based on the “tax assessed value” multiplied by the millage rate. The tax assessed value is 40% of the assessment value. The millage rate is the amount of taxes per \$1,000 of tax assessed value. In the unincorporated part of the county, the millage rate includes a figure for both the county and the school district.

Taylor County

In Taylor County, where an additional 1,000 acres are projected to be conserved in fee simple acquisitions, the research team used the CUVA value of \$588 per acre and Taylor County’s 2022 millage rate of 22.97 mills (8.14 mills for the county and 14.83 mills for the school district) to calculate an estimate of the taxes that would be owed. The formula for that calculation is as follows:

$$1,000 \text{ acres} \times \$588 \text{ per acres} \times 40\% \times 22.97/1000 = \$5,127$$

County	Acres	Tax Impacts
Taylor County	1,000	\$5,127

Chattahoochee, Russell, and Stewart Counties

Unlike the acquisitions in the other project counties, conservation areas in Chattahoochee and Stewart counties will occur using primarily conservation easements. Properties encumbered with conservation easements remain taxable. They are not exempt from taxation like properties held by the state or a nonprofit entity for conservation purposes. However, in some cases, there may be a loss of value compared to the CUVA or FLPA values because those programs are administered on renewable 10-year contracts, whereas a conservation easement is permanent. Therefore, to estimate the impacts the conservation easement acquisitions in Priority Area 2, the research team had to estimate a loss of value for the affected properties.

Based on conversations with local tax assessors and other property tax experts, the research team determined that a reasonable method to estimate this value differential would be to utilize the difference in the middle FLPA value (W5) and the lowest FLPA value (W9) for the encumbered property. However, it is not uncommon for tax assessors to use CUVA or FLPA values for assessing conservation easement properties, so in reality there may be no impact to the tax revenues in these areas.

CUVA and FLPA are state programs in Georgia. They do not apply in Alabama. In fact, Alabama uses a much more complex system for calculating property taxes that makes estimating the potential impact there much more complicated without knowing which specific parcels would be acquired. Therefore, to account for the potential lost revenue in Russell County, the research team calculated an estimate based on the possible lost revenue from Chattahoochee and Stewart counties. The researchers first estimated the potential lost revenue from Chattahoochee and Stewart counties as if all the possibly affected acres were located in those counties. Those numbers were summed and the total divided by the percentage of the ACUB Priority Area 2 located in each of the three counties. Based on GIS analysis, the research team estimated that the following percentages of the ACUB Priority Area 2 were located in each county: Chattahoochee County, 36%; Stewart County, 28%; and Russell County, 35%. Method of calculating property tax impacts in Russell County is not accurate, and these figures should be considered only a general approximation of the tax impacts.

In Chattahoochee County, the research team used a value of \$254 per acre (\$588-\$334) to calculate the potential tax impact. For Stewart County, this means using a value of \$278 (\$537-\$259).¹⁶ This estimate is very conservative in that the perceived changes in the value of the conservation properties will be quite subjective and are likely to be lower than these amounts.

In Stewart County, where 5,000 acres are projected to be conserved, the county charges 11.596 mills and the school district charges 15.027 mills. The following formula was used to estimate the taxes that would be owed on those acres using the difference between the mid-range and the lowest CUVA valuation:

$$5,000 \text{ acres} \times (\$537 \text{ per acres} - \$259 \text{ per acre}) \times 40\% \times (11.596 \text{ mills} + 15.027 \text{ mills})/1,000 = \$14,802$$

In Chattahoochee County, where 10,000 acres are projected to be conserved, the county charges 8.502 mills and the school district charges 17.3 mills. The following formula was used to estimate the taxes that would be owed on those acres using the mid-range CUVA valuation:

$$10,000 \text{ acres} \times (\$588 \text{ per acres} - \$334 \text{ per acre}) \times 40\% \times (8.502 \text{ mills} + 17.3 \text{ mills})/1,000 = \$26,215$$

Adding these two estimates together with the Russell County figure produces a total of \$41,017. Apportioned by the amount of the ACUB Priority Area in each community, the actual potential impacts are shown in the table below.

