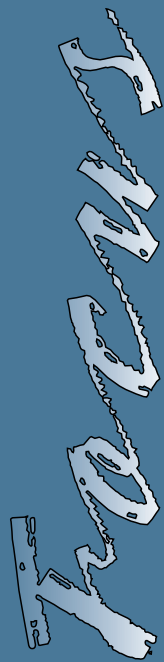


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Innovating Georgia One Community at a Time

By dictionary definition, innovation broadly means “the introduction of something new.” Innovation in community economic development refers to applying new techniques or technologies to achieve greater quality of life, job opportunities, and fiscal sustainability. Enter the Herculean job of local economic developers—true change agents who certainly face no small task given that such innovation usually requires a beneficial modification of how community stakeholders view, approach, and do things.

Take **Tattnall County**. For just a little over a year, the community’s economic development leadership has worked diligently to build solidarity among all interests in the county. With the help of several statewide and regional partners, Tattnall County recently completed the Economic Development Institute’s (EDI) Accelerator Program. The community’s leaders and citizens developed a countywide vision and formed a strategic plan for economic development called Tattnall 2012. In just the first year of its efforts, Tattnall took great strides toward reaching the six Tattnall 2012 goals by accomplishing 23 supportive actions. Going forward in the second year of the initiative, the community’s leadership remains committed to working together to reach these goals (see page 6).

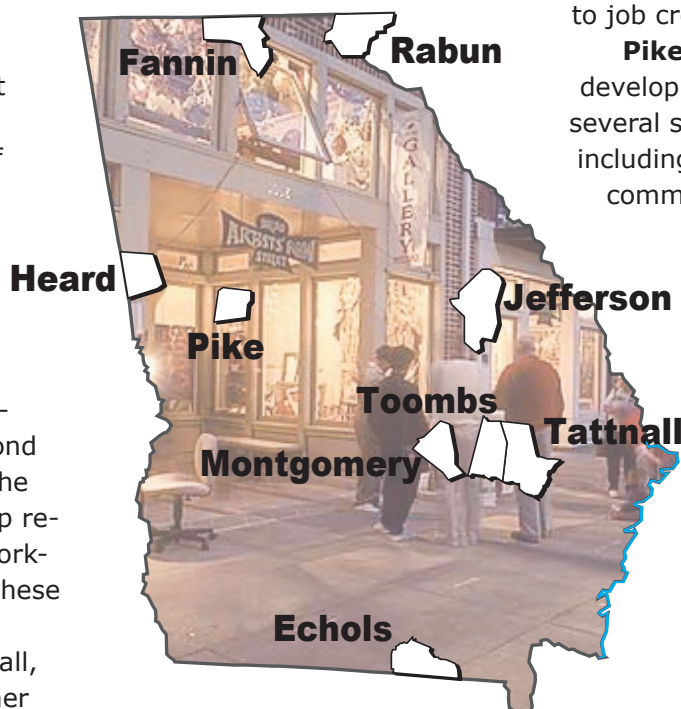
In addition to Tattnall, EDI continued to partner with other communities around the state during 2003 to introduce that “something new” to their pursuit of economic growth. Notes EDI Director Rick Duke, CEcD, EDFP, EDI’s efforts reflect its overall mission to provide technology-driven and innovative solutions to Georgia’s communities and a long-time tradition set forth by Georgia Tech. “Georgia Tech’s history of innovative approaches to economic development goes back 70 years” he says.

Time will tell whether these efforts to foster community innovation lead to long-term success, but they will not succeed at all unless communities invest in themselves. Several locales served by EDI are doing just that, and a few examples follow.

With support from EDI’s ENet program and the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center (GREDC) at East Georgia College, community leaders in **Toombs** and **Montgomery** counties developed a strategy for providing more assistance to local entrepreneurs. They established an Entrepreneur Support Team consisting of several local stakeholders. It meets monthly to coordinate efforts, which include start-up kits, mentoring, and classes at the local technical college related to starting and operating a business. The team also put budding entrepreneurs in contact with Patrick Wilbanks, EDI’s entrepreneur specialist at GREDC, who supplied appropriate assistance, thereby contributing to job creation in the area.

Pike County jump-started its economic development program with assistance from several statewide and regional partners, including help from EDI in assessing the community’s readiness to pursue various economic development activities. Recommendations from this assessment became the basis for the Pike County Development Authority’s program of work, and they have spawned numerous actions by the community’s leadership to foster an environment conducive to economic growth. These include developing a strategic plan for economic development, forming a roundtable for local government officials, devising a program to support existing industry, and increasing funding for economic development (see page 8).

Leaders in **Echols County** recently decided to formalize their community’s first-ever economic development organization to manage future growth. This followed a recommendation from EDI’s assessment of economic development readiness. Popula-



Continued – page 3

tion growth in Echols—60 percent from 1990 to 2000—has put pressure on the county school system and caused concern among the citizenry. A group of residents banded together to form Economic Development Group Echols, or EDGE, and with help from EDI and the Georgia Tech Research Institute, they are working to develop a shared vision for economic development and to organize their efforts.

