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Collaborative Planning For Sustainable Economic Development

Are you interested in balanced growth that provides decent jobs for your residents while upholding or enhancing your community's quality of life? Does achieving fiscal self-sufficiency for your local government interest you? Asking these questions is like asking you about motherhood and apple pie. Whether you're an economic developer or a planner, you're seeking to develop your community's "sense of place" for living, working, and recreating in a way that's lasting. The potential for doing this is greatest in those communities where economic developers and planners collaborate effectively.

Says Rick Duke, CEcD, EDFP, director of Georgia Tech's Economic Development Institute (EDI), "An enlightened view of the role of planning in contributing to sustainable economic development and fiscally viable governments cannot be emphasized enough. Planning is the most significant area of professional development and practice to come along in the profession of economic development in years."

Does Planning Really Matter?

In 2001, investigators from EDI and Georgia Tech's City and Regional Planning Department, in partnership with the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center (GREDC) at East Georgia College, searched for the answer to this question. Specifically, investigators compared the economic development performance of Georgia counties with zoning to counties without zoning. (Investigators chose to look at zoning as a proxy for a community's effort to implement a comprehensive plan, but other land use regulations exist for this purpose, as well.) Investigators concluded, with statistical certainty, that communities with zoning achieved greater economic development in terms of increased jobs and property values (i.e., potential tax revenue) than did communities without such a policy. At that time, more than 60 counties in Georgia—all rural—lacked a county zoning ordinance.

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Rolling Out the Carpet at Technology Square

On April 9, Georgia Tech was a stop on the 45th annual Red Carpet Tour, a program that brings international corporate decision makers to Georgia to highlight local industry and showcase the talents and hospitality of its people.

The tour arrived at the new Global Learning and Conference Center at Technology Square where it was welcomed by EDI staff and the Georgia Tech band. Participants heard presentations by Sam Williams, president of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce; Wayne Hodges, Georgia Tech's vice provost for Economic Development and Technology Ventures; and Brian Leary, vice president of design and development for Atlantic Station. EDI Director and GEDA President Rick Duke served as a state host.

Hodges highlighted Georgia Tech's collaboration with industry, and described relevant

research and services resources. For example, Tech ranks first among U.S. universities for its volume of engineering research and fourth for the amount of industry-supported research. It also has developed nationally recognized approaches to commercializing research innovations.

The tour comprised representatives of 34 (mostly manufacturing) firms from Canada, Japan, Germany, Taiwan, and this country. They dined at the Governor's Mansion, visited Turner Field and Road Atlanta, and watched some of the Master's golf tournament.

In its long history, the tour has taken guests to every region of Georgia. Since 1988, guests of the tour have announced more than \$3 billion in new or expanding business investments in Georgia while creating some 24,000 jobs statewide. ❖



Nancy R. Fullbright
Guests on the 2004 Red Carpet Tour arrive at Technology Square in Atlanta.

Development — continued from page 2

Through this effort, dozens of economic developers also shared insights on why planning and zoning can be an economic development asset. Benefits cited included, but were not limited to:

- business and citizen preference for land use predictability;
- insurance for business prospects and residents that their investment will be protected;
- the ability to guide future development and prevent haphazard, (e.g., patchwork), harmful, or unwanted development; and
- the minimization of potential conflict between industry and residents.

These findings underscore the importance of planning to economic development. It follows that local economic developers have a vested interest in both the development and implementation of a well-conceived comprehensive plan to achieve sustainable economic development. Ideally, the comprehensive plan should set the stage for devising an economic development strategic plan.

Recently, at the request of the Middle Georgia Regional Development Center (RDC), EDI interviewed 84 local economic developers to hear their perspectives on how planning has affected economic development. The interview results were presented at a session developed by Middle Georgia RDC's Tiffany Andrews, EDFP, in partnership with fellow Georgia Economic Developers Association (GEDA) members, for the Georgia Planning Association's

(GPA) Spring Workshop. The session also featured a talk by Georgia Power Company's Bill Bryant, AICP, on the importance of "making economic developers a part of your planning team." The EDI interviews,

conducted in February 2004, uncovered some level of collaborative economic development planning across Georgia, but they also illustrated that such planning is not happening in at least 40 percent of the communities represented in the interviews.