County	PA 2%	Acres	Tax Impacts
Chattahoochee County	36%	10,000	\$14,766
Russell County	35%		\$14,356
Stewart County	28%	5,000	\$11,485
TOTAL		15,000	\$41,017

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The ACUB acquisitions affect the property tax revenues of the impacted counties, particularly in the Priority Area 1 counties and to a lesser extent in the Priority Area 2 counties.

Priority Area 1

In Marion County, since 2018, the ACUB program has decreased potential property tax revenues by approximately \$541,144. These acquisitions currently cost the county an estimated \$136,142 per year. These impacts are likely to increase over the coming years as additional lands are protected, eventually costing the county as much as \$233,742 per year in lost property tax revenues.

In Talbot County, since 2015, the ACUB program has decreased potential property tax revenues a total of approximately \$286,005. These acquisitions currently cost the county an estimated \$41,029 per year. These impacts are likely to increase over the coming years as additional lands are protected, eventually costing the county as much as \$55,401 per year in lost property tax revenues.

In Taylor County, the impacts are much less significant. No lands have been acquired there, and if future acquisitions do reach this far east, the impacts will be more limited at \$5,127.

Priority Area 2

In Chattahoochee County, future acquisitions of conservation easements over large areas of the county may impact future tax revenues. Depending on the processes used to value the impacts of a perpetual easement on a CUVA property, this could be as much as \$14,766 per year.

In Russell County, future acquisitions of conservation easements could impact future tax revenues. Depending on the processes used to value the impacts based on the property tax valuation method in Alabama, this impact was estimated at \$14,356 per year.

In Stewart County, future acquisitions of conservation easements over large areas of the county may impact future tax revenues. Depending on the processes used to value the impacts of a perpetual easement on a CUVA property, this could be as much as **\$11,485** per year.

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- ¹ See www.repi.mil/Portals/44/Documents/Buffer_Fact_Sheets/Army/FortBenning.pdf
- ² The Nature Conservancy in Georgia. 2017, October. Land Management Plan for Fort Benning ACUB Lands. Retrieved from www.benning.army.mil/Garrison/dpw/emd/content/NRD/FINAL_Land_Management_Plan_Fort_Benning_ACUB_Lands_05092018.pdf
- ³ Georgia Department of Natural Resources. 2022, October 14. "Georgia Initiative Played Roles in Tortoise Listing Decision." Retrieved from gadnr.org/georgia-initiative-played-role-tortoise-listing-decision
- ⁴ US Army Environmental Command. 2012. *Army Compatible Use Buffer Program, Year End Summary FY12* (2012) at 18.
- ⁵ US Department of Defense, Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration. n.d. "REPI Program Benefits." Retrieved from www.repi.mil/Buffer-Projects/Benefits/
- ⁶ See US Department of Defense. 2022, March. *The Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program*. Retrieved from www.repi.mil/Portals/44/Documents/Primers/Primer_REPI_Buffer_Partnerships.pdf
- ⁷ Brookings Institute: Tax Policy Center. n.d. *The State of State (and Local) Tax Policy*. Retrieved from <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/how-do-state-and-local-property-taxes-work>.
- ⁸ For more information, see GeorgiaData n.d. The Tax and Expenditure Data Center for Georgia Local Governments. Retrieved from <https://ted.cviog.uga.edu/>
- ⁹ GeorgiaData.
- ¹⁰ Georgia Department of Revenue. n.d. "Property Tax Millage Rates." Retrieved from dor.georgia.gov/local-government-services/digest-compliance-section/property-tax-millage-rates
- ¹¹ Georgia Department of Revenue, "Property Tax Millage Rates."
- ¹² Georgia Department of Revenue. n.d. "Conservation Use Assessment Information." Retrieved from dor.georgia.gov/conservation-use-assessment-information#conservation_use
- ¹³ Russell County is not considered in this analysis; thus, the full 15,000 acres in Priority Area 2 are allocated between Chattahoochee and Stewart counties. However, in reality, a substantial portion of this land will be protected in Russell County, which means these figures are significantly higher than they will likely be.
- ¹⁴ Priority Area 1 also includes a small portion of Columbus–Muscogee County, which is not considered here. Instead, the full acreage is allocated among the three project counties shown here. This area is not likely to substantially change the estimated tax impacts.
- ¹⁵ See Georgia Department of Revenue. n.d. "Table of Conservation Use Land Values." Retrieved from dor.georgia.gov/table-conservation-use-land-values
- ¹⁶ Stewart County is in Valuation Area #7 rather than #4, so it has different assessed values.