Fannin County's leadership created the Fannin's Future initiative and recruited EDI to help develop feasible strategies for economic development. The EDI team reviewed opportunities related to several potential strategies--from entrepreneur development and strengthening the tourism base to workforce development and supporting existing business and industry. The community has elected to pursue six of 10 strategic goals recommended by EDI. Leaders and citizens already have banded together to form a steering committee and work group alliances to formalize their strategic plan and begin pursuing these goals (see page 11).

And in **Heard** County, following a recommendation made by EDI's review of the community's technology opportunities, local leaders last September held a technology fair to educate the community about the importance of technology and how it can be used to improve everyday life (see page 11). EDI conducted a similar assessment for **Jefferson** County, where local leaders have since created a program for high school students to provide technology support for area small businesses. In **Rabun** County,

the city of **Clayton** has been the demonstration site for EDI's Visitor Internet Point, a project that uses high-speed Internet access to attract tourists and gather data from them (see page 9). EDI also has assisted community leaders around the state—for example, in **Columbus, Dalton, and Rome**—with

their efforts to form, organize, and implement local technology organizations or councils.

What is common to all these communities? They have elected to pursue new approaches or techniques for fostering economic development or for addressing barriers to economic development, which reflects some fundamental change in thinking and doing. Their initiatives have been spearheaded and implemented by a broad sector of community members who have developed a greater understanding about the need for economic development and how it works. In many cases, their initiatives have incor-

porated groundbreaking community action as well as significant collaboration among partners. Their efforts have the potential to benefit widespread, rather than narrow, interests. And these communities are pursuing economic development strategies that go beyond what they traditionally have done.

New times call for new thinking, new approaches, new tools and techniques. "Rural communities face an even greater challenge than ever before," says Duke. "These challenges call for innovative approaches to foster job creation and an enhanced quality of life." ♦

—Joy Wilkins, CECd

Did You Know?

EDI served 91 counties in FY 2003 through 140 economic development projects.

E²—Energizing Entrepreneurs

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Georgia Tech's Global Learning Center at
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Martha Schoonmaker, CECd, at **404.894.0332** or
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This two-and-a-half-day interactive program will help economic developers, educators, and community leaders:

- examine the latest trends in entrepreneurship;
- learn how to grow their economy through a comprehensive entrepreneur program; and
- develop a community strategy suited to their locale and business environment.

A Q&A with GREDC's Jack Bareford

East Georgia College in **Swainsboro** established the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center (GREDC) to expand the school's role in regional economic development. Partly funded by the University System's Intellectual Capital Partnership Program (ICAPP) and partly by the private sector, GREDC is directed by Jack Bareford. Here, he shares his thoughts about the center's work and rural economic development.

Focus: How long have you been at GREDC, and what are your responsibilities?



Jack Bareford

Bareford: I came to East Georgia College in October 1998 to open the first Office of Economic Development. In late 1999, the president of the college thought it would be a good idea to expand our economic development of-

ferings through a rural-focused center. In late 2000, I became director of GREDC, and, in 2002, also became director of Lifelong Education and Economic Development Services (LEADS), the new Board of Regents initiative, which is under the GREDC umbrella.

Focus: How did you get into the economic development field, and when?

Bareford: I began my economic development career in July 1995 when I became the chamber of commerce director and economic developer for **Claxton** and **Evans County**. I had recently left active military service and had contacts in Claxton due to community work while stationed at Fort Stewart, Georgia.

Focus: What is GREDC's service area?

Bareford: We serve rural Georgia, particularly Tier 1 and 2 counties, but we have a 21-county focus area, chosen because of its demographics. Programs are developed for replication in any rural area.

Focus: How does GREDC assist communities?

Bareford: GREDC conducts research and develops programs that benefit rural Georgia, to include a limited grant program, a proactive entrepreneurship program, studies that target specific rural challenges, and projects that help rural businesses and industry. GREDC's programs have had a significant impact on rural Georgia.

Focus: Describe some of GREDC's milestones or achievements.

Bareford: The GREDC Entrepreneurship Program has assisted more than 110 entrepreneurs in 31 counties with start-up and growth. Fifty of these entrepreneurs have created more than 435 jobs and have the potential to grow an additional 365 jobs within the next two years. It also provided entrepreneur development guidance and training to over 30 economic development professionals and community leaders. In addition, it established a "model" volunteer entrepreneur support team of 10 community leaders in **Toombs** and **Montgomery** counties, which identified 46 entrepreneurs, assisted 27 and helped create more than 30 new jobs.

Grants to communities have had a significant effect, as well. Most of the grants are small, but for the rural communities receiving them, the impact is large. For example, a GREDC grant for **Johnson County** facilitated the effort to evaluate 10 potential sites for a large industrial park to select the optimal site. Subsequently, a OneGeorgia grant was obtained to purchase the land and provide some of the infrastructure. The community is currently negotiating with a prospective tenant.

Another grant to **Jefferson County** was the leverage to bring in \$81,000 of non-GREDC grant money to the county. It has created specs and plans for two industrial parks and helped initiate a countywide leadership program. They are now in their fourth year of Leadership Jefferson County. The county has brought in 300 new jobs and \$2 million in grants with GREDC's help.

