

# 03

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



# Introduction

## CONTEXT

In recent years, Gwinnett County has placed great importance on economic development, actively pursuing investment through initiatives such as the Gwinnett Entrepreneur Center, the Gwinnett Place Mall Redevelopment, and the ongoing progress of the Rowen Foundation Development. The County remains committed to fostering inclusive and equitable economic growth, ensuring that current residents and businesses have opportunities to thrive while attracting new prospects and stimulating the local economy.

Building upon research and the implementation of effective solutions, the Gwinnett County 2045 Unified Plan's Economic Development Element aims to provide a comprehensive strategy for future countywide economic development. This strategy begins with insights from local and regional data analysis and active stakeholder engagement, which then inform economic development needs and opportunities. To address these needs and opportunities, this element proposes three overarching economic development goals the County and its partners should pursue over the next two decades, which are supported by best practices observed in similar communities nationwide. Finally, each goal is broken down into actionable and implementable policies or programs in the final section, creating an economic development playbook for the future.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## 1 PROMOTE INVESTMENT AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE

To embrace the concept of Daily Communities, Gwinnett County must make substantial investments in a range of assets that enhance quality of life and sense of place across its distinct communities. These investments are crucial for the County to maintain its economic competitiveness and attractiveness for development. Over the years, Gwinnett's leaders and residents have recognized that the county's suburban nature is both a strength and a weakness. People desire to lead fulfilling and healthy lives, and require access to the amenities, transit systems, and infrastructure typically found in urban areas to do so. By adopting the Daily Communities approach as a guide for new investment, Gwinnett can pursue active, connective, and affordable improvements to the built environment. This shift requires reimagining Gwinnett's character as more than just a suburban, bedroom community for the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Housing stands out among these various investments as a crucial focus area. Gwinnett County faces a significant housing shortage of over 4,800 units annually, which hampers the County's ability to attract new residents and businesses. To realize its growth potential in terms of population and economy, Gwinnett must prioritize the development of robust new infrastructure related to housing, transportation, and commercial assets. This will ensure that the County remains an attractive location for starting a business, purchasing a first home, forging meaningful connections with neighbors and residents, and planning for the future.

## 2 ATTRACT NEW BUSINESSES AND TALENT

Gwinnett County has become a desirable destination for knowledge-based jobs in fields such as innovation, research and development, and other related industries. However, Gwinnett faces a challenge in retaining a significant portion of the nearly 100,000 college graduates who enter the regional workforce each year. Many of these graduates opt for more urban environments with better access to diverse housing, entertainment, transit, and amenities.

To increase its share of attractive employment opportunities in the region, Gwinnett should create a live-work environment that appeals to young professionals. Diversifying in this way provides Gwinnett residents with an option to stay within their community, spending more time and money at businesses closer to home, and reducing long commutes. Additionally, Gwinnett can capitalize on its diverse population to attract businesses and individuals from a wider national and international audience. By strengthening its efforts to build a distinct identity, connecting with diverse groups of residents, and highlighting its unique opportunities and advantages compared to intown Atlanta communities, Gwinnett can position itself as a distinctive place for investment.

## 3 PROMOTE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MOBILITY

Gwinnett County has long been known as a place where residents can achieve socioeconomic mobility, and it continues to provide transformative economic opportunities. One notable demonstration of this commitment is Gwinnett's recent emphasis on fostering diverse forms of entrepreneurship. By further investing in entrepreneurship, the County aims to ensure that individuals from all walks of life have equal access to the resources necessary to secure employment, start their businesses, and nurture their ventures for long term success. This concerted effort will contribute to an inclusive and dynamic economic landscape.

To further promote economic growth and mobility, Gwinnett County can enhance its strategy for workforce development, creating opportunities for workers with varying levels of education and skill sets. By aligning workforce development initiatives with the County's vision for future job prospects, Gwinnett can establish itself as a hub for local employment opportunities. This approach will enable individuals to find meaningful work and contribute to the county's overall economic growth.

# Existing Conditions

To establish an informed baseline for economic development in Gwinnett County, this section synthesizes several layers of data and analysis including:

- An overview of existing economic development organizations and leadership
- A review of previous economic development reports, studies, and actions
- An updated data analysis focused on key socioeconomic data and trends
- Brief descriptions of current economic development projects
- Brief descriptions of the goals and priorities of current economic development action plans.

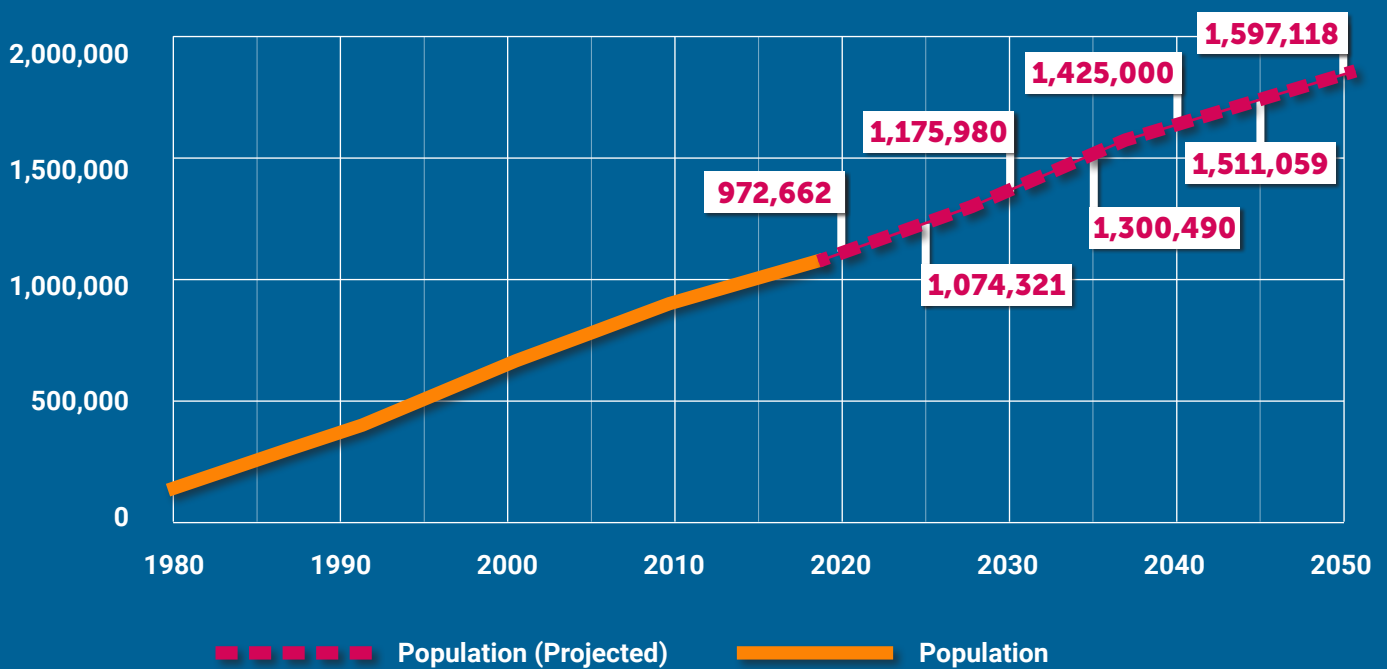
## SOCIAL DATA

### POPULATION GROWTH

Using a variety of prior projections and new data, the planning team projects Gwinnett to continue on a linear path of population growth. The county population may increase by over 50% by 2045, eclipsing 1.5 million residents (Figure 3-1).

**FIGURE 3-1: GWINNETT COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

SOURCE: FOURTH ECONOMY ANALYSIS OF LIGHCAST AND US CENSUS BUREAU DATA



## EDUCATION

Gwinnett’s population is highly educated, with 65% of residents having a secondary education or beyond. Furthermore, most new residents moving into Gwinnett also have higher education levels.

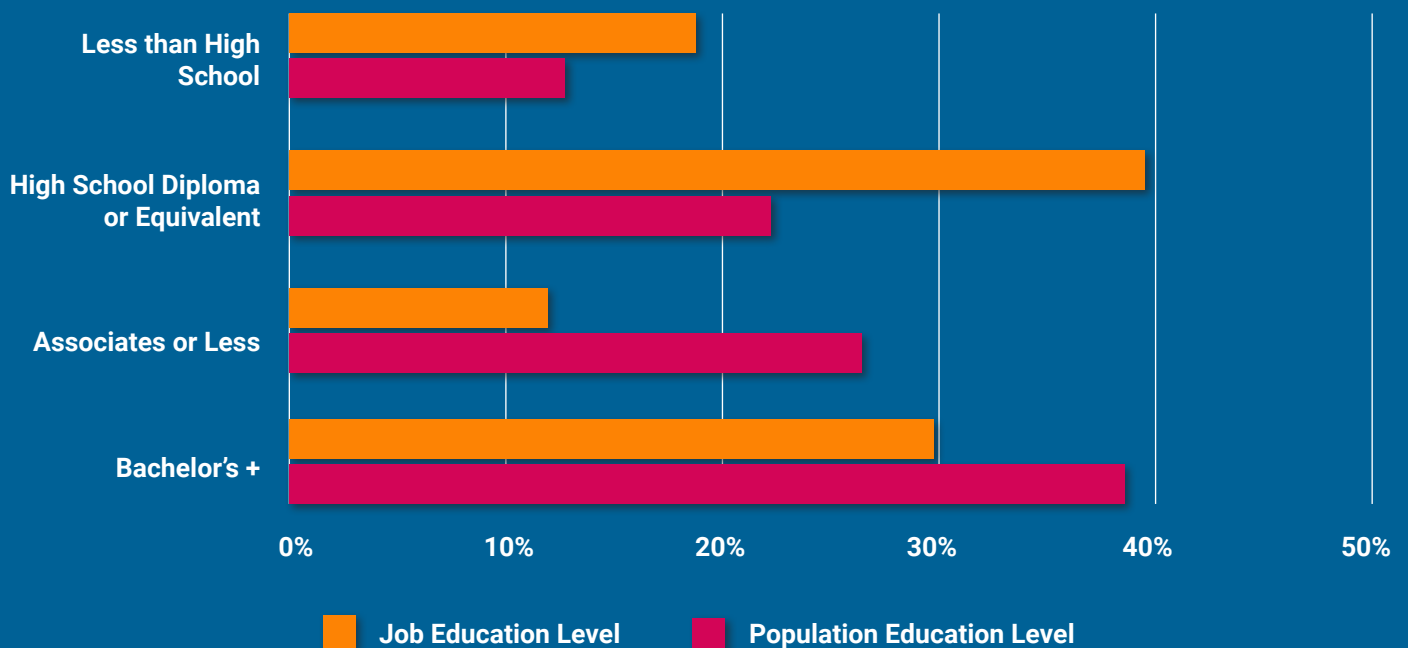
Although there are some knowledge-based job opportunities, most jobs in Gwinnett require a high school diploma or less (Figure 3-2). This is an essential consideration regarding job requirements for those in the county and the potential to attract more people to the area to live or work. Since most jobs do not require secondary education, many residents travel outside of the county for work resulting in increased congestion and degradation of road infrastructure. The effects of the education and employment mismatch are a major contributor to Gwinnett’s traffic congestion.