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More information about the project and an interactive asset map may be found at www.rivervalleyccd.com. The plan was released in spring of 2023.

APPENDIX C

REGIONAL ARTS PLAN: CASE STUDIES & BRAINSTORMS



Appendix C. Regional Arts Plan: Case Studies & Brainstorms

Artists and artisans are important assets to community and economic development, enriching locals' lives and attracting tourists and young professionals to an area. Economic development around arts and artisans programming not only promotes a stronger, shared sense of identity, it also creates pride and a sense of place that attracts visitors and entrepreneurs. Supporting local arts and artisans is an opportunity for communities to capitalize on what makes them special while generating economic activity that allows the community to grow and prosper in a way that preserves that culture.

As an appendix to the River Valley Compatible Community Development (RVCCD) Plan, this document provides additional guidance to the plan's recommendations by including case studies from areas similar in rural character to the six rural counties surrounding Fort Moore, namely five counties from Georgia – Chattahoochee, Marion, Stewart, Taylor, and Talbot – and Russell County in Alabama.

This region has a long history with the arts and has hosted a number of successful arts events. In Marion County, for example, the Pea Ridge Arts Festival is a popular event in downtown Buena Vista, and the Talbotton Blues Festival is a major event each year in Talbot County. The Taste of Richland & Market was an annual event in Richland, Georgia, highlighting artisans in the region before it was canceled in 2020 because of the pandemic. The Phenix City Artpark, an outdoor gallery in Phenix City, Alabama, also lost traction after 2020. While these and the numerous other events in the region were severely impacted by the pandemic in recent years, funding for the arts stayed fairly stable, and many funding opportunities exist to support individual artists and help arts organizations revive or reinvigorate the arts economy in impacted areas.

Many Georgia communities have had demonstrable success implementing arts programs as a major part of their economic development strategy. The Georgia Council for the Arts, in partnership with the Georgia Municipal Association, prepared a series of case studies highlighting how communities are utilizing the arts for economic development. Focusing on communities from across the state from Buena Vista and Cuthbert to Blue Ridge and Statesboro, these case studies offer valuable insights into how small communities can capitalize on their local culture and artists to foster a type of economic development that values the communities as unique and special places.¹

¹ These case studies are compiled into two volumes titled *Leveraging Public Investment in the Arts: The Role of Arts-based Economic Development Strategies in Georgia Communities*. See gaarts.org/impact-of-the-arts-in-georgia/arts-and-economic-development/

RVCCD CASE STUDIES AND BRAINSTORMS

The following case studies show a variety of ways that the arts can be leveraged to encourage investment, increase tourism, and improve the quality of life for local citizens throughout the region. These case studies and brainstorms were carefully examined by researchers at the University of Georgia. They are meant to be starting points for conversations with a Regional Arts Partnership. Each brainstorm is inspired by local efforts, and each case study represents a successful comparable example.

Build on the existing Flint Energies Rural Murals Program and create a regional arts trail highlighting public art and murals.

Example: Colquitt, Georgia's Millennium Mural Project was started in 1999 with a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts. The first mural completed was "The Peace Wall," a collaboration between muralist Chrissie Orr and students at Miller County Middle School. Today, Colquitt is home to 16 murals, delighting travelers and locals alike. The Georgia General Assembly designated Colquitt as Georgia's first Mural City. Colquitt also boasts a 27,000-square-foot Agricultural Icon Mural, which is one of the largest hand-painted murals in the United States. The Colquitt Miller Arts Council now offers guided mural tours, which go out regularly on show days and at other times by appointment. Tours visit 14 of the 16 murals.

www.exploregeorgia.org/colquitt/general/historic-sites-trails-tours/colquitt-millennium-murals

Brainstorm: Incorporated in 1937, **Flint Energies** is a nonprofit member-owned electric cooperative that provides energy services to residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural members in parts of the following 17 Central Georgia counties: Bibb, Chattahoochee, Crawford, Dooly, Harris, Houston, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Muscogee, Peach, Schley, Sumter, Taylor, Talbot, Twiggs, and Upson. The system also includes the Fort Moore military post.