A grant to **Laurens County** led the county's development authority through a process to develop their own wetland mitigation bank. The bank will provide Laurens County with a major advantage in

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Q&A — continued from page 4

recruiting prospects when wetland issues are involved. This will be the first government-controlled bank in the state, and the county will be able to sell credits for a profit.

The center also has conducted research programs in conjunction with other University System organizations on topics that aid all communities in their development efforts.

These include a study to determine the economic development benefits of zoning, a rural water/sewer assessment study, and a study focusing on outdoor tourism, to name a few. We also developed a manual titled, *Best Practices and Strategies in Rural Economic Development*, which is a compilation of rural economic development best practices from Georgia and around the country. It is available on GREDC's Web site—

www.gredc.org.

Focus: What are the most critical issues facing rural Georgia today?

Bareford: The major issue is the same as for non-rural areas—getting new jobs and, particularly for rural areas, retaining existing jobs. Because of the large impact the loss of one business or industry has for rural communities, it is extremely important to retain jobs and do everything possible to help existing industries remain healthy so that they may grow.

Funding is also a significant issue. Many rural communities do not have the resources to conduct strong economic development programs. The state is doing a lot to help through OneGeorgia, funding opportunities through the Departments of Industry, Trade and Tourism and Community Affairs, and other programs. However, the small grants from GREDC often are the catalysts to get effective, grassroots economic development programs moving and provide the foundation for larger grants. For example,

GREDC funded readiness and strategic assessments, conducted in partnership with EDI, that were catalysts for major advances in community economic development programs.

Finally, there are leadership programs. Without a strong, solid leadership base in a community, economic development programs do not materialize.

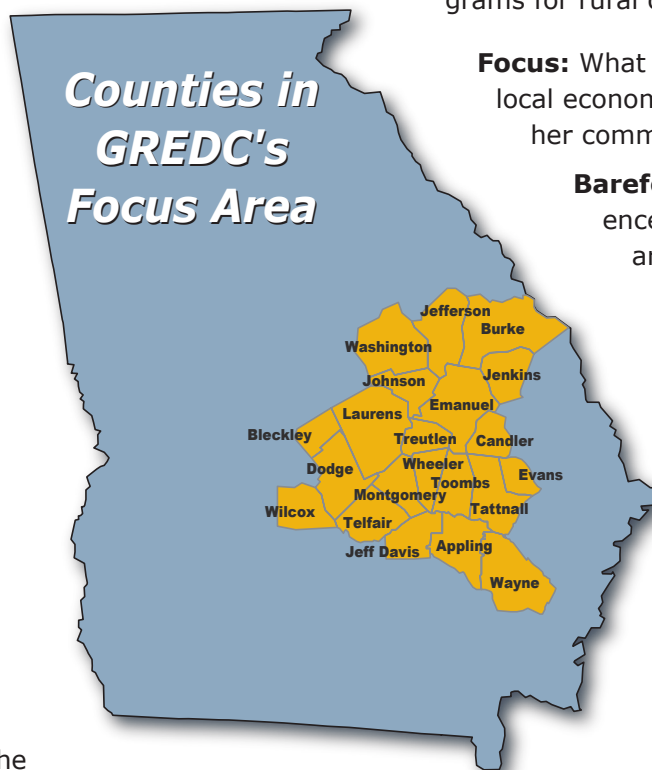
The center has always recognized the importance of leadership and has funded leadership programs for rural communities.

Focus: What advice would you give to a local economic developer preparing his/her community for economic growth?

Bareford: From GREDC's experience, I would say that there are many resources available to rural Georgia. That strong leadership base needs to be established and/or maintained to take advantage of the many opportunities. There are people out there willing to be involved, and developers need to get them involved. Economic development is a team effort.

Communities should make every effort to promote themselves, particularly to statewide developers. In addition to seeking out new businesses, communities need to work hard to take care of existing business and industry. Of great importance, too, is seeking out and developing entrepreneurs, who create jobs and contribute in many other ways to their communities.

Finally, local leaders must realize that for their rural community to develop, it must be confident that it can affect its own future; develop logical, attainable goals and strategies; and, above all, do a lot of hard work. ❖



Tattnall Takes Off

The Economic Development Institute (EDI) has worked with **Tattnall County** for several years, with initiatives encompassing a JumpStart technology project, attempts to expand the tourism base, and assistance to local manufacturers. Recently, developments have quickened up via EDI's Accelerator Program, and reported results are promising.

Tattnall was picked to pilot the new program, which provides technical assistance to local leaders during the start-up phase of their newly devised strategic planning process. This pilot was a joint initiative of EDI and the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center (GREDC) at East Georgia College.

During the first half of 2002, EDI conducted an assessment to identify strategic opportunities for economic development for Tattnall County. (Visit www.ceds.gatech.edu for the complete story.) The community chose to pursue six of the 10 strategic goals (see table on page 7) recommended by EDI through this assessment. Approximately 40 volunteers signed up to help pursue these goals at the read-out of the assessment findings. Due to the strong community commitment, Tattnall was selected for the Accelerator Program pilot, which was launched later in 2002 and led by EDI's Danny Duggar. It concluded in September 2003.