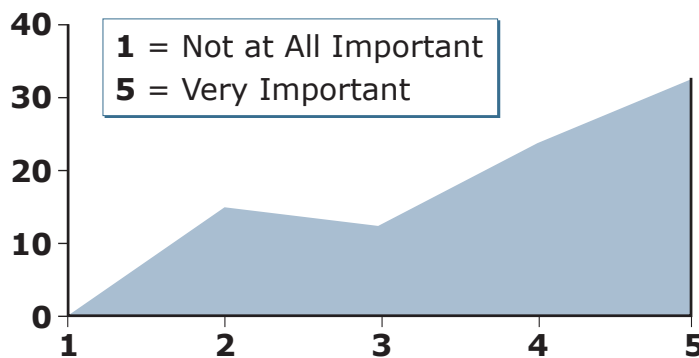
The Intersection of Planning and Economic Development

Interviews were conducted with local economic developers representing 84 counties and all 12 regions of the state. Of the 84 economic developers, 44 percent represented Tier 1 counties, 20.2 percent represented Tier 2 counties, 25 percent represented Tier 3 counties, and 10.7 percent represented Tier 4 counties.

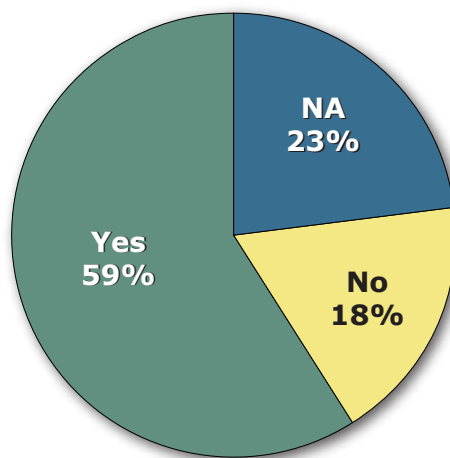
When asked how important the comprehensive plan is to their community's economic development, 66.7 percent reported that the plan is "important"

or "very important." Seventy percent of those interviewed indicated that either the local government or a combination of the local government and regional development center led community efforts to develop the plan. More than half (58.3 percent) reported that they are directly involved in efforts to develop the plan. Some reported significant direct

How Important Is Planning to Your Community's Economic Development?
(84 Economic Developers)



Does Your Community Have Economic Development Needs Not Addressed by the Plan?



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involvement, such as serving on the community design team or developing the “economic development element” of the plan. Others reported less direct involvement, such as being asked for input after the draft plan was developed. Approximately 41.7 percent of those interviewed reported that they are not involved in developing the plan. More than half (59.5 percent) of the economic developers interviewed indicated that their community has economic development needs not addressed by the plan, with most of those representing Tier 1 communities.

Fifty-seven percent of those interviewed indicated that their economic development organization is responsible for implementing a part of the comprehensive plan. Approximately 63.3 percent of those involved in developing the plan also have responsibility for implementing part of the plan. Examples of areas of responsibility held by the local economic development organization included industrial recruitment and marketing, site acquisition and development, infrastructure development, business retention and expansion, workforce development, small-business development, tourism development, downtown development, and housing development.

Nearly two-thirds (65.5 percent) of the economic developers reported that they review the comprehensive plan when developing economic development strategies for their community. Said one economic developer, “When we do our strategic planning, we look at the comprehensive plan to make sure we’re doing what the community wants.” Another explained, “When a company comes in, we try to put them in an area indicated by the plan so the community won’t object.”

Overall, 55.9 percent considered their local planning process to be successful in guiding the economic development of their community. Not surprisingly, many of those reporting this were also directly involved in developing the comprehensive plan.

“The interviews clearly indicate both a need and a desire among economic development professionals to provide a medium for improved communication and participation with planners at the local and regional level,” says Andrews of the Middle Georgia RDC. “Collaborative efforts would result in a cohesive approach and produce better decisions and more effective outcomes.”

Where To Go from Here

Collaborative planning for economic development is not an option but a necessity, no matter a community’s size. And although help is available from several state and regional resources, the planning process itself must be community-led, community-driven, and community-executed. If your community is not already engaging in collaborative economic development planning, these resources can help you design and implement such a process. Don’t delay—your community’s potential for sustainable economic development depends on it. ❖

—Joy Wilkins, CECd

The China Challenge

To better understand the nature of low-cost competition on the global stage and its impact on U.S. manufacturing and our economy, The National Institute of Standards and Technology has researched factors driving China’s phenomenal economic growth and will publicly present the results May 14 at Georgia Tech.