Flint Energies has a strong commitment to the communities it serves. To draw travelers off the main interstates to discover the vast resources the region has to offer, the Flint Energies Rural Murals Program was established as a collaboration between Flint Energies and the local communities. Seven murals have been completed in the region to date, and an eighth is in progress in Buena Vista. The Flint Energies murals carry a lasting impact and spark economic development. The program has been vital to establishing a strong sense of place for residents by creating suitable and recognizable murals within a community or downtown. The program intends to increase the number of public murals across Flint's service territory while supporting the incredibly talented artist community within Middle Georgia. Flint Energies is committed to identifying and partially funding projects that highlight positive images of the Middle Georgia area's history and culture.

www.flintenergies.com/

This idea could be applied to the region in a variety of ways. Using the Flint Energies Rural Murals Program as a foundation, communities could apply for funding to create a comprehensive regional arts trail that includes the Flint murals as well as other forms of art viewable to the public. The River Valley Arts Trail could be marketed to Columbus residents and travelers who seek a unique arts experience in the region, helping benefit rural businesses, restaurants, and more. The first step would be to create a map that shows all murals in the area with interesting facts about the artists and designs. Like Colquitt, Georgia, a guided tour could be developed in which visitors could participate by bike, bus, or on their own. Murals promote tourism by becoming photo opportunities for social media like Instagram and Facebook.

Recruit local craft breweries and distilleries to establish satellite taprooms in the Chattahoochee River Valley communities.

Example: Rick Goddard and Brian Roth opened Southern Brewing Company in Athens, Georgia, in 2015. The City of Monroe, located about 27 miles from Athens, wanted to attract a brewery to its downtown. Monroe changed its alcohol ordinances in 2018 to allow for microbreweries and open containers in its downtown district. Those laws paved the way for Southern Brewing Company to open a satellite taproom in downtown Monroe. Unlike breweries, taprooms cannot manufacture beer and require less investment and square footage. The Southern Brewery Taproom in Monroe now offers 20 beers and a unique place to gather and host events, bringing more nightlife to downtown Monroe.

Brainstorm: The River Valley Region has several breweries and distilleries, some of which might be interested in opening a taproom or tasting room in the regional communities to drive economic development and increase entertainment options in these areas.

Establish a Craft Beer and Wine Trail in the Chattahoochee River Valley.

Example: Southern Brewing Company is part of the Athens Beer Trail, a network of breweries and taprooms in the Athens, Georgia, area that encourages visitors to patronize local breweries to discover their approaches to craft beer. The Athens Beer Trail is part of a larger tourism strategy by Visit Athens. www.visitathensga.com/athens-beer-trail/

Brainstorm: Create a map of all breweries, taprooms, and wineries in the Chattahoochee River Valley and integrate them into a regional tourism strategy.

Create an artist-in-residence program in collaboration with Florence Marina State Park and Providence Canyon State Park.

Example: The South Carolina State Parks Service hosts an annual Artist-In-Residence program, which provides artists with the opportunity to gain inspiration from the natural and cultural resources of the South Carolina State Parks. In return for a week-long stay at a state park cabin, each artist produces an original piece of artwork that is presented to the park. This competitive program attracts outstanding artists from all over the state and beyond. Out of nearly 100 applicants, 22 artists were chosen for the 2022 Artist-in-Residence program.

Brainstorm: A local nonprofit organization could apply for funding through existing Bureau of Land Management agencies and National Park Service programs to establish an artist-in-residence program. Lumpkin and Stewart counties have shown interest in creating an artist-in-residence program.

Host a Plein Air painting event to celebrate the region's rural landscape and natural beauty.

Example: *Plein air*, from the French *en plein air*, is the method of painting outdoors directly from life and has become a wildly popular practice with artists around the world. The Friends of Providence Canyon and the Stewart County Historical Commission host A Canyon Plein Air painting competition. Artists are invited to paint anywhere outdoors in Stewart County. The event concludes with a panel of judges reviewing the paintings and a public viewing at the park. Artists from around the region serve as judges, and the top three paintings receive a cash prize. In 2022, Christopher Johnson, the artist and muralist who has worked in many communities in the River Valley Region, served as a judge.