Duggar guided the community through the development of its strategic plan to reach the six strategic goals, known as Tattnall 2012, and the process to begin to implement the plan. Fashioned after an approach used by Georgia Tech's Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC) and developed in partnership with the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center at East Georgia College, the Accelerator Program helped Tattnall County by:

- Sharpening *focus* through the establishment of realistic targets and taking actions with the potential for success in reaching those targets.

- Facilitating *connectivity* by helping the community understand, identify, and mobilize internal and external resources (talent, financial, technical, etc.)

- Creating a *sense of place* by helping the community create a collaborative, communitywide organization for implementing actions in pursuit of the strategic planning goals.

"The Accelerator Program has begun to engage the general public in the community economic development concept – while providing a road map to move forward," says John Cheney, executive director of the Tattnall County Development Authority. "It is a venue to collect ideas, thoughts, and suggestions to help implement our community improvement program, 'Merging Tattnall's Talent.'"

Tattnall County formed a steering committee to provide oversight to the process and work groups for each of the strategic goals. "The program is designed to help communi-

ties with the 'next step,'" explains Duggar. He adds that more than 1,500 volunteer hours reportedly have gone into the program involving people from all walks of life and all areas of the county.

"One of the biggest parts of implementing the strategic plan initiatives is getting people to understand more about the economic development process," says Cheney. "We made a diligent effort to get countywide representation of every group." Serving on the work groups, the Tattnall volunteers implemented several key actions, which has taken them a step closer to reaching their 2012 goals. These accomplishments are highlighted in the accompanying table on page 7.

"When we had these state and regional partners help review our draft plan, folks began to see that we didn't operate in a vacuum. It's imperative that we have all of us in there together working on this particular process," Cheney says.



GDITT

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Tattnall — continued from page 6

According to Cheney, these partners have included GREDC at East Georgia College, Southeastern Technical College, University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government and Extension Service, Georgia Department of Industry, Trade, and Tourism, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the Heart of Georgia Regional Development Center, Georgia Power, Georgia Electric Membership Corporation and Georgia Tech EDI. Cheney also stresses the importance and positive focus of local partners such as the Tattnall County Board of Commissioners, all city governments and development authorities, and the local media.

"Oldtimers say that never in the history of Tattnall County has a campaign for community improvement been such a sustainable effort as this one," says Cheney. He estimates that more than 100 people have participated in Tattnall 2012 to date.

Duggar credits the success of Tattnall County's efforts so far with the engagement of stakeholders from every corner of the community. ❖

—[Several EDI staff contributed to this article.]

Strategic Goal	2003 Accomplishments of Volunteer Work Groups
Community Solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All development authorities initiated site study for industrial properties ■ Preliminary discussions about Memorandum of Agreement between development authorities ■ Articles written about community solidarity ■ Developed logo and slogan
Engaging and Growing New Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Youth leadership program initiated at Tattnall County High School ■ Financial stability classes initiated in high schools ■ Continued local and regional youth leadership programs
Improving Youth Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Starting campaign to increase number of students completing high school ■ Began research of entrepreneurial opportunities for youth ■ Assisted with youth career days
Supporting New and Existing Business and Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developed a list of financial resources for business and industry ■ Gathered sample business and industry incentive plans ■ Initiated BREP study
Enhancing Community Systems and Support for Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Researched "Better Hometown" status ■ Recommended additional funding for development authorities ■ Initiated land use plan ■ Recommended study to consolidate community services ■ Recommended upgrades to airport ■ Recommended additional resources to support a unified economic development effort
Empowering the Hispanic Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identified language resources ■ Identified key documents required for translation ■ Identified community resources ■ Identified education resources available to Hispanic students

Toward Pike's Peak

Economic development in **Pike County** is climbing in the aftermath of a community economic development readiness assessment completed by EDI in fall 2002. According to Missy Kendrick, executive director of the chamber of commerce and development authority, action has been taken on several recommendations from the assessment, including fostering entrepreneurship, seeing a fivefold budget increase for the development authority, completing a BREP survey, exploring ways to recognize existing industry, and attracting greater involvement on the part of area municipalities.

"For a new organization, the readiness assessment was exactly what we needed to help the decision makers realize that a bigger effort had to be made to fund and support economic development in Pike County," says Kendrick. "Since the report has been completed, I have used it numerous times to help educate the public about economic development and to shape the direction of economic development initiatives."

EDI found several positive factors, such as increases in population, employment, and per capita income and a decline in the poverty rate. It also noted that Pike County lies between Atlanta and Macon, which could allow it "to take advantage of the ripple effect of both cities." And it's situated within an hour of Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, a marketing plus. In addition, it has good access to post-secondary education, and has formed partnerships with **Upson** and **Lamar** counties. Opportunities possibly lie with tourism and entrepreneurial development.

According to EDI west region manager Jennifer Trapp-Lingenfelter, the assessment was designed to help educate the development authority and identify areas on which to work regarding economic development initiatives.

In response, Pike's strategic plan for economic development includes focusing on existing industry, entrepreneurs, tourism, retail development, and new industry recruitment, notes Kendrick, adding that

ENet's Don Betts, CEcD, has provided an entrepreneurial "start-up kit."