A one-day symposium, “Competing with Low-Cost Countries,” scheduled for the Global Learning and Conference Center will feature a briefing on world markets and the competitive situation, an examination of strategies, and a roundtable discussion on the future of manufacturing. Keynote speaker will be Gus Whalen, CEO of Warren Featherbone Company in Gainesville, Ga., and an authority on industrial partnerships and interdependence.

The event should interest not only Georgia manufacturers but also economic developers who must gauge the current and future status of local industry, help firms become more productive and competitive, and keep them in their communities.

To register for the symposium or get more information about it, visit www.edi.gatech.edu or call Deborah White at 404.894.3463.

Jim Frederick, DCA Director of Planning and Quality Growth



Jim Frederick

EDI has a long tradition of working with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Recently, EDI staff have served on DCA's Quality Growth Resource Teams, an initiative created by the department's Office of Planning and Quality Growth directed by Jim Frederick. EDI also is helping DCA with developing several quality growth toolkits. Here, Frederick discusses his group's goals and initiatives, and what they can mean for local economic development. Last year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognized DCA with a National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in Community Outreach and Education.

Focus: How long have you worked for DCA, and what is your background?

Frederick: I've been at DCA for more than 15 years. My undergraduate degree is in industrial engineering from Northwestern, and I hold a master's degree in community and regional planning from the University of Texas. Both provide an economic development orientation and a natural foundation for my present work. Before DCA, I worked for the Macon Community Development Department, where we had to be good partners with other local agencies to get anything done.

Focus: What are your current responsibilities?

Frederick: I'm director of Planning and Quality Growth, which oversees implementation of the 1989 Georgia Planning Act. All of our outreach activities are aimed at helping local governments be better planners. I have a staff of 16, all but four of whom are located in the Atlanta office, with the others assigned to each of DCA's "super regions." The outreach involves offering technical assistance and follow-up with planning and quality growth issues to Georgia communities.

Focus: What are DCA's "super regions"?

Frederick: The "super regions," which represent a realignment affecting all service delivery by DCA, went into effect early this year.

The move combined the old service delivery regions to provide better coordination of services. Each of the four new regions has staff specializing in economic development, downtown development, affordable-housing assistance, and other DCA areas, including planning and quality growth. These diverse skill sets are available, alone or in combination, to all communities within the regions.

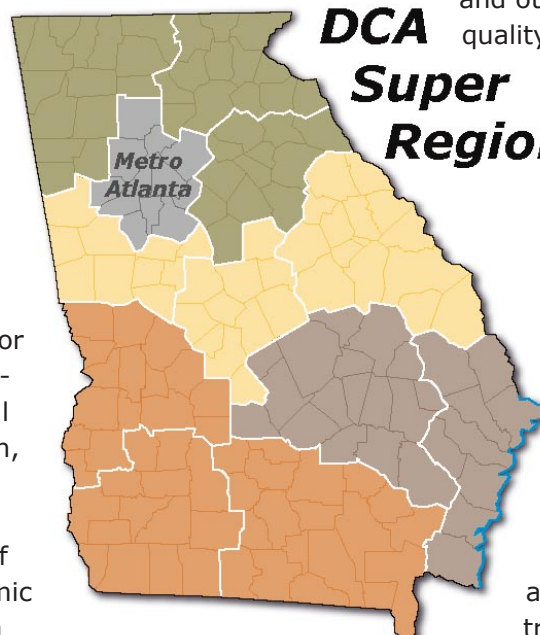
Focus: When was the Office of Quality Growth created, and what is its purpose?

Frederick: It was created in November 1999, and folded into Planning in March 2004. Its purpose is to promote good planning, growth management, and use of best quality-growth practices by local governments. We describe quality growth as trying to return to the way we traditionally built communities, with a better mix of housing types, businesses and jobs, and transportation alternatives, and reflecting a sense of place.

Focus: How do the Resource Teams work?

Frederick: The Resource Teams comprise 10 to 15 volunteer experts from various partnering organizations—including EDI, Georgia Planning Association, Arts Council, and the University of Georgia—that spend a week in a community assessing various growth-related issues. Teams start with a stakeholder meeting, then do field work, then make recommendations based on the assessments. DCA recruits team members, coordinates the visits, handles logistics, and prepares the final report. Requests for visits typically come from a local government or chamber of commerce.

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Q&A — continued from page 5

Focus: What is your office's involvement with the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership?

Frederick: We are a founding member of the partnership, and—with the Atlanta Regional Commission—serve as its staff. The partnership's mission is to coordinate various organizational activities among several statewide partners to be more effective at promoting better planning and quality growth throughout the state.