Brainstorm: Other historical societies or local nonprofit organizations could create a similar plein air painting event in the Chattahoochee River Valley, helping to draw artists who could capture the region's natural beauty and character. Columbus is a short distance away and can offer lodging, while nearby communities offer on-location painting sites. The event could be an informal gathering or a juried competition with a show and gala.

Use a new or existing event to raise money to support artists, artisans, and artistic programs in the region

Example: AthFest Educates is a nonprofit organization in Athens, Georgia, focused on "sustaining and advancing music and arts education for K-12 youth in Athens–Clarke County." These funds are raised through two annual events, The AthFest Music & Arts Festival and The AthHalf Half Marathon & 5K race. Money raised during these events is used for local grant efforts such as supporting art educators in the area.

athfsteducates.org

Brainstorm: This model could be used in the region by building on existing trails and events. The Carter Butt's Memorial Bike Ride is already a popular event; these cyclists could be surveyed to gauge interest in a larger race or race series throughout the communities. The route could highlight major art nodes, and funding raised from the event could support regional artists and artisans' projects that celebrate the area.

Utilize vacant spaces downtown for pop-up shops and festival exhibits.

Example: Thomasville has been building on ways to support local artists and artisans. The city collaborated with the Thomasville Center for the Arts and focused its efforts on youth education and showcasing the arts at local festivals. The city has 28 programs and brings in \$1.8 million through these efforts. An annual local event called "Flaunt!" includes public art, music, and other activities with a different theme each year. In 2014, the city allowed vacant storefronts to be used by local creative businesses. After being used as pop-up spaces, several of the buildings were sold and now house new creative businesses. In collaboration with the Thomasville Arts Center, the city also hosts meetings and design charrettes that highlight sign makers, landscape architects, illustrators, and interior designers in the pop-up spaces. The plan from the charette includes a 14-mile trail system connecting the city through its parks.

[Thomasville-case-study-1.pdf \(gaarts.org\)](#)

Brainstorm: Identify vacant places in the region's downtowns and connect them with local artists and artisans who need studio, gallery, workshop, and storefront space. Downtown Lumpkin may be a great place to explore this idea with its Carter Butts Bike Trail and Lumpkin Fair on the Square event, offering temporary spaces to local artists and artisans for the duration of the event. Another event that could be considered is Richland's The Taste of Richland & Market.

Support art education by creating a scavenger hunt for each community.

Example: The "Flat Friend" project is an activity used in schools and Girl Scout troops. Students are sent a "Flat Friend," or a paper doll, scavenger hunt, or a list of places. The student then takes the doll to the places and takes a photo of each item on the list. This activity brings both the students and their parents on a scavenger hunt within a community.

Brainstorm: Each community could have a scavenger hunt based on their downtowns. These scavenger hunts could be used in local schools to engage families in their downtowns. Families can discover the arts and historic places within their community.

Incorporate the region's arts and artisans into a regional tourism strategy.

Example: Explore Georgia is an effort by the state tourism office within the Georgia Department of Economic Development. The Explore Georgia website highlights places to visit in cities and

regions throughout Georgia. Some travel guides are created based on themes like “Explore Georgia’s Mountains,” but others are based on location.

Brainstorm: Create a unified Arts and Artisans brand identity to use throughout the region. Such branding helps visitors identify a particular region. Tourism guides can be created based on themes of interest for visitors like “Top 10 Places to View Art in the Chattahoochee River Valley.”

One example in the region is the Explore Stewart County campaign. (See its [brochure](#) and [website](#).)

POTENTIAL COLLABORATIONS

The following organizations, schools, venues, and agencies could be potential collaborators on future arts and artisan-related projects.

Reimagine Home Project, BAML Studio and Gallery: The project’s mission is to provide public access to quality arts and educational programming and to preserve and document local history and culture. The studio and gallery curate an inclusive arts environment, focusing its exhibits on self-taught, regional, and contemporary art and highlighting work by women and members of the LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities.