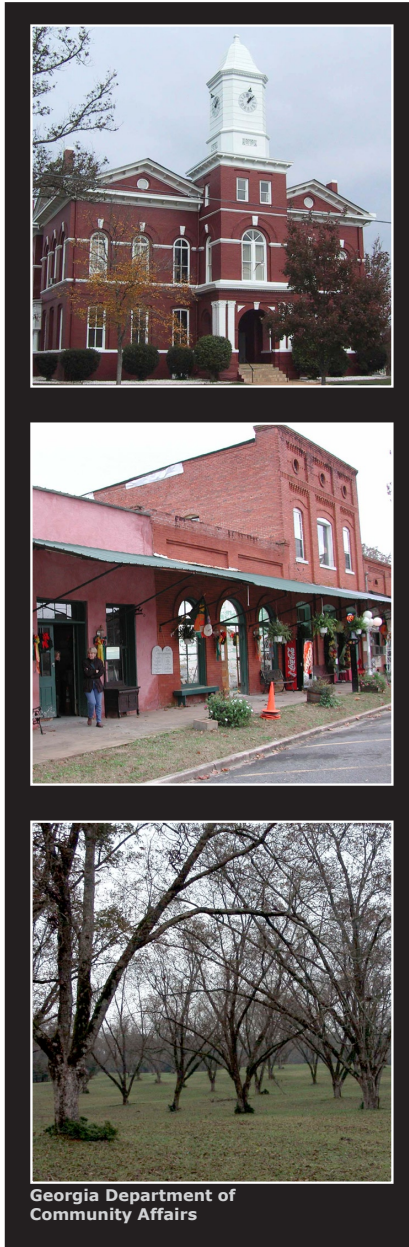
The assessment offered 14 key action items, from developing a strategic plan to creating a volunteer recruitment program to preparing a community information packet.

Efforts are under way for business recognition and volunteer recruitment programs, and the chamber will include an Economic Development Committee in its 2004 program of work, Kendrick says. Also, a strategy is being devised to explore Atlanta-Macon opportunities. Pike County held its first annual developers day last year, well-attended by the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism and regional partners. The development authority has issued press releases to raise awareness of economic development, and it produced the recommended community information packet.

In terms of hard numbers, Kendrick reports the development authority's budget has risen from \$18,000 in 2001 to \$90,000 in 2003-04. And when the chamber sponsored its first local government roundtable last year, it garnered 100 percent attendance from all five cities and the county. Economic development, she remarks, is intended to be a major part of these discussions.

"Coming from Georgia Tech, the report lent credibility to the long-term process of economic development," Kendrick notes. "The report was comprehensive, objective, and well-presented, and it has been a great benefit to Pike County. I would recommend this to any community." ♦

—Lincoln Bates



Georgia Department of Community Affairs

The VIP Treatment

New Internet technology for tourism and economic development debuted Oct. 22 in **Clayton**.

A hands-on demo of the Visitor Internet Point (VIP) was held at the **Rabun County** Chamber of Commerce to offer area stakeholders a chance to "test drive" the system, which essentially gives high-tech visitors a chance to learn about regional attractions by linking to Web sites for state parks, regional tourism, and local chambers of commerce. In turn, they provide data about their travel plans and information sources. The "deal" gives tourism

mated to have great value for travelers and mobile computer users. "The VIP is unique in that it charges information rather than money for Internet access," he says.

The demo enabled local business and civic leaders to see how VIP works, but it also sought support for a broader concept, that of a regional network, according to Laudeman. A regional approach would allow users to roam from one VIP to another and enable communities in the region to market themselves more effectively, and the region itself to convey a stronger message and image. "In other words, having a regional system will have more publicity and marketing value than a bunch of stand-alone VIPs," he says. ♦

Contact Todd Greene, CECD at 404.894.4595 or todd.greene@edi.gatech.edu; or Greg Laudeman at 706.272.2703 or greg.laudeman@edi.gatech.edu.



Rabun County Chamber of Commerce

Shown in the photo are (l-r) Charles Craig from Patterson Pumps in Toccoa, Lyn Allen from the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, Diane Wiggins from the U.S. Forest Service, and seated, Randy Dilliot Executive Director of the Rabun County Economic Development Authority, host of the VIP demonstration site.

representatives a chance to engage visitors, learn their interests, and direct them to suitable offerings.

Developed by EDI and funded by the Georgia Academy for Economic Development, the VIP resulted from an EDI assessment of Region 2 conducted in summer 2002. The economic development study included opportunities related to technology and tourism. Region 2 encompasses 17 counties in northeast Georgia.

"The basic idea," says EDI's Greg Laudeman, who designed the VIP, "is to use high-speed Internet access as a tourism asset for tech-savvy visitors."

According to Laudeman, the VIP is a variation in what is commonly called an Internet or wireless Internet "hotspot," increasingly popular among technology product and service providers and esti-

Pursuing Quality Growth

EDI is partnering with the Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) Office of Quality Growth to offer economic development assistance to communities served via DCA's quality growth resource teams. The Office of Quality Growth recently won the 2003 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The partnership recently operated in **Thomasville**, where a resource team studied the city's downtown and the corridors leading to it.