Focus: How does the Office of Planning and Quality Growth serve communities, and what are some of your major initiatives?

Frederick: Through field staff, we try to find communities that are good candidates for smart growth and help them undertake that effort, and we use success stories to further market the program—communities are more willing to listen to their peers than to a bureaucracy. Among our initiatives are: (1) quality growth audit, which reviews development regulations, growth patterns, and planning practices to identify opportunities for improving local planning; (2) quality growth grants, which provide up to \$40,000 for implementing planning and growth management best practices; (3) PlanBuilder, an on-line system to assist communities with developing and maintaining their comprehensive plans; and (4) advisory clinics where a panel of experts offers brief individual consultation on local planning issues.

Focus: Describe your milestones to date.

Frederick: We've done 15 Resource Team visits across the state, and every one has resulted in at least some level of implementation of recommendations. For example, in **Hinesville** the team recommended revamping the downtown—building on it and extending it toward Fort Stewart. Much of the downtown activity had been lost to bypasses. The community subsequently did a detailed study and has begun creating more space for retail enterprises and the like. And **Dalton** has become real aggressive—the city has hired a full-time staffer to work on quality growth. In addition, **Rome-Floyd County** is working to revitalize the South Rome neighborhood across the river from downtown. DCA came up with a housing strategy—economic development is part of it—and a community development corporation was created to utilize financial tools.

Focus: What's coming up for the Office of Planning and Quality Growth?

Frederick: Dealing with strip corridors—abandoned or active—is an issue all over the state, and we're developing products to address that. One is a "road show" to tell communities statewide that there are things they can do about it—for example, ordinances. Also, we're applying an outreach approach to help communities devise a better, and customizable, process for developing plans. And as part of the EPA award we'll get some free technical assistance from EPA in the form of an options table for local officials considering conventional development. It will convey the actual financial costs to local government and come with visuals to show what the options look like. I expect it to be available this summer.

Focus: What are the most critical issues facing Georgia communities in terms of quality growth?

Frederick: There are many communities where leadership is ready to pursue quality growth, but citizens aren't—so there's an educational issue. Also, the perception exists that quality growth is growth management and may stifle or obstruct economic development. We're addressing these issues with toolkits, workshops, guidance documents, model ordinances, and specialized technical assistance. We want to emphasize that there are alternative strategies for economic development, that it doesn't necessitate chasing smokestacks. Communities are at different stages with this. We want to slide them up the continuum a bit and get them started on the road to smart growth.

Focus: What advice do you have for local economic developers who are preparing their communities for smart growth?

Frederick: They should learn about and examine the options and resources available. For example, land-use regulations are not limited to zoning, and there's more than one economic development tool—industry, yes, but also retail, tourism and others. ❖

Is It Time for a Tune-up?

As much as anything, says EDI's Greg Laudeman, local economic development organizations (LEDOs) are "infomediaries," gathering information from diverse sources and customizing it for various consumers, such as local officials, citizens, industry recruiters, tourism industry specialists, entrepreneurs, and expanding firms. The challenge, he says, is to understand the needs of these consumers and meet them effectively. In today's technology-driven society that means utilizing the latest tools and techniques and staying abreast of developments.

In spring 2003, Laudeman conducted a study that examined what sorts of technologies LEDOs need to be "world-class infomediaries." The research involved both the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center (GREDC) at East Georgia College and Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Unified Development Council territories—an area covering 34 counties. GREDC sponsored the research. Among results of the study is a new EDI tool to help LEDOs across the state.

Researchers reviewed economic development literature, interviewed a range of stakeholders to learn what they expect of LEDOs technologically, and surveyed 45 LEDOs in the two service areas. The findings, according to Laudeman, "clearly can be extrapolated to apply to other rural counties and maybe to almost any economic development organization."

LEDOs, said the study, should be able to provide not only community data but (1) insights into global, local, and niche markets; (2) sources-of-inputs factors such as raw materials, services, and highly productive workforces; (3) opportunities to collaborate with other firms to create value-added products; and (4) high-value tourism opportunities. To accomplish these things, LEDOs must tap the full range of information technology (IT) and champion the use of IT by local firms, agencies, and institutions. Among the study's recommendations:

- create dynamic Web sites
- develop capabilities to use geographic information systems (GIS)
- become more sophisticated in analyzing and presenting information via PowerPoint, data projectors, and large-format printers, among other tools.

The study also emphasized the need for regional IT standards and cooperation in acquiring and using IT resources, and suggested LEDOs allocate at least 3 percent of their budget for IT.