## PROXIMITY TO COLLEGE GRADUATES

Gwinnett is surrounded by educated talent. Most of the state’s major higher education institutions, such as Emory University, Georgia Tech, Georgia State, Oglethorpe University, and the Atlanta University Center (Morehouse & Spelman Colleges) in Atlanta, and the University of Georgia in Athens, are within 45 minutes of the county. The county’s own Georgia Gwinnett College and Gwinnett Technical College also add to the pool of annual graduates, totaling up to 75,000 annually for the region. These graduates end up dispersed throughout the region for a variety of reasons; proximity to jobs, family, friends, and amenities are a few leading factors. Gwinnett struggles to retain its fair share of graduates, losing many potential residents to other living situations and jobs across the Atlanta metropolitan region.

**FIGURE 3-2: JOBS REQUIRED BY EDUCATION LEVEL**

SOURCE: LIGHTCAST



## AGE

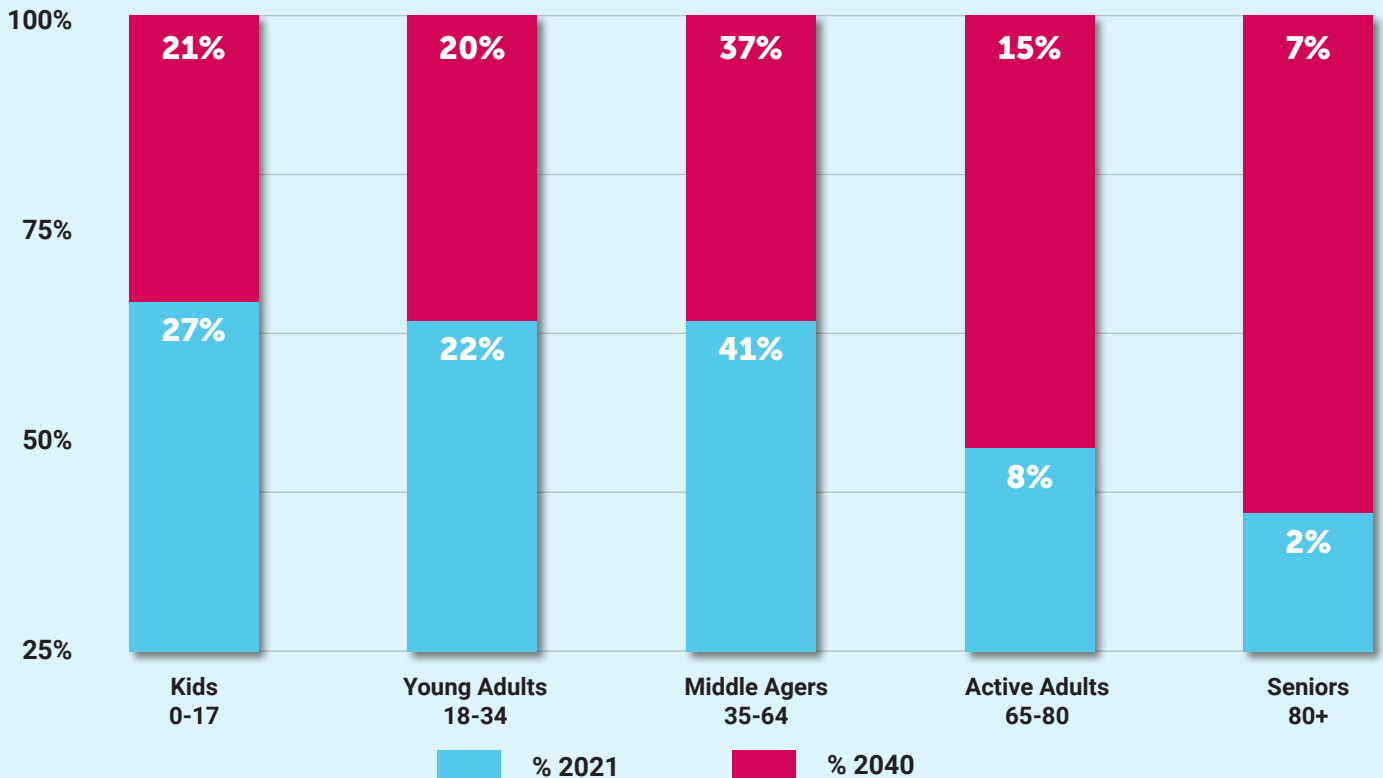
Data from the Atlanta Regional Commission suggests that up to a third of Gwinnett’s population in 2050 will be 55 or older, compared to 20% of the population in 2015. Data from the Census Bureau suggests a similar trend by 2040 (Figure 3-3). With a decreasing share of young people choosing to locate in Gwinnett County immediately after high school or college graduation, Gwinnett will need to pursue intentional strategies to maintain an active workforce and its current median age of 35.7.

## RACIAL EQUITY

Gwinnett County faces disparities in opportunities and outcomes among residents of different races and ethnicities (Figures 3-4 through 3-6). People of color in Gwinnett are disproportionately affected by poverty, with a higher likelihood of experiencing economic hardships compared to white residents. Educational disparities exist as well, with lower educational attainment among certain racial groups. For instance, Hispanic residents have lower bachelor’s degree attainment rates compared to their white, non-Hispanic counterparts. Homeownership rates also show significant gaps for Black and Hispanic residents.

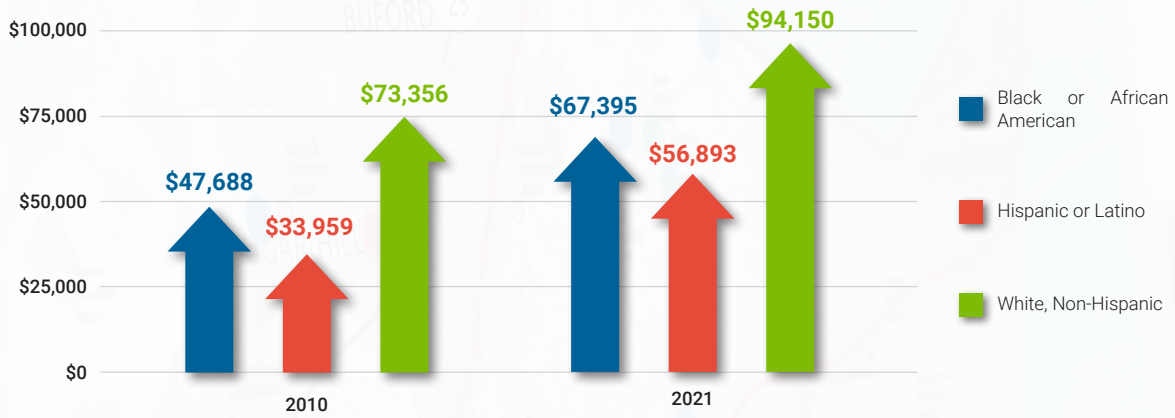
### FIGURE 3-3: POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

SOURCE: GWINNETT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING STUDY & U.S. CENSUS ACS 2016-2021



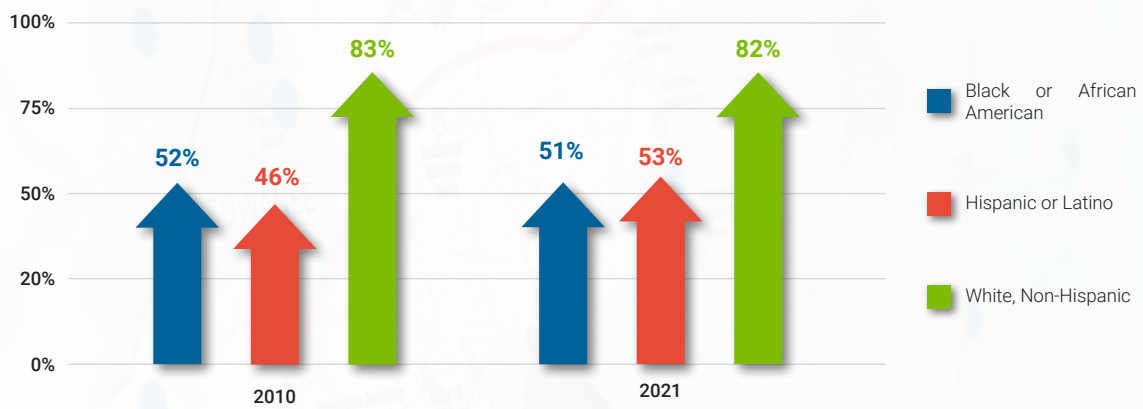
### FIGURE 3-4: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY



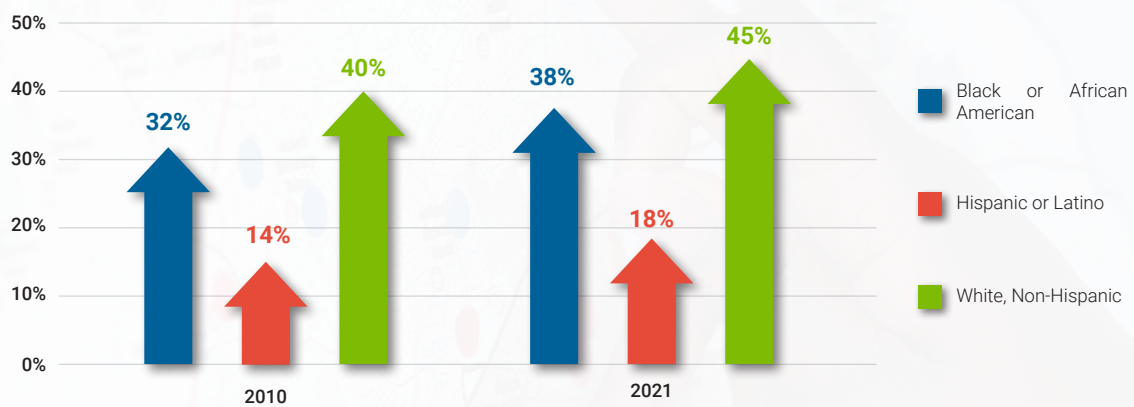
### FIGURE 3-5: HOMEOWNERSHIP RATE BY RACE & ETHNICITY

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY



### FIGURE 3-6: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: BACHELORS' DEGREE+

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY





# BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DATA

## JOBS

Gwinnett County has experienced substantial job growth in the last decade, adding over 78,000 jobs between 2010 and 2021. As of 2022, the county boasts a total of over 470,000 jobs. **The healthcare sector witnessed the most significant increase in employment, followed by administrative roles, construction, and retail trade.**

To gain a deeper understanding of Gwinnett’s job growth compared to the Atlanta metro area, a shift share analysis was conducted (Figure 3-7). This analysis examines industries in Gwinnett

that either outperform or underperform the Atlanta metropolitan area in terms of growth. The findings revealed that several industries in Gwinnett exhibited robust regional growth, **including trade, transportation, warehousing, manufacturing, healthcare, and professional services.** These sectors demonstrated a positive trend, indicating their strength and contribution to the local economy.