DCA recruited a multidisciplinary team comprising numerous groups that ranged from the Georgia Conservancy and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation to the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government and Thomasville Landmarks. For EDI's part, south Georgia regional manager Art Ford, CECD, conducted a community economic development readiness assessment of Thomasville and **Thomas County**. Says Jim Frederick, director of DCA's Office of Quality Growth, "I think the readiness assessment worked very well with the process, and Art was a great contributor to the team effort."

Among quality growth issues examined by the team were:

- Upgrading the viability and appearance of commercial corridors, including creation of more attractive gateways to downtown.

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- Encouraging revitalization and greater housing/income mix in neighborhoods surrounding downtown.
- Planning/designing for attractive expansion of the downtown area, while minimizing impact on surrounding neighborhoods.
- Accommodating potential university expansion into the downtown area.
- Addressing downtown parking, to accommodate retail, office, and university needs.
- Encouraging appropriate infill development on vacant lots, and adaptive reuse of vacant buildings, in downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Providing transportation alternatives, such as trolleys, bicycle and pedestrian paths, or linkages to the existing county transit system.
- Developing a new industrial park and conference/convention center.
- Updating development regulations to accommodate smart growth, including design guidelines or other strategies for avoiding unattractive development.
- Improving coordination with the county on development controls, tourism, and economic development.

In February, a final report of the team's recommendations for Thomasville and Thomas County, including those provided through EDI's readiness assessment, will be available for review on the community's Web site (www.rose.net) or on DCA's Web site (www.dca.state.ga.us/publications/thomasville.html). ♦

[Office of Quality Growth's Julie Brown contributed to this report.]

Contact Jim Frederick (DCA's quality growth resource teams) at 404.679.3105 or jfrederi@dca.state.ga.us;

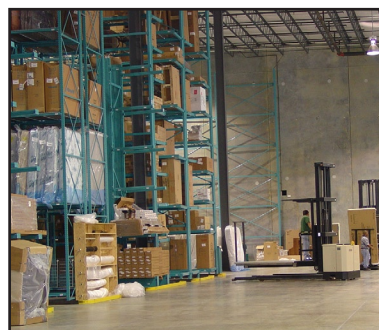
Contact Joy Wilkins (EDI's economic development assistance to communities) at 770.540.1003 or joy.wilkins@edi.gatech.edu.

GDITT



Turning to Tifton

When Fortson Turner wanted to locate a new 50,000-square-foot distribution center for Turner's Fine Furniture, he needed solid information on which to base the decision. The chamber of commerce in **Tifton** suggested he contact EDI to analyze potential locations in different cities.



Karen Porter
Turner's Fine Furniture's new distribution center in Tifton.

Ed Hardison of the Albany office collected information about the 88-year-old firm to calculate the facility's most cost-effective location. "The company," he says, "was considering expanding into north Florida and central Georgia, so I had to consider

the logistics associated with moving furniture from the center to the potential new stores."

But lacking solid plans for those locations, he had to produce calculations for different scenarios. For example, if the firm decided to expand only into Florida, Valdosta might be the best city.

"This distribution center gave us the capacity to add more stores," says Turner, pointing out that the company could not run more product through its existing two warehouses in Albany and Valdosta. "Ed's calculations helped us to decide whether to expand our stores north or south and the best place to put the distribution center."

Hardison calculated the cost-effectiveness of locating the center in 12 cities in Georgia and Florida based on projections of individual store sales and truckload inventory that would be shipped from the center to each city.

Assuming the company would serve both Florida and Georgia with its new stores, the calculations showed that the lowest transportation costs would result from a center in Tifton. The firm selected that location, and opened the new facility in September.

The center employs about 40 people, more than half of whom are new hires. And the site can accommodate future expansion. ♦

Contact Ed Hardison at 229.430.4210 or ed.hardison@edi.gatech.edu.

Contact Nancy Nolan (prospect support services) at 404.894.6108 or nancy.nolan@edi.gatech.edu.

Accelerating Community Innovation

With the sunset of the Accelerator Program in **Tattnall County** comes the sunrise of this program in **Fannin County**.

In 2002, with the help of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Fannin County launched the first phase of its strategic planning initiative known as Fannin's Future: Planning Tomorrow Together. The purpose was to gather input from citizens about where they'd like the community to be in 10 years. To assist with the next stage of this initiative, the Fannin County Development Authority and Fannin County Board of Commissioners selected EDI to conduct an economic development feasibility study to help fashion a strategic plan for economic growth.

The EDI team conducted detailed assessments of Fannin County's economic trends, entrepreneur readiness, tourism and technology opportunities, workforce development, economic development program capacity, support for existing business and industry, physical infrastructure, industrial properties, public policies, and retirement needs. In May 2003, an EDI team made several recommendations for strategic goals and related initiatives to a packed house of more than 150 citizens and stakeholders.

Notes Carolyn Willis, executive director of the development authority, "EDI services helped launch Fannin County back on a road of not only recovery but one of discovery, as well. The EDI team did a top-notch, custom job for us that assisted Fannin at many levels."

Fannin County leaders and citizens have chosen to pursue six of the goals suggested by EDI and have formed work group alliances on topics related to these goals: existing business and industry support, entrepreneur development, local public policy. More than 50 volunteers compose these work group alliances.