Columbus State University: A hub of creative thought and energy, the College of the Arts at Columbus State University is committed to teaching through innovative, hands-on curricula. From nationally accredited programs in art, music, and theater to its communication program's Non-Profit and Civic Engagement Center (NPACE), the college has a reputation for academic excellence and experiential learning. www.columbusstate.edu/arts/

Troy University: Troy University’s College of Communication and Fine Arts is home to departments in art, design, English, music, theater, dance, and culture. In 2020, Troy University collaborated with several organizations in Phenix City and Columbus to promote an outdoor art gallery in the Riverfront District. www.troy.edu/academics/colleges-schools/college-communication-fine-arts/index.html

Gallery on 10th: Formerly the Joseph House Gallery, Gallery on 10th displays fine art by local and regional artists. Featured artwork includes paintings, photographs, pottery, woodworking, cards as well as gifts. www.galleryon10th.com/

River Center for the Performing Arts: The center is home of the Columbus Symphony and a popular location for performances by visiting entertainers.

POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

National

National Endowment for the Arts: Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.

www.arts.gov/

Our Town: Our Town is the NEA's creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, the program supports activities that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities. www.arts.gov/grants/our-town

Southeastern Region

Alternate ROOTS Artistic Assistance: This program provides direct support to individual artists and cultural workers in the South to enhance their skills, create unique projects, and build community. The program has two funding areas: professional development and project development. alternateroots.org/artistic-assistance/

South Arts: This arts organization supports and celebrates the artistry of the Southeast region with grants and fellowships for artists, communities, and organizations.

www.southarts.org/about

State

Alabama State Council for the Arts: The Council for the Arts is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life and economic vitality for all Alabamians by providing support for the state's diverse and rich artistic resources. arts.alabama.gov/

Georgia Council for the Arts: The mission of the Georgia Council for the Arts is to cultivate the growth of vibrant, thriving Georgia communities through the arts. <https://gaarts.org/>

Georgia Humanities: This organization supports the efforts of nonprofit organizations seeking to foster connections between people and ideas. Through a competitive process, Georgia Humanities awards grants to such cultural, civic, and educational entities as museums, libraries, universities, and historical societies for a range of projects, including walking tours, exhibitions, author talks, lecture series, and literary festivals. Proposed grant programs can also be virtual. www.georgiahumanities.org/grants/

Georgia Power Foundation

The Georgia Power Foundation empowers local communities through grants and sponsorships. The foundation's signature programs include Workforce for Georgia, supporting college, career academies and school districts in Georgia to meet the workforce needs of local industries and

businesses. The Waters for Georgia program supports projects in water quality improvement that provide measurable benefits to environments and communities in Georgia. In addition, the Teachers for Georgia program focuses on recruiting and retaining black male educators.

Georgia Power is committed to partnering with and assisting communities across Georgia.

www.georgiapower.com/community/apply-grant.html

Local

Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley, Inc.

The Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley offers the Community Impact Grant, which funds projects that aim to do one or more of the following:

- Foster an enterprising spirit and innovative culture to support startups and create a thriving entrepreneur ecosystem
- Attract, retain, and develop top talent to strengthen the workforce pipeline
- Enhance the quality of life by creating vibrant and connected neighborhoods and corridors

Applicants must be 501(c)(3) organizations and currently serve, or propose to serve, persons or communities in any of the following counties: Chattahoochee, Harris, Marion, Muscogee, Taylor, Talbot, Quitman, Meriwether, Troup, Stewart, or Webster in Georgia; or Russell or Lee in Alabama.

Applicants can be units of local government or public education institutions that currently serve, or propose to serve, persons or communities in any of the counties listed above.

Flint Energies

The Flint Energies Rural Murals Program establishes a collaboration between Flint Energies and local, rural communities to create murals that carry lasting impact, spark economic development, and are the focal point of community discussion. www.flintenergies.com/rural-murals

The Flint Energies Imagine That! Art Contest is a regional contest for young artists. Participants must be middle school students in 6th, 7th, or 8th grade, and they must live in or attend a school located within Flint's 17-county service area (Bibb, Chattahoochee, Crawford, Dooly, Harris, Houston, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Muscogee, Peach, Schley, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, Twiggs, or Upson counties). www.flintenergies.com/art-contest

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The plan was released in spring of 2023.