However, weaknesses were identified in certain industries within Gwinnett County when compared to the broader Atlanta metropolitan area. These areas of weakness were concentrated in the management of companies,

**FIGURE 3-7: SHIFT SHARE, 2010-2021**

SOURCE: FOURTH ECONOMY ANALYSIS OF U.S. CENSUS QUARTERLY WORKFORCE INDICATORS, 2010 TO 2021

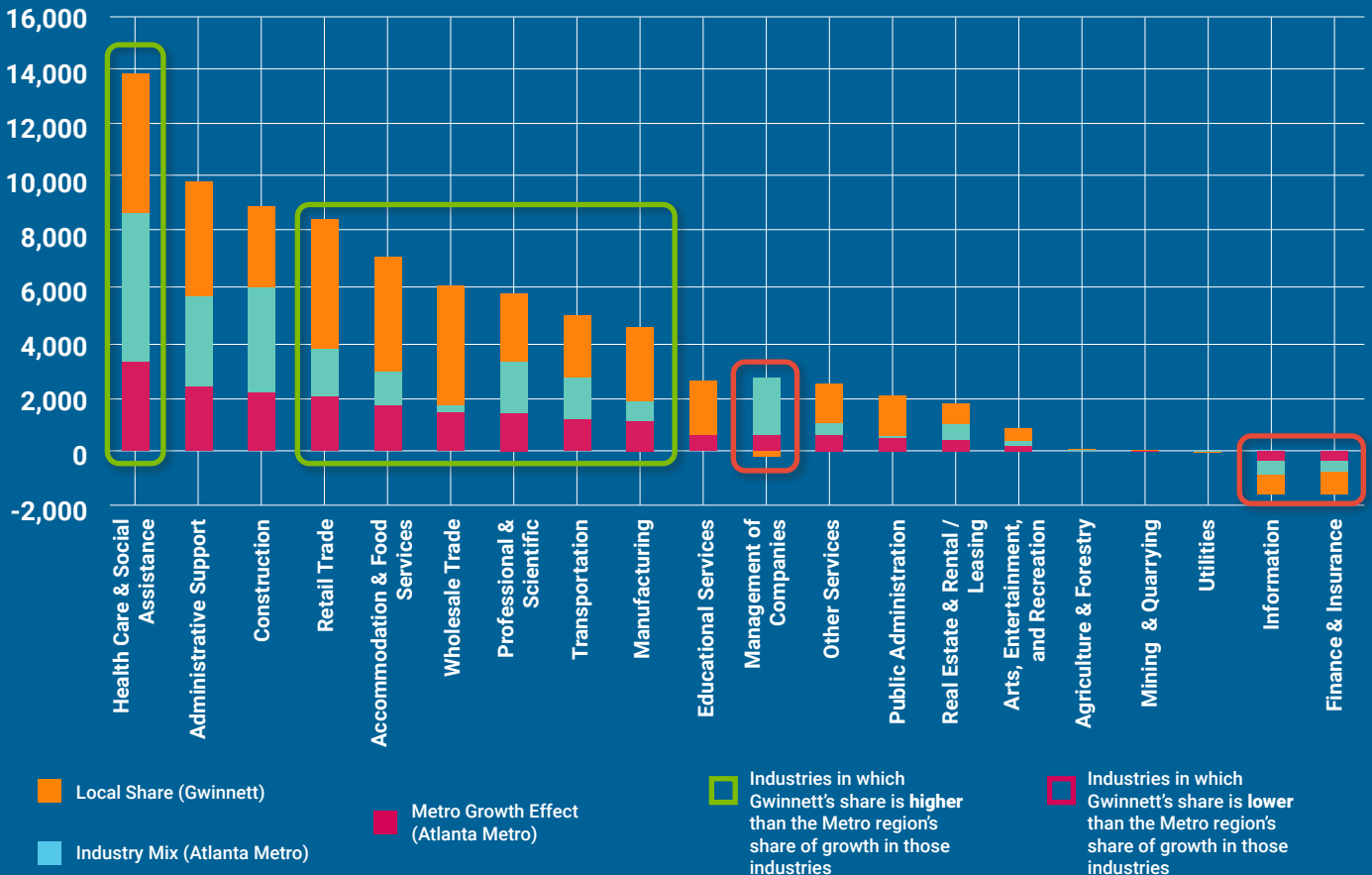




Image Source: Northside Hospital

information services, and finance/insurance sectors. Identifying these industries allows for a targeted focus on areas that require further development and attention to foster growth and maximize their potential.

Overall, the shift share analysis sheds light on the industries experiencing strong local growth within Gwinnett County while highlighting areas that are relatively weaker compared to the broader metropolitan region.

## INDUSTRY

The growing industries by employment are **Healthcare and Social Assistance**, Administration and Support, Construction, Retail Trade, Accommodations, Wholesale Trade, **Professional Services**, and **Transportation and Warehousing**; these sectors have added 65,098 jobs, which is 82% of the total employment growth between 2010 and 2021.

The largest industries by employment are Retail Trade, Administrative and Support, Government,

**Healthcare and Social Assistance**, and **Professional Services**. These sectors comprise 224,142 jobs or 49% of total employment in Gwinnett County as of 2021.

Target industries identified by Partnership Gwinnett include **Information and Technology Solutions; Health Sciences and Services; Professional and Corporate Services; Supply Chain Management; and Advanced Manufacturing**. These industries accounted for 27,539 new jobs between 2010-2021. It's important to note that **Information and Technology Solutions** declined by 16% between 2013 and 2023, showing a mismatch between this industry's growth and the County's plans to focus on and attract new businesses and jobs.

## LIVE-WORK

Most people living in Gwinnett commute outside of the county for work. The number of workers who either commute in or out of the county for work—totaling nearly 429,000 daily commuters—has increased by more than 85,000 since 2010, exceeding total job growth in the county by 7,000+ jobs (Figure 3-8). In total, 60% of residents who live in Gwinnett work elsewhere, creating a missed opportunity for economic impact for the county. The commuting patterns have meant more traffic and longer commute times for people entering and leaving the county for work.

Resident employment differs from employment within the county. More residents are employed in Healthcare and Social Assistance (13%) and Retail Trade (13%) than in Accommodation and Food Service (9%) and Professional, Scientific, and Technical (8%). Those working in Gwinnett are employed in Retail Trade (14%), Healthcare and Social Assistance (10%), Wholesale Trade (10%), and Administrative & Support Waste Management (9%). Workers and residents have a significant percentage in Healthcare and Social Assistance and Retail Trade, but there is a stark

difference in average earnings. The median household income for residents in Gwinnett is \$75,853, while the average earnings for workers in Gwinnett is \$66,236. The difference indicates that jobs in Gwinnett pay lower than jobs in the surrounding areas where most residents commute for work, further indicating a lack of jobs appropriate for many Gwinnett residents.

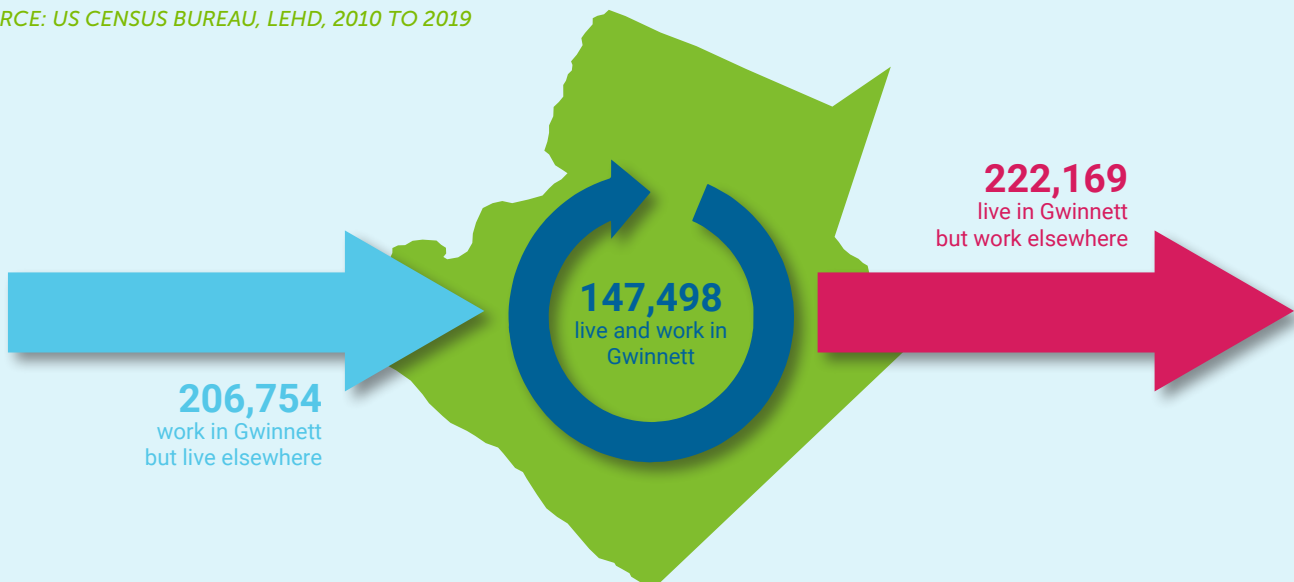
### RETAIL TRADE

Retail Trade is Gwinnett's largest industry and employs 12% of the total workforce in the County, yet the average pay was \$50,158 in 2021. As for the target industries, the average pay for each is as follows:

- **Information and Technology Solutions:** \$118,090
- **Professional and Corporate Services:** \$101,474
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** \$87,960
- **Supply Chain Management:** \$66,020
- **Health Sciences and Services:** \$61,608

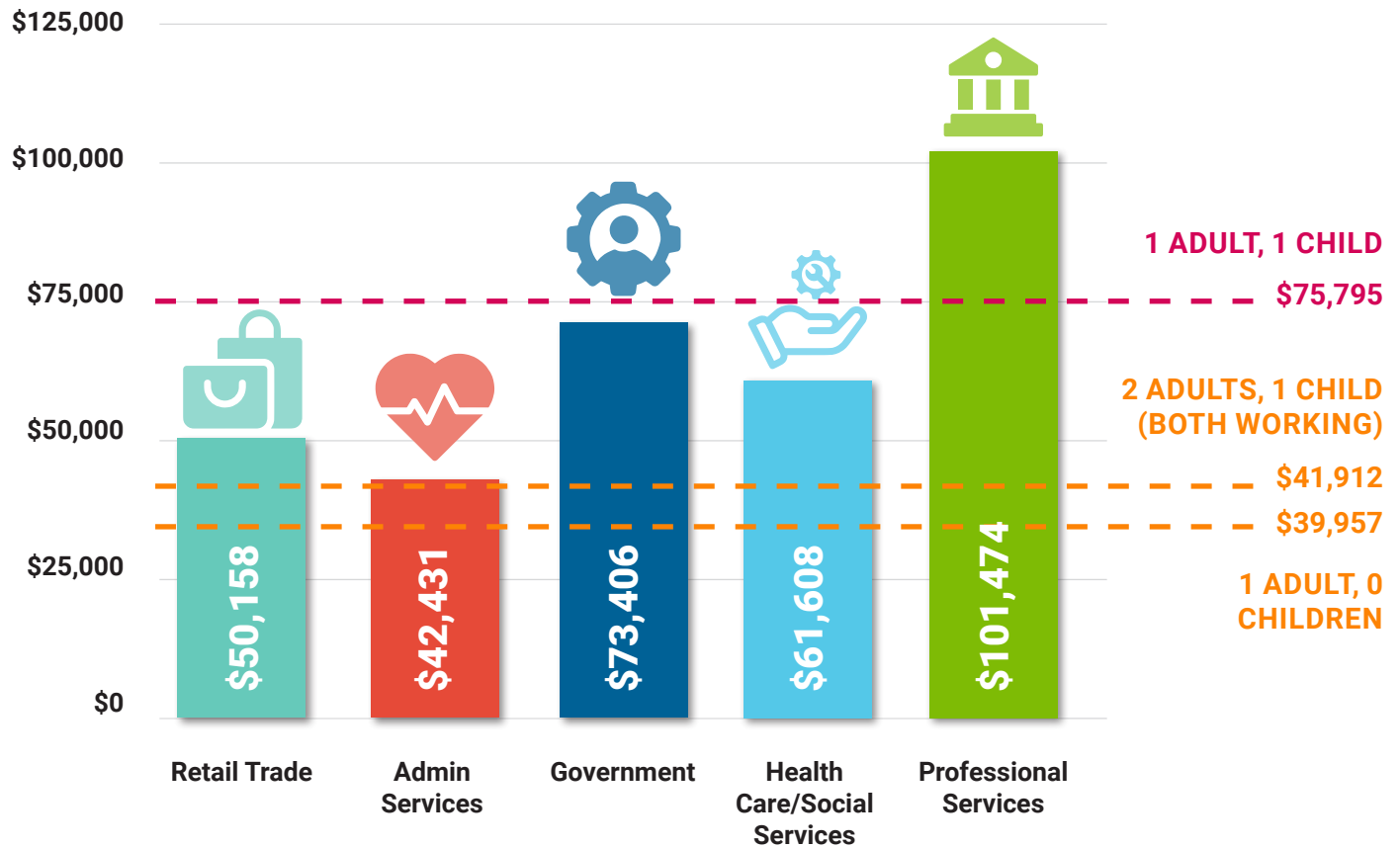
## FIGURE 3-8: INFLOW/OUTFLOW OF GWINNETT COUNTY JOBS

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU, LEHD, 2010 TO 2019



## FIGURE 3-9: LIVING WAGE BY INDUSTRY

SOURCE: LIGHTCAST & MIT LIVING WAGE CALCULATOR



## WAGE

The average earnings of workers in Gwinnett in 2021 was \$66,236. For Gwinnett County, the living wage per adult breakdown by family size is:

**\$75,795**  
1 adult, 1 child

**\$41,912**  
2 adults, 1 child

**\$39,957**  
1 adult

It is important to note that **four of the five largest industries that employ workers in Gwinnett do not provide a living wage sufficient for a single adult and one child.**

In comparison to similar suburban counties, Gwinnett ranked 19th out of 20 in terms of wage growth in recent years. This ranking is surprising considering the County's strong performance in employment growth (14th), population growth (10th), and median household income growth (13th) in the same timeframe.

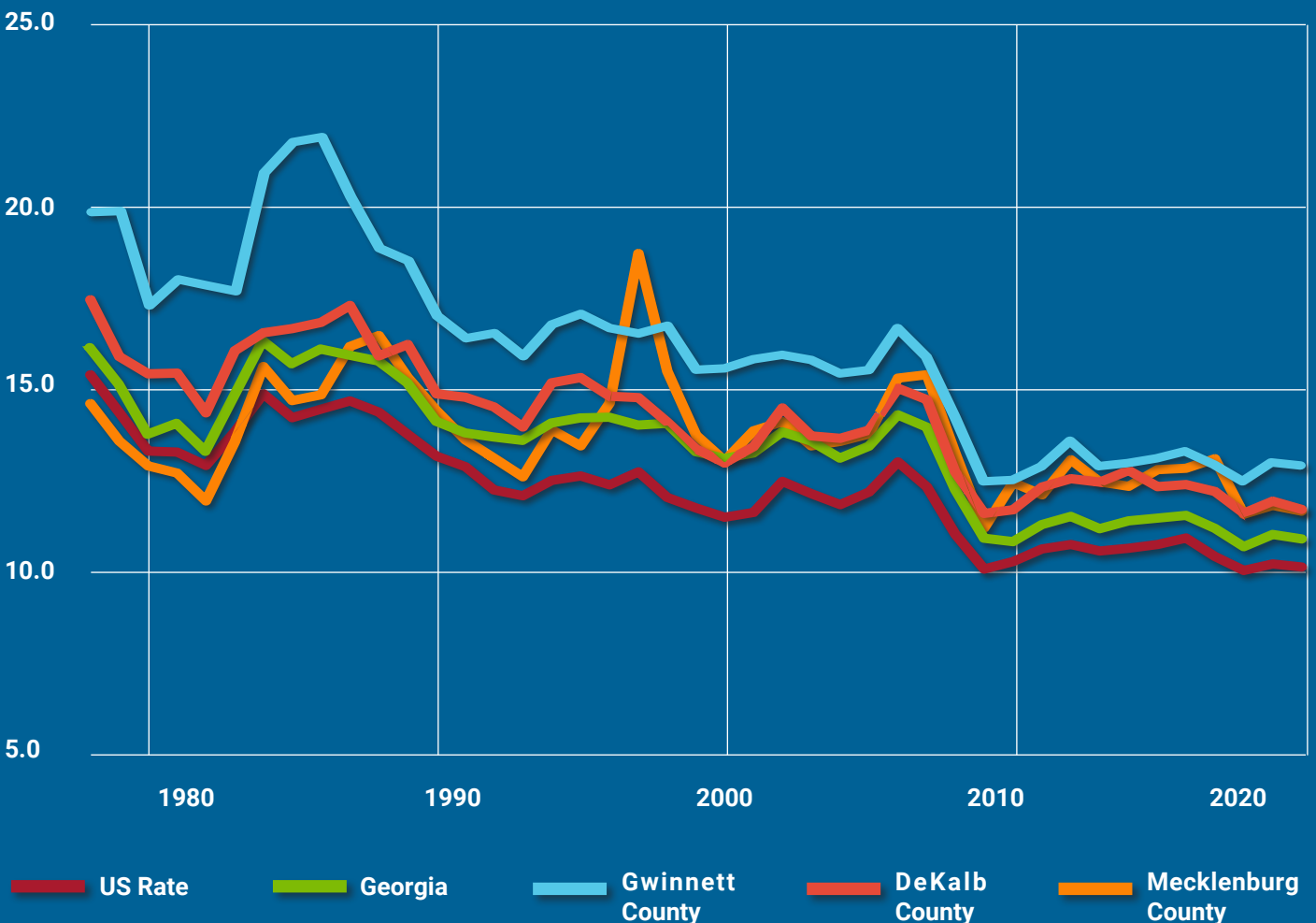
## BUSINESS BIRTHS AND SURVIVAL

Gwinnett County is highly entrepreneurial, as seen through the high business birth rate compared to surrounding counties, Georgia, and the United States. Between 1985 and 2020, Gwinnett's business birth rate averaged 15.9 and the business death rate averaged 7.6, while Georgia's was 12.9 and death rate was 7.2. The U.S.' business birth rate was 11.7, while the death rate was 6.9 (Figure 3-10). A strong entrepreneurial community can show promise in bringing in small businesses and growing in new sectors.

According to Partnership Gwinnett and Gwinnett County's Office of Economic Development, 75% of Gwinnett's businesses have fewer than 20 employees, and 88% have less than 100 employees. These figures mirror national averages, but lag behind major metropolitan areas like Atlanta, which host a plethora of larger, corporate entities.