To help the county pursue some of the team's recommendations, EDI's Karen Fite and others are assisting the Fannin's Future Steering Committee and work group alliances with their efforts to decide on specific actions to take for reaching these six goals. The team is coaching Fannin County through the process to design its strategic plan, start to implement initiatives, and work to sustain the effort. ❖

Contact Joy Wilkins, CECD at 770.540.1003 or joy.wilkins@edi.gatech.edu.

Technology Is Fair Game, and More

In September, community information technologists from EDI participated in **Heard County's** second annual technology fair, an initiative arising from EDI's 2001 community information technology assessment. Attendance at the fair, which aimed to demonstrate technology training and career opportunities to students, totaled 500, more than double that of the previous year. With a half dozen exhibitors, EDI's Harris Johnson, Mike Parks and Donna Peak demonstrated wireless bar coding and personal digital assistants.

According to Donna Armstrong Lackey, executive director of the Heard County Chamber of Commerce and Development Authority, "The technology fair is opening the eyes of the community to the great need to broaden our students' perspectives of how technology affects their lives. Almost any career path they take will require a certain level of IT [information technology] proficiency."

Other recommendations from EDI's assessment included:

- Develop a special program to promote math and science in the schools using IT as a core component.
- Expand educational services for working-age adults, offering nominally free IT introductions and training.
- Set up a computer purchase program in partnership with local banks, technology providers, and major employers and institutions.
- Pursue opportunities focused on IT use by key industries, their customers, and suppliers.

In addition to the technology fair and ensuing student participation, Lackey says the community has begun to meet its IT objectives, including a technology robotics lab in the middle school, additional IT courses at the high school, and the opening of a West Georgia Technical College extension center in **Franklin**. ❖

Contact Todd Greene, CECD at 404.894.4595 or todd.greene@edi.gatech.edu.

Getting WebFIT

EDI recently developed a Web-based version of its Fiscal Impact Tool (FIT) for land use planning. An earlier off-line version devised for **Fayette County** served as the basis for developing WebFIT. Because it was devised with Web tools and operates on-line, WebFIT offers greater flexibility, ease of use, and convenience.

Gwinnett County is the first user of WebFIT. EDI researchers finished development of Gwinnett's FIT database in November in a project that paralleled development of WebFIT.

The Gwinnett County Finance Department contracted with EDI in January 2003 to create the FIT database and train county staff in its use.

Implementing FIT for any county requires a detailed analysis of the county's tax digest to summarize current land use patterns, and access to its comprehensive plan to determine a full build-out scenario. FIT gives county staff the ability to estimate fiscal impact on the county, each city, and the county school district of their long-run land use plan. WebFIT also enables fiscal analysis of a partial build-out scenario—a large development currently being

planned. Both Gwinnett County's Finance and Planning departments envision using WebFIT to help estimate the fiscal impacts of short- and long-term development in one of Georgia's fastest-growing counties.

Notes Alfie Meek, Gwinnett's director of Forecasting and Research, "As Gwinnett County continues to grow and develop, it becomes ever more important that our tax base be balanced in such a way as to be able to support the financial demands of county



services and infrastructure. Toward that end, we plan to use the FIT model to help us understand the fiscal implications of various land use scenarios, and to make sure that Gwinnett County remains fiscally strong into the future." ♦

Contact Robert Lann at 404.894.3475 or robert.lann@edi.gatech.edu.

New LOCI Rates

Due to budget considerations, Georgia Tech EDI announces the following new rates for its services.	Basic LOCI		Advanced LOCI	
	Tier 1 communities	\$500	Basic rate plus \$500 per day of service beyond two days	
	Tier 2 communities	\$1,000	Basic rate plus \$500 per day of service beyond two days	
	Tier 3 communities	\$1,500	Basic rate plus \$750 per day of service beyond two days	
	Tier 4 communities	\$1,500	Basic rate plus \$750 per day of service beyond two days	

EDI's Northeast Region

Region manager Karen Fite made the northeast Georgia evening news in mid-November when WNEG Channel 32 Toccoa reported on her presentation to the **Stephens County** Development Authority, county commissioners, and residents about the community's readiness for economic development. Key recommendations cited included a strategic plan, a Workforce Development Committee, and an entrepreneur assessment for possibly developing entrepreneurship as an engine of growth. According to the development authority's interim director Jean McCullough, "This assessment gave the community an outsider's point of view and insight to evaluate ourselves, and it allowed us a road map to determine which direction we need to proceed, as well as allowing us to build on our strengths and also address our weaknesses."

But that's breaking news with film at 11. Community readiness assessments have also been completed for **Union** and **Madison** counties, according to Fite. The latter was unusual in that it was initiated with a partnership among the chamber of commerce, the development authority, and Family Connections in the state Department of Family and Children Services. The possibility of a strategic plan is being explored, she says.

In addition, 13 counties have undergone technology opportunity assessments, which have resulted in formation of the Lake Lanier Technology Alliance, a Technology Leadership program in **Lumpkin County**, and a demonstration of the Visitor Internet Point in **Rabun County** (see page 9). Jeanette Mann of North Georgia State University says of the Lumpkin leadership program, "It's hard to describe how exciting it is to have the community leaders and so much

technology talent working together on community economic development." She adds that bringing the two groups together has been a personal and professional campaign for her.