**FIGURE 3-10: NEW ESTABLISHMENTS PER 100 EXISTING ESTABLISHMENTS**

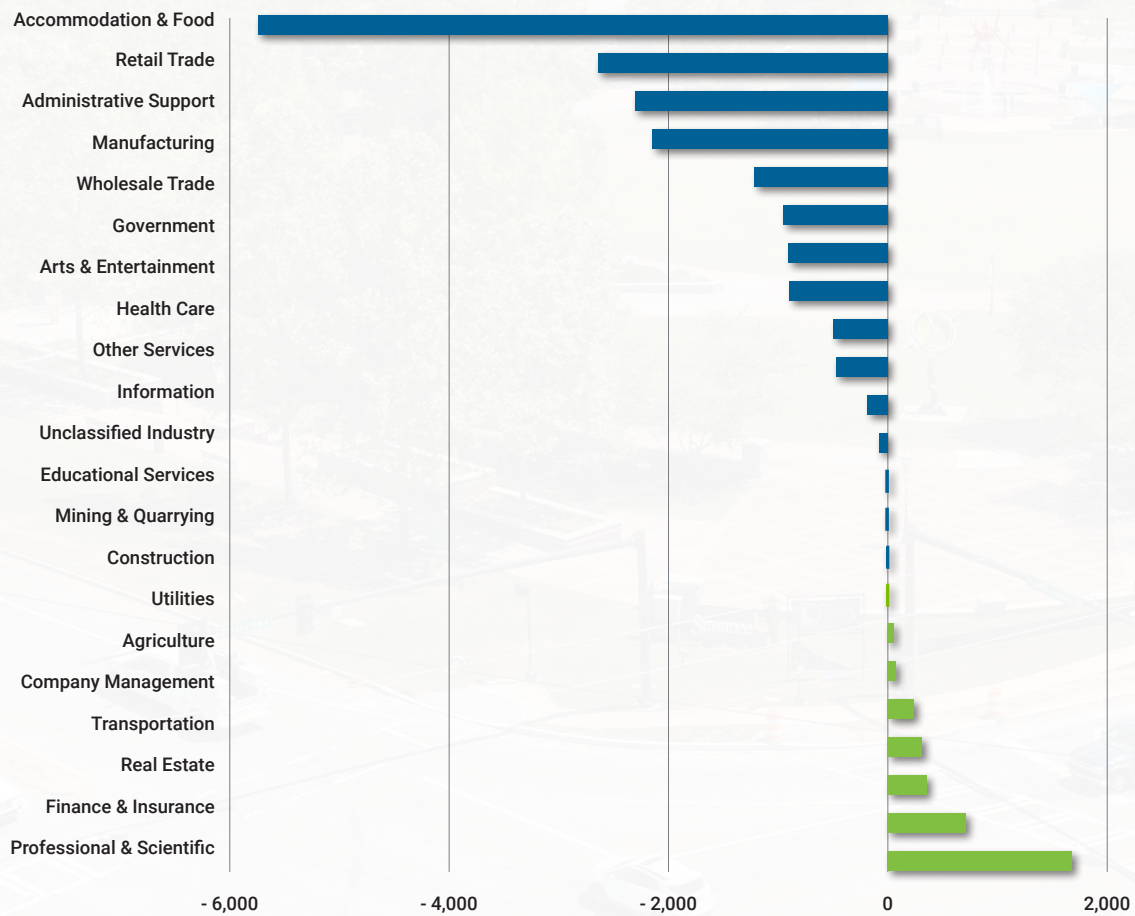
SOURCE: BUSINESS DYNAMIC STATISTICS



## FIGURE 3-11: INDUSTRIES IMPACTED BY THE PANDEMIC

SOURCE: LIGHTCAST

The COVID-19 Pandemic hit Gwinnett County hard, causing losses of nearly 18,000 jobs between 2019 and 2020. Most of the decreases came from Accommodation & Food Service, Retail Trade, Administrative & Support, Manufacturing, and Wholesale Trade, which amounted to 78% of all losses. Between 2019 and 2020, industry growth occurred in Professional Services, Finance & Insurance, Transportation and Warehousing, Real Estate & Insurance, and Management of Companies, which accounted for 3,000 jobs.



## FIGURE 3-12: INDUSTRY RECOVERY FROM THE PANDEMIC

SOURCE: LIGHTCAST

Administration & Support and Retail Trade have recovered and grown from 2019 to 2022 by adding over 13,000 jobs. However, many industries have yet to recover, like Accommodation & Food Services, Manufacturing, and Wholesale Trade, which decreased by 1,400 jobs between 2019 and 2022. Interestingly, industries that grew during the pandemic, like Finance & Insurance and Management of Companies, lost 1,900 jobs over the same period. While the pandemic had significant impacts, many industries recovered and grew from 2020 to 2022, showing economic resilience and the ability to recover swiftly from future economic upheaval.



# KEY ECONOMIC THEMES

## HOUSING

Interviewees and project stakeholders consistently cited housing as one of the largest barriers between Gwinnett and sustained economic development. Gwinnett’s annual housing development shortage of 4,800 units represents a material roadblock to population growth. Without more units, potential new residents will not have the opportunity to call Gwinnett home. More specifically, the affordability of new units is an increasingly urgent issue; data shows only 2 percent of new units are built for lower income residents. This figure will need to rise closer to 28 percent for affordability to accommodate projected population growth. Specifically, the County’s housing market lacks homes in the price range of \$100,000 to \$200,000 and the supply of affordable rental units has not kept pace with demand. About 53 percent of renters and 23 percent of owners are cost burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing. More detailed housing data and information is provided in the Housing Element of this 2045 Unified Plan.

## TRANSPORTATION

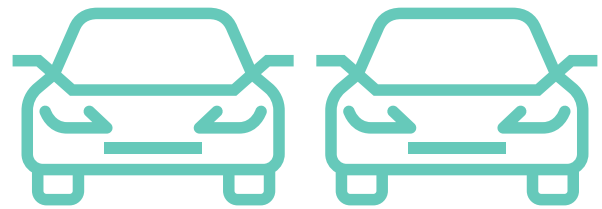
Gwinnett lacks major public transit outside of its bus system, requiring most residents to own and use their car for travel to work, activities, and key resources and amenities. The unsuccessful transit referenda in recent years have delayed the prospect of connection to regional bus and rail networks even further. As such, most residents rely on automobiles for transportation: 74 percent of county residents commute to work by car, with an average commute time of 34 minutes. Nearly 66 percent of all county jobholders commute more than 10

miles to work. And, walking to work rates have decreased by 22 percent since 2016. More detailed transportation data and information is provided in Chapter 6, Transportation.

Enhanced connectivity would significantly benefit potential new residents seeking proximity to amenities, housing, and work. The Daily Community approach aims to make it easier for Gwinnett County residents to access essential resources and services within a reasonable distance of their home. This would mark a distinct change from how Gwinnett has developed over the past several decades.

# 74%

of county residents  
commute by car



with an average  
commute time of

# 34

MINUTES





## ARTS, CULTURE, & THE OUTDOORS

Gwinnett's increasing demographic diversity has led to an increased cultural richness. The breadth of international cuisines, houses of worship, and languages on various forms of signage across the county is impossible to miss. This melting pot of religions, cultures, and identities has pushed the county towards a more vibrant arts and culture scene, exemplified by Artworks Gwinnett's recent endeavor to create the county's first Arts and Culture Plan. Specific installations and activations, the presence of public art, and cultural events and festivals may all help drive a new form of resident and tourist experience in the county. More detailed information on these subjects is provided in the Community Resources Element of this 2045 Unified Plan.

Similarly to the niche economies of arts, culture, and tourism, Gwinnett County continues to invest in the outdoor recreation economy. The County's intentionality in building out new parks, greenspaces, and greenways represents a commitment to public health, active lifestyles, and connectivity across geographies. However, the County must continue to preserve these spaces and ensure they connect to each other, allowing individuals to maneuver across the county through a variety of natural areas and trails.

## CURRENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

In recent years, Gwinnett has taken on complex development and redevelopment projects to catalyze economic development, improve the built environment, and create opportunities for homeownership and socioeconomic mobility. Efforts such as Exchange @ Gwinnett, the Gas South District, and the Gwinnett Place Mall redevelopment aim to make use of previously

underutilized assets, bringing higher intensity, mixed use concepts to the County through the combination of apartments, workspaces, recreation spaces, amenities, and activities for leisure. Though at different phases of the development process, each development has experienced its challenges, namely in attracting the types of development proposals that meet the community's vision.

To catalyze job growth and commercial opportunity, Gwinnett has intentionally invested in and attracted innovation assets to begin growing the share of entrepreneurial success stories, research and development projects, and higher wage, knowledge economy jobs for residents to pursue. County owned assets such as the Gwinnett Entrepreneur Center allow for the County to directly support existing and potential entrepreneurs with technical support. The newly operating Water Tower represents an opportunity for the County to connect a niche form of research and innovation into an economic opportunity for residents and their communities. Curiosity Labs has grown into a regional case study for physical lab space that drives entrepreneurship and technology development.

Rowen presents the largest opportunity of this pool of projects and investments. The project aims to create 18,500 jobs by 2035 and up to 100,000 jobs at full buildout, adding billions to the regional economy. Continuing to monitor and evaluate the progress of these and other projects, and ensuring that they continue to align with the County's economic development objectives, will be key in the years to come.

## PREVIOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

The County's two most recent economic development planning efforts, Partnership Gwinnett 4.0 (2021) and the Economic Development Element of the 2040 Unified Plan (2019), serve as a baseline for new economic strategies and goals. These are summarized below.

PLAN	THEME	OVERVIEW
Partnership Gwinnett 4.0	Business Development	Strategies for business development include expanded marketing materials for target industries and businesses; establishing an entrepreneur council to connect emerging and existing founders to experienced members of the business community; supporting new technology centers; and utilizing incentives to align with community development goals.
	Talent Development	Talent development tactics include establishing a council to ensure alignment between postsecondary offerings and business needs; strengthening workforce development initiatives; and launching a new talent attraction and retention campaign.
	Community Development	Community development actions include providing continued assistance to countywide economic development projects and stakeholders; building a new attraction campaign targeting external developers; and better understanding business needs via an annual survey.
Gwinnett County 2040 Unified Plan	Maintain Economic Development and Fiscal Health	Key economic development goals include promoting mixed use development alongside major corridors; positioning University Parkway as the County's Innovation District; utilizing various financial sources for new infrastructure improvements; and encouraging the revitalization of existing retail centers.
	Foster Redevelopment	To foster redevelopment, Gwinnett County aims to implement new pro-development incentives and bonuses; promote density in specific areas; utilize Tax Allocation Districts for development finance; and promote shared infrastructure and new corner stores.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

<p><b>Gwinnett County Planning and Development</b></p>	<p>Gwinnett’s Department of Planning and Development manages economic development activities within Gwinnett through its staff of subject matter experts and practitioners. The Economic Development Division is dedicated to ensuring the financial prosperity of the County, its businesses, and its residents. This effort includes effectively managing tax incentives and abatements, overseeing Tax Allocation Districts to encourage targeted development, operating the Gwinnett Entrepreneur Center to foster entrepreneurship and innovation, and helping to plan and execute significant projects such as the Gwinnett Place Mall Equitable Redevelopment Plan. By fulfilling these responsibilities, the team ensures a favorable environment for economic development and growth within Gwinnett.</p>
<p><b>Partnership Gwinnett</b></p>	<p>Partnership Gwinnett plays a pivotal role in fostering economic prosperity in Gwinnett County. Their efforts are focused on attracting, expanding, and retaining quality businesses, aligning and developing diverse talent, and contributing to the exceptional quality of life in the county. As a public private initiative, Partnership Gwinnett has made significant contributions to the local economy, resulting in the creation of over 32,000 new jobs and an impressive \$3.7 billion in capital investment since 2007. Partnership Gwinnett oversees the attraction, retention, and growth of Gwinnett’s target industries, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and Technology Solutions</li> <li>• Health Sciences and Services</li> <li>• Professional and Corporate Services</li> <li>• Supply Chain Management</li> <li>• Advanced Manufacturing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce</b></p>	<p>The Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce is a major economic development player in the county. Working closely with Partnership Gwinnett, the Chamber is a champion for businesses of all sizes and promotes a business friendly environment through events, programs, and policy advocacy.</p>
<p><b>Community Improvement Districts</b></p>	<p>The five CIDs in Gwinnett—Gateway 85, Gwinnett Place, Sugarloaf, Evermore, and Lilburn—are significant organizations in the County’s development. They are the equivalent of homeowners associations for businesses, collecting fees and investing in their area’s safety, mobility, and aesthetics.</p>
<p><b>Rowen Foundation</b></p>	<p>Sparked by the county but now an independent, nonprofit organization, the Rowen Foundation is the keeper of the planning vision of the Rowen site. It is responsible for the implementation of this large scale, long term development that will fundamentally change the course of development in eastern Gwinnett County.</p>

## WHAT WE LEARNED FROM RESIDENTS

Conversations with residents about economic development followed three general themes:

- 1 how to attract high-paying job opportunities
- 2 how to attract and support more retail establishments
- 3 how to support and train young, diverse entrepreneurs

Through survey questions and specific activities at the Daily Community Cafes, residents were offered several choices for which businesses, industries, and types of retail they considered appropriate for their community. Other engagements also sought to educate residents on how new housing can support the growth of high quality retail and other industry sectors.

The preferences below summarize feedback the project team received, but do not capture all the nuances of that feedback which the Daily Community framework can accommodate. For a full summary of engagement, see Appendix C.

### COMMUNITY PREFERENCES: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bring more small, local businesses to Gwinnett communities and develop programs to support them

Attract and accommodate more high paying job opportunities

Create more shopping, retail, and entertainment options, particularly within commercial areas close to where residents live

Support Gwinnett's highly educated population through innovative workforce opportunities

Invest in other forms of transportation; traffic is often cited as a reason businesses do not want to locate in Gwinnett

*Pictured: Gwinnett's Gas South Convention Center and Arena  
Image credit: Gwinnett County Communications*

# Needs & Opportunities

In the following section, the review of previous studies, analysis of data and trends, and engagement with key stakeholders and decisionmakers in Gwinnett County are synthesized to showcase the high priority economic development needs and opportunities in the county.

## NEEDS

Gwinnett County faces several challenges to future prosperity and socioeconomic mobility. Key issues include:

### 1 HIGHER WAGE JOBS FOR EDUCATED POPULATIONS

The majority of Gwinnett's residents, specifically individuals with higher education levels, leave the county for work. This is representative of a metro effect: people live in the county for its amenities and community, but consistently go to more urbanized parts of the region for work and other experiences. As expectations surrounding in person work change alongside the county's commercial profile and built environment, Gwinnett must intentionally attract higher wage jobs for educated individuals that enable people to live and work in the county. These jobs should not come at the expense of existing essential industries and workers, whose jobs are held by both local residents and commuters from other nearby counties. Rather, new jobs can add to Gwinnett's economy and retain more people in the county on a daily basis.

### 2 RETENTION OF YOUNGER, EDUCATED TALENT

Gwinnett struggles to retain its newly educated talent in local jobs, with young professionals only making up 25 percent of the county population. While the education rate of local residents is high, most of them are leaving the county for work daily. Gwinnett must intentionally retain young talent to live and work in the county to sustain population and economic growth.

### 3 REALIGNMENT ON TARGET INDUSTRIES

As exhibited in Gwinnett's shift share analysis, the County can realign its target industries to better reflect existing growth trends. The Information and Technology Solutions sector has seen significant retraction in recent years, decreasing in employment by 16 percent between 2013-2023. Analyzing new potential target industries could help Gwinnett's economic developers have more success in attracting jobs for locals to work in, specifically those with higher wage levels.

## 4 THOUGHTFUL REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING ASSETS

There is a need for purposeful redevelopment in Gwinnett County that brings amenities closer to communities, improves infrastructure, provides housing options, and reimagines existing spaces for community benefit. There is no silver bullet to ensure developments are perfect. Rather, a holistic approach is required to understand specific community needs, use cases, and feasibility surrounding site specific improvements. Additional information on this need is discussed in the Housing Element.

## 5 STRONGER RACIAL EQUITY

Gwinnett County's lack of racial equity manifests itself in a variety of topics: income, education level, and homeownership rates are just a few categories where nonwhite individuals aren't participating equally in economic prosperity. Cultural and language barriers further complicate matters, as effective communication with the diverse population can be challenging for the government and public institutions. Addressing these racial equality disparities requires concerted efforts to promote equal access, as well as improved cultural competency and language support services.

## 6 HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

While Gwinnett's housing market remains relatively affordable compared to the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area, lower to middle income families are increasingly finding it challenging to afford homes in the county. To

address this issue, Gwinnett needs to prioritize the construction of affordable housing units to accommodate the existing population and meet future demand. Additional information on this need is discussed in the Housing Element.

## 7 MORE ROBUST TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Public transit is consistently cited as a missing link between Gwinnett and increased prosperity in public opinion and planning efforts. Gwinnett has few public transit options outside its bus system, which currently runs 11 routes. Furthermore, ballot initiatives to expand transit into Gwinnett have been unsuccessful. Gwinnett residents' average commute to work is 34 minutes, exhibiting inefficiency in both getting around and leaving the county for work. This lack of connectivity to the community for work drives up commute times and leads people to spend their money elsewhere. Additional information on this need is discussed in the Transportation Element.

## 8 RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES TO SCALE

Countywide figures for average business size mirror national averages, but suggest room for Gwinnett to improve and scale businesses into larger economic producers. Recent planning efforts suggest that small businesses in the county lack access to investment capital, a connected network of innovation assets, and incentives to gain a competitive advantage in their work. Investment into these resources can help Gwinnett's businesses continue to scale and employ local talent.

## 9 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

While Gwinnett's workforce is one of its greatest assets, further investment in improving talent and offering continuing education opportunities is crucial for keeping Gwinnett competitive in its target industries.

## 10 SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Gwinnett's residents exhibit a strong entrepreneurial spirit, leading to Gwinnett having a high rate of business births. The County has taken strides to provide support for entrepreneurs and small business owners, and should continue to strengthen that programming.

# OPPORTUNITIES

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## 1 TAPPING INTO COUNTYWIDE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

Gwinnett history is full of entrepreneurship. To this day, Gwinnett has a higher business birth rate than other parts of Georgia and the country, and the County is only just beginning to focus on business creation as a key form of economic development. County officials must continue to tap into this spirit of growth and success, leveraging the new Gwinnett Entrepreneur Center, existing business development resources, and the range of diverse business establishments found in Gwinnett to incorporate resident owned businesses in new forms of redevelopment.

## 2 STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP

Gwinnett County Planning and Development, Partnership Gwinnett, the Chamber, and more localized efforts of the CIDs and the Rowen Foundation are critical in supporting Gwinnett's economic development future. However, these organizations are challenged to keep pace with the size and complexity of Gwinnett's economy

and development aspirations. Additional staff, capabilities, and potentially new organizations will be needed to implement the initiatives that will meet the County's goals.

## 3 LEVERAGING PROXIMITY TO COLLEGE GRADUATES

With proximity to 75,000 annual college graduates, Gwinnett has a potential labor shed that moves across the country and world upon finishing school. As Gwinnett's economy develops with new companies and jobs, there is a strong opportunity to capture more of these graduates, seeing an increase in county population, employment, and educational pedigree.

## 4 CONTINUING INVESTMENT INTO INNOVATION ASSETS

Gwinnett County is increasingly working to unite its innovation assets, mixing R&D with entrepreneurship in order to create jobs and build a robust innovation sector within the county. Assets include the Gwinnett Entrepreneurship Center, Curiosity Labs, Atlanta Tech Park, and 22 Tech Park. The Water Tower and Rowen R&D sites will add further capacity to the innovation

ecosystem, bringing more research expertise and creativity to the county.

## 5 EXPLORING REDEVELOPMENT AND RETROFITTING

As the County's supply of undeveloped land grows sparse, existing buildings and assets must be considered for redevelopment. The County has already begun to explore redevelopment opportunities through the Gwinnett Place Mall redevelopment and Stone Mountain Tennis Center. Gwinnett should ensure that key development sites meet various community needs, from housing to office space, entertainment areas to childcare facilities. Smaller scale redevelopment should focus on improving the sense of place in Gwinnett's Daily Communities, using urban design best practices and investing in facade improvements, the creation of new amenities, and updates to underutilized areas like parking lots, strip malls, and old warehouses.

## 6 INCREASING CONNECTIVITY AND WALKABILITY

Improving transit and transportation systems is one of Gwinnett County's largest priorities. These systems can take on numerous forms: rail, buses, urban trails, sidewalks, and bike paths all help incentivize public transit and micromobility. With the completion of a new Transit Development Plan, opportunities exist to develop other forms of local transit, generating connectivity and potentially shortening commute times to work and other amenities due to decreases in traffic.

## 7 LEVERAGING GEORGIA'S STRONG OUTDOOR ECONOMY

Gwinnett's 2020 Parks and Recreation Master Plan reflects the countywide desire for more connected, usable parks and protected land. The County managed parklands are strong, and there is an opportunity to build more connected greenways and park systems that protect Gwinnett's natural and cultural character. These investments can tie into Georgia's large outdoor economy sector to drive local amenities and connectivity.

## 8 INVESTING IN ARTS AND CULTURE

Local public private partnership ArtWorks Gwinnett has compiled a strategic cultural plan for Gwinnett to grow creative sectors, build more employment, and amplify the impacts of this industry. This coordinated strategy will help the County invest in specific arts and culture assets and organizations, create more equity in cultural access, and develop experiences that draw new residents and tourists to Gwinnett.