And in June, ENet's Don Betts, CECD, spoke at the "Cultivating Entrepreneurship in Northeast Georgia Conference," where he discussed building entrepreneurial networks.

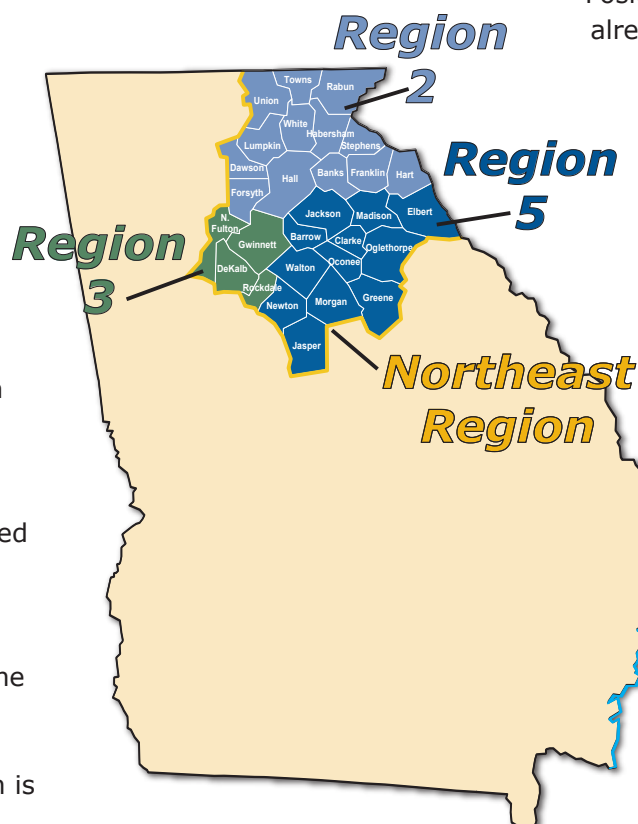
Also, says Fite, EDI tourism specialists have been actively engaged in the region. One project involved a tourism opportunity study for Georgia Lake Country, an alliance of **Greene, Putnam, and Morgan** counties centering on Lake Oconee.

Positive impacts from that study have already occurred, including a projected \$40 million in investment and some 400 jobs, as well as a jazz and hot-air balloon festival planned for next fall. Another, more recent project entails a tourism opportunity study for the Lake Hartwell area.

Helping to coordinate regional partnership meetings is another EDI initiative in northeast Georgia. Economic development professionals—representing local development authorities, chambers of commerce, and local governments—have been hosted by EDI, Georgia Power Company, and the Georgia Department of Industry Trade and Tourism on a semi-formal basis to network and learn from each

other, reports Fite. Plans are to meet three to four times annually, with topics ranging from international trade to lean manufacturing. "The biggest benefit from these meetings is less the topic and more the opportunity for mutual support and problem-solving," she says. ♦

Contact Karen Fite at 706.542.8901 or karen.fite@edi.gatech.edu.



EDI's Northeast Region encompasses State Service Delivery Regions 2 and 5 and portions of Region 3 as shown.

Professional Development Planner

Courses

- E² Energizing Entrepreneurs, **Atlanta**, Feb. 4-6
- IEDC – Real Estate Development and Reuse, **Atlanta**, Feb. 19-20, 2004
- Basic Economic Development Course, **Atlanta**, March 29-April 1, 2004
- IEDC – Business Retention and Expansion, **Atlanta**, April 21-22, 2004
- Tourism: The 4th Economic Development Strategy, **Atlanta**, April 28-29, 2004
- Developing Non-Traditional Funding Strategies for Your Economic Development Programs, **Atlanta**, June 22, 2004

Scholarships for the Basic Economic Development Course and IEDC courses are available through the Georgia Economic Developers Association (GEDA). For more information, visit GEDA's Web site (www.geda.org).

E-Courses

- The Ripple Effect: Can Local Governments and School Boards Meet the Fiscal Challenge?
- Trade Talk: Using Trade as Part of Your Existing Industry Program
- ExTreme Marketing for Economic Developers

For more information on these and other professional development offerings, contact:

Martha Schoonmaker, CECD, at 404.894.0332 or martha.schoonmaker@edi.gatech.edu.

Visit us at:
www.ceds.gatech.edu

Resources

Web Sites

- "Innovation of the Week." Presented by the Leader to Leader Institute.
<http://121i.org/innovation/>
- "Invented Here: The 2002 Southern Innovation Index." A publication of the Southern Growth Policies Board.
www.southern.org
- Georgia Planning Web Site: A one-stop portal for resources provided through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to assist communities with developing comprehensive plans.
www.georgiaplanning.com
- Georgia Quality Growth Partnership Web Site: A one-stop portal for resources provided through this partnership to help communities with their pursuit of quality growth.
www.georgiaqualitygrowth.org

Focus on Communities is published by Georgia Tech's Economic Development Institute, Atlanta, Georgia.

For more information on EDI's community innovation services, contact Joy Wilkins, CECD at 770.540.1003 or joy.wilkins@edi.gatech.edu.



*EDI: Growing Georgia Through
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