## 9 CULTIVATING A GLOBAL BRAND

As Gwinnett County's diversity has increased, so has its prominence for both population and business attraction. Gwinnett has an opportunity to become a more global, household name, as many areas adjacent to major cities—such as Arlington, Virginia and Fort Lauderdale, Florida—have accomplished. Developments such as Rowen can accelerate this branding effort, exposing Gwinnett to a broader international audience of potentially impactful economic players.



# Goals & Best Practices

Building on the needs and opportunities identified in the previous section, the following pages put forth three economic development goals for Gwinnett County. Alongside goals, case studies of best practices from similar or comparable communities around the country are shared to highlight what is possible in Gwinnett if these goals are pursued.

## **PROMOTE INVESTMENT AT THE DAILY COMMUNITY SCALE**

Gwinnett County's transition towards developing connected Daily Communities necessitates a shift away from traditional suburban forms of development in favor of new ones that can support a mix of activities and a strong sense of place. Compelling public spaces, distinctive architectural styles, and captivating artistic installations can attract businesses and residents, foster strong community identities, and promote a more connected and accessible lifestyle. Through policy and regulation, the County can influence, prioritize, and incentivize specific development types that better align with higher quality, connected communities.

However, Gwinnett County faces challenges in housing and transportation that need to be addressed. The county has a notable shortage of housing units, coupled with limited alternative transportation options. To modernize housing options and enhance connectivity, it is essential for the County to adopt an intentional approach through effective governance, strategic funding, and investment attraction. Addressing

these issues is critical as they directly impact economic development and future projections of population and job growth in the county. More in depth analysis and recommendations surrounding these issues can be found in this 2045 Unified Plan's other elements.

To invest in Daily Communities, two overarching best practices should be pursued when building out new economic development projects and initiatives:

### **1 INCENTIVIZE & FACILITATE UNIQUE, ATTRACTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Encourage and explore development projects that support the Daily Community framework—investing in mixed use community centers surrounded by traditional neighborhoods—throughout the county. These developments should encourage housing next to goods and services, provide greater connectivity/walkability, and enhance residents' quality of life.

### **2 ACCOMMODATE GROWTH THROUGH HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

Ensure that housing options and transportation infrastructure align with the county's continued growth. This includes addressing the shortage of housing units and improving alternative transportation modes to reduce commute times and enhance accessibility.

## MIXED USE REDEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY:

### ARLINGTON MILL COMMUNITY CENTER - ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Arlington Mill Community Center, located in the historic Columbia Pike Corridor in Arlington County, Virginia, is an example of mixed use redevelopment that seeks to revitalize an existing commercial corridor with a history of underperformance. Built in 2013, the Community Center replaced a vacant big box grocery store that formerly occupied the site. It includes a fullsize gym designed for intergenerational customers, a multipurpose court, a game room, a two story garage, public access computers, and wireless access. Phoenix Bikes, a local nonprofit that offers youth educational programs in addition to a full service professional bike shop and retail store, also occupies space in the Community Center.

A key element of the Arlington Mill Community Center is the Arlington Mill Residences, located adjacent to the Community Center. The Residences include 122 studio and one to three bedroom apartments, all of which are 100% affordable at different income and assistance levels. These units are supplemented by five additional units throughout the building that house formerly homeless individuals and families.

Together, the Arlington Mill Community Center and Residences are located in proximity to Glencarlyn Park, the Four Mile Run Bike Trail, and retail amenities in the Columbia Pike Corridor, connecting residents and the larger community with recreation, health, and wellness opportunities. Gwinnett County can learn from Arlington Mill's commitment to strategic investment in social infrastructure, access to health and wellness resources and amenities, and affordable and accessible housing for vulnerable community residents.

*Source: Arlington Mill Community Center and Arlington Mill - APAH*



*Image Source: DCS Design*

## **MIXED USE REDEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY:** *SOUTHERN VILLAGE - CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA*

Located on 312 acres south of downtown Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Southern Village is a master planned community that includes single family homes and apartments located within walking distance from an elementary school, movie theater, grocery store, modest office space, and other retail establishments. All of these resources surround a village green, which hosts regular community events and activities.

Built in the early to mid 1990s, the Southern Village development represents a New Urbanist design that prioritizes the creation of open space, access to transit, and pedestrian opportunities coupled with diverse, integrated commercial development.

The developer collaborated closely with the Town of Chapel Hill to pursue and navigate a conditional use zoning process for the village area. Development occurred one street at a time, allowing for careful consideration and review by both parties of the design elements that would make the neighborhood function seamlessly. The finished product abides by guidelines set out in the small area plan created for the area: a walkable, mixed use community with a cohesive street system.

Southern Village remains a highly sought after community that continues to see new development, including a hotel groundbreaking that occurred in tandem with the community's 20th anniversary in 2015.

*Source: Southern Village Chapel Hill, North Carolina and What we love about living in...Southern Village - Chapel Hill Magazine*



*Image Source: Southern Village*



## ATTRACT NEW BUSINESSES AND TALENT

Despite its strategic location between Atlanta's prestigious higher education institutions and Athens' University of Georgia, along with its own colleges, Gwinnett County faces challenges in retaining a significant share of recent graduates. Many young graduates gravitate towards the vibrant job market and lifestyle amenities of the City of Atlanta. To establish Gwinnett as an appealing destination for young professionals, deliberate steps are needed to develop a pipeline of both residents and job opportunities that differentiate Gwinnett County from Atlanta.

Gwinnett County has proven to be competitive in attracting a diverse range of residents, but this has not necessarily been replicated in the County's ability to attract a breadth of job opportunities. The County must build a foundation that can support and encourage jobs for highly educated, highly skilled workers. As the County continues to embrace its international demographics, it has the potential to become a global destination for domestic and international businesses and residents. Gwinnett can cultivate a vibrant hub of culture, community, and possibility.

At the same time, it is also important to safeguard affordability and accessibility for Gwinnett's existing businesses as growth is pursued. Balancing these often competing priorities require policies and programs that support small businesses, provide access to commercial spaces at affordable prices, and protect underresourced entrepreneurs while also allowing for continued growth.

To distinguish Gwinnett County from the rest of the region and attract new businesses and talent, the following best practices should be pursued when building out new economic development projects and initiatives:



## ESTABLISH A THRIVING JOB MARKET

In tandem with Goal #1 (Promote Investment at the Daily Community Scale), Gwinnett should invest in a holistic economic development foundation that not only attracts young workers and regional graduates to reside in Gwinnett for its quality of life, but also provides a multitude of appropriate job opportunities for them to thrive professionally. This can be achieved by fostering the growth of target industries, supporting entrepreneurship, and collaborating with educational institutions to align curriculum with local workforce needs. Rowen stands as an example of how the County is actively working to diversify the job opportunities present in Gwinnett.



## AMPLIFY GWINNETT'S BRAND

Promote Gwinnett's commercial and residential brand to a broader national and international audience, capitalizing on the county's diversity and unique identity. Potential channels for marketing may include conferences, memberships in trade associations, outreach to multinational delegations, and consistent business trips to destinations with a potential business interest in Gwinnett. Highlighting Gwinnett's distinct attributes, such as its cultural richness, economic potential, and quality of life, will help differentiate Gwinnett from Atlanta and attract businesses, individuals, and further investment. This endeavor includes prioritizing elements of the built environment—including arts and culture and placemaking—in addition to traditional forms of physical branding and marketing campaigns.

### 3

## CONNECT BUSINESSES TO MARKET DEMAND AND DATA INSIGHTS

To support the growth and success of businesses in Gwinnett County, it is crucial to provide business owners with comprehensive data and insights about the local market and demographics. By offering transparency around information on consumer behavior, market trends, and demographic profiles, the County will catalyze business owners to make informed decisions about the types of new businesses that would thrive in the area. This data driven approach will enable entrepreneurs and existing businesses to better understand the needs and preferences of the local community, leading to the establishment of businesses that align with market demands.

### ATTRACTING AND RETAINING YOUNG, EDUCATED TALENT:

#### *CHOOSE TOPEKA PROGRAM*

The Choose Topeka initiative, spearheaded by the Greater Topeka Partnership in Kansas, is a robust economic incentive program designed to assist local businesses in attracting and retaining talented professionals. This program uses funds approved by the Joint Economic Development Organization of Topeka and Shawnee County (JEDO) to provide reimbursement to employers for the moving expenses incurred by newly hired individuals. Participating employers offer relocation incentives ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000, depending on whether the individual rents or purchases a home in Topeka. Once the employee has established residency in Topeka for a minimum of one year, employers are eligible for reimbursement of half of the incurred moving expenses through the Choose Topeka program.

In 2021, the JEDO allocated a total of \$300,000 for reimbursement purposes, with approximately \$100,000 already committed to specific cases. The GTP anticipates that the remaining funds will be fully utilized, and there may be future considerations to seek additional funding from the JEDO board to sustain the program's success. The Choose Topeka initiative has effectively attracted individuals from diverse locations to Topeka, resulting in tangible economic growth and an enhanced reputation for the community. The program's positive outcomes serve as a testament to its efficacy in promoting talent retention and recruitment, establishing Topeka as a more appealing destination for professionals seeking new opportunities.

By implementing a similar program, Gwinnett can proactively incentivize skilled individuals to relocate to communities across the county, bolstering its workforce and fostering economic development. Local employers in Gwinnett County may consider participating in a relocation program to attract top talent and strengthen the county's overall competitiveness in attracting skilled professionals. Such initiatives can contribute to the growth and prosperity of the county, positioning it as an attractive destination for talented individuals looking to embark on new career journeys.

*Source: Choose Topeka, and The Topeka Capital-Journal*

## USING INCENTIVES TO CREATE HIGH WAGE, KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY JOBS: *BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA*

Broward County has successfully implemented a range of programs and initiatives through the Office of Economic and Small Business Development, in partnership with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance, to incentivize the creation of targeted, high wage jobs. Key incentives that Broward County offers include:

1. **Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund:** This program provides tax refunds on corporate income, sales, property taxes, and other taxes for companies that create high wage jobs in targeted industries. Eligible applicants can receive incentive tax refunds of up to \$6,000 per new job created. Gwinnett County can consider implementing a similar tax refund program to attract businesses in high wage sectors.
2. **Job Growth Incentive:** Broward County offers direct cash incentives to both new and existing businesses that create high skill/high wage jobs. Payments of up to \$2,000 per new job created are provided under this program. Gwinnett County could establish a comparable job growth incentive to encourage the creation of high wage positions within the county.
3. **High Impact Performance Incentive Grant:** This grant is designed for designated high impact sector businesses that create many new jobs and make substantial investments. It awards 50% of the eligible grant upon the commencement of operations. Gwinnett County could explore the implementation of a similar grant program to attract businesses that generate substantial job opportunities and investments.
4. **Capital Investment Tax Credit:** Broward County offers an annual credit against corporate income tax for up to 20 years to eligible projects in designated high impact sectors. To qualify, businesses must create a minimum of 100 jobs and invest at least \$25 million in eligible capital costs. Gwinnett County could consider introducing a comparable target industry tax credit program to incentivize large scale capital investments and job creation.

Adopting similar best practices from Broward County, Gwinnett County can establish its own tailored incentive programs, collaborate with economic development partners, seek funding opportunities, and actively promote the benefits of high wage job creation. These efforts can help attract businesses in targeted industries, retain and expand existing businesses, and ultimately drive economic growth and prosperity in Gwinnett County by attracting more desirable, higher wage jobs for residents to hold.

*Source: Broward County*

## **BUILDING A REPUTATION TO ATTRACT TALENT AND BUSINESSES: *FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA***

Fairfax County in Virginia has successfully developed a comprehensive brand strategy that effectively showcases its strategic location near a major metropolitan area while highlighting its unique assets. This brand appeals to an international audience and gives local businesses a recognizable identity. The County leverages its proximity to Washington, D.C., utilizing slogans such as Connect with America to emphasize this advantage.

In the realm of tourism promotion, Visit Fairfax, Fairfax County's Destination Marketing Organization, funded by a portion of the Transient Occupancy tax, plays a crucial role. It supports event organizers by providing marketing materials that encourage visitors to explore the region's museums, historic sites, shopping destinations, and world class restaurants. Additionally, the County has implemented initiatives like Made in Fairfax to foster support for local businesses. This program specifically focuses on small scale production businesses and makers within the county, offering resources, networking opportunities, and marketing support to entrepreneurs interested in establishing or expanding such enterprises.

Gwinnett County can draw valuable insights from Fairfax County's case study by capitalizing on its proximity to Atlanta, creating a distinct brand identity, and supporting local businesses. By highlighting its advantageous location, implementing effective marketing campaigns, and providing resources for small businesses, Gwinnett County can enhance its appeal to businesses, tourists, and residents alike.

*Source: Visit Fairfax, and Made in Fairfax*



*Image Source: Fairfax County EDA*

## EQUIPPING BUSINESS OWNERS WITH KEY MARKET INSIGHTS: WAKE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Wake County in North Carolina is committed to creating a supportive ecosystem for small business owners looking to grow and develop their entrepreneurial vision. Wake County is home to the Wake Tech Small Business Center, a state funded organization that is a part of Wake Technical Community College in Raleigh and the larger Small Business Center Network of North Carolina.

With the understanding that starting and building businesses requires in depth knowledge of market conditions and industry trends, the Wake Tech Small Business Center offers research support to its clients through the Western Wake Campus Library team. This encompasses free access to critical data including market analyses, competitor intelligence, demographic data and industry assessment. Wake Tech positions itself to enhance the understanding of small business owners looking to create jobs for Wake County, creating success within the local economy.

Gwinnett County can incorporate this model from Wake County by drawing upon its own educational institutions and entrepreneur support organizations to offer similar business data requests. Doing so will similarly position Gwinnett County to become a leader in small business development and economic success for the area.



*Image Source: Visit Raleigh*





## PROMOTE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MOBILITY

Gwinnett County has recognized the importance of entrepreneurship and local small business growth as a fundamental aspect of its economy and identity. The establishment and success of the Gwinnett Entrepreneur Center exemplifies this commitment, with the County investing in technical assistance, resource sharing, and flexible meeting spaces to support local business owners. Building upon this entrepreneurial momentum, Gwinnett can implement programs and initiatives to help businesses scale up and provide essential support to aspiring entrepreneurs through mentorship and professional services. A suite of programs can also specifically target underserved demographics and populations, working to grow economic equity throughout the county.

Meanwhile, workforce development in Gwinnett County involves various partner entities, including government, educational institutions, economic development groups, and regional centers. However, there is a need for a coordinated effort to ensure that Gwinnett residents have the skills to match the jobs in the county, and vice versa.

Additional best practices for promoting economic growth and mobility in Gwinnett include:



### 1 FOSTER A CULTURE OF INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Foster a culture of innovation and creativity by continuing to build out programs, funding opportunities, innovation hubs, and coworking spaces that bring together entrepreneurs, creatives, and professionals from different industries. These programs and spaces can serve as collaborative environments for idea exchange, accessing funding opportunities, networking, and resource sharing, nurturing the

growth of innovative businesses and fostering socioeconomic mobility.



### 2 DEVELOP TARGETED PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES

Develop targeted programs to support underrepresented communities and individuals in starting and growing their own businesses. This can include initiatives that provide specialized training, mentorship, and access to capital for entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed and contribute to the county's economic growth.



### 3 CONNECT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO THE COUNTY'S SHIFTING ECONOMY

Connect workforce development to the county's shifting economy, ensuring existing county residents are upskilling into higher wage jobs. The county needs an entity specifically focusing on workforce development, working to connect residents with various levels of education and training to a wide variety of jobs and other economic opportunities.

By pursuing these goals and implementing creative strategies, Gwinnett County can strengthen its economy, promote economic mobility, and establish itself as a dynamic and inclusive community that attracts businesses and talent from diverse backgrounds.

## CATALYZING A SCALING INNOVATION ECONOMY: *NEWLAB, NEW YORK CITY*

Established in 2016, Newlab was created to address significant societal challenges by advancing and commercializing innovative technologies and businesses. With a track record of success, this organization has played a pivotal role in guiding over 200 member firms to secure more than \$2 billion in capital from approximately 260 venture capital companies. These efforts have resulted in successful exits valued at over \$1.5 billion and a total valuation exceeding \$5 billion. Today, Newlab is at the forefront of driving progress and adoption of technologies crucial for reducing global carbon emissions and improving societal outcomes.

Located in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a historic shipbuilding site from World War I and II, Newlab received valuable support from the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) through a \$30 million grant as part of the NYCEDC's Made in NYC initiative, which fosters job creation and economic growth through innovation. Newlab boasts a membership of over 300 companies and institutions, ranging from startups to universities and government agencies. It serves as a shining example of how public private partnerships can effectively promote innovation and drive economic development. The impact of Newlab extends beyond the Brooklyn Navy Yard, benefiting both New York City and the wider innovation community.

Some key roles of Newlab include:

- Providing members with access to state of the art facilities, equipment, and resources necessary for their research and development endeavors.
- Facilitating connections between members and industry experts, mentors, and potential collaborators to foster knowledge sharing and cross-pollination of ideas.
- Encouraging collaboration among member firms to drive innovation and the development of groundbreaking solutions.
- Offering funding opportunities and comprehensive support for member projects, enabling them to reach their full potential and contribute to economic growth.
- Promoting the achievements and initiatives of its members to the public and potential partners, helping to forge valuable connections and opportunities.

The Newlab case study serves as an excellent guide for Gwinnett County, demonstrating how public private partnerships can fuel innovation and stimulate economic growth. By adopting a similar model on a smaller scale, Gwinnett County can establish its vibrant innovation ecosystem, support local businesses, create employment opportunities, and drive economic development. Furthermore, this approach can address the specific needs and challenges of the community, positioning Gwinnett County as a hub for innovation and a catalyst for positive change.

*Sources: Newlab, and NYCEDC*

## CONNECTING R&D TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:

### *TRIANGLE UNIVERSITIES CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDIES*

Triangle Universities Center for Advanced Studies, Inc. (TUCASI) is a vital institution situated within the Research Triangle Park that serves as a crucial link between education and job opportunities. Established in 1975, TUCASI's primary mission is to facilitate nonprofit research and educational programs that utilize and enhance the intellectual and physical resources of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke University, and North Carolina State University at Raleigh.

At the heart of TUCASI's work is the cultivation of collaboration and innovation. The organization serves as a catalyst, forging partnerships between faculty members from the three universities and scientists within RTP. By creating an environment that fosters interdisciplinary cooperation, TUCASI acts as a central hub, bringing together various organizations dedicated to advancing research and education. Through its collaborative approach and emphasis on leveraging the intellectual assets of the universities and RTP, TUCASI plays a pivotal role in aligning education with job opportunities in the region. Noteworthy achievements include the establishment of the state's renowned biotechnology center, groundbreaking research in the humanities, and significant contributions to digital networking technologies.

Gwinnett County can draw valuable insights from the success of TUCASI and Research Triangle Park in bridging the gap between education and job opportunities. The development at Rowen has similar goals, and can look to TUCASI for lessons learned and potential application in Gwinnett.

*Source: Research Triangle Park (rti.org)*



*Image Source: TUCASI | Research Triangle Park (rtp.org) - Research Triangle Park*

## PROTECTING AGAINST COMMERCIAL GENTRIFICATION:

### BROOKHOLLOW, TEXAS

Just as gentrification can raise property values in a way that makes it unaffordable for residents to remain in an area, so too can gentrification lead to displacement for small business owners as the cost of renting or owning a storefront becomes untenable.

To combat commercial displacement and support small business owners, the City of DeSoto, Texas worked with a local developer to redevelop the longtime Brookhollow Shopping Center to better support the needs and interests of the predominantly Black suburb. The resulting space features Grow DeSoto, a small business incubator designed to foster new and developing businesses. The incubator serves as the anchor for the shopping center, with space for 60 businesses, including small retailers, service businesses, and microrestaurants. The development also holds space for outdoor food vendors. As of 2021, five years after the opening of the redeveloped Brookhollow Shopping Center, the space reported an occupancy rate of 90% despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Source: DeSoto Transforming Hardware Store into Entrepreneurial Haven » Dallas Innovates and Grow DeSoto: Lessons from a suburban business incubator – Ash + Lime*



*Image Source: DeSoto Transforming Hardware Store into Entrepreneurial Haven » Dallas Innovates*

# Implementation

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION**

To achieve these goals for economic development, a series of integrated implementation steps will need to be pursued by the County. These actions involve multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, community organizations, educational institutions, and private sector partners. Funding for the various programs and initiatives must be secured through a combination of county resources, grants, public private partnerships, and corporate sponsorships. The implementation timeline, found in the Community Work Program (page 417), spans a period of 20 years, with specific actions and milestones outlined for each goal and corresponding policy or program.