The new EDI service, called Tech Tune-up, helps LEDOs get maximum impact from their IT. "It's like a gap analysis," says Laudeman, adding that EDI specialists will recommend things LEDOs can do to close the gaps, which will mean lower costs and greater effectiveness. The Tech Tune-up could benefit development authorities, convention and visitors bureaus, chambers, regional development centers, almost any organization, according to Laudeman. Available now but still being "tweaked," it entails a half day of work off-site and a half day of customized training with LEDO staff.

Based on the study, too, the CSRA Unified Development Council provided grants of up to \$750 to each of its members for technology purchases applicable to recommendations received from participating in the research. And yet another outcome—many LEDOs from the study area, says Laudeman, have expressed interest in doing the tune-up again. "That's probably a good idea," he says, "like you would with your car."

Says Alana Burke, executive director of the **Lincoln County** Development Authority: "I was delighted with the study because it gave me a document to put in front of my board that justified meeting certain needs, such as a digital camera and upgraded printer.

The board okayed these items, and we plan to work on others as time goes on."

A Tech Tune-up pilot project occurred in **Conyers-Rockdale County**, and from it the LEDO purchased new computers, upgraded software, improved the server, established a technology team, and began re-examining its Web site. The service proved an immediate help to newly hired chamber exec Fred Boscarino, who notes: "He audited our tech program, looking at everything from our phone bill to our server. It's a valuable service. Without a doubt other organizations could benefit from it." ❖

(Contact: greg.laudeman@edi.gatech.edu)

"I was delighted with the study because it gave me a document to put in front of my board that justified meeting certain needs."

Economic Echoes in Echols

Rapid population growth proved an economic development wake-up call for one south Georgia county, and EDI helped answer it.

Echols County, bordering Florida and the Okefenokee Swamp, grew 61 percent between 1990 (2,334) and 2000 (3,754), a population increase that put pressure on the local school system and other community services and sparked interest in economic development among a group of concerned citizens. "This was an instance where a dramatic increase in population was not accompanied by a dramatic increase in local government revenues," says South Region Manager Art Ford, CECD, EDFP. "The school system was one of the first places forced to deal with the growth, and do so with existing dollars."

Using a Learn and Serve grant, the county requested a Community Economic Development Readiness Assessment (CEDRA) from EDI, which regional staff conducted last summer.

Because the county has no economic developer, the EDI team interviewed a five-person focus group comprising a county commissioner, the school superintendent, and local businessmen/farmers.

The CEDRA draws on best practices and seeks to determine what a community is or is not doing to further suitable economic development—a form of gap analysis. The interview is supplemented by critical data, such as poverty level, dropout rate, and infrastructure. Typically, recommendations follow, and EDI offers assistance to implement them.

EDI, notes Art Ford, recommended five priority items as well as several additional undertakings for the longer term. The former included: (1) formalize the economic development group that already had met; (2) review the local government structure to

see if it meets local needs given the growth, and consider alternatives such as a consolidated government in that Echols has no incorporated cities; (3) investigate revenue enhancement efforts, such as ad valorem taxes on timber (now done on an honor system) and a special local option sales tax; (4) improve communications via a community Web site, current school-based newsletter, or the *Valdosta Times*; and (5) educate the public on the importance of economic development. Other suggestions ranged from encouraging tourism and entrepreneurship to partnering with Lowndes and other neighboring counties to establishing countywide land-use zoning.

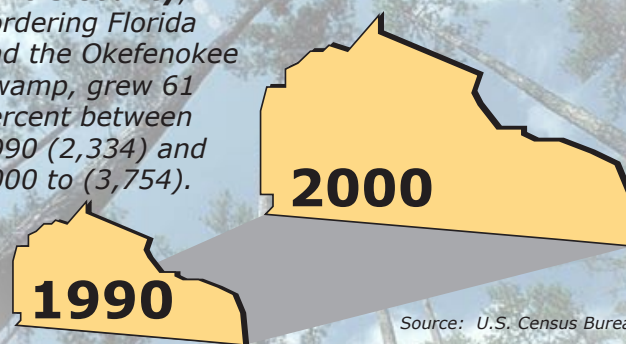
According to Ford, the county has already taken action. The fledgling economic development group is formalizing its structure and purpose, including adopting the name, EDGE (Economic Development Group Echols), and EDI continues to facilitate that. After EDGE started meeting, the county commission allocated \$20,000 to pay for a part-time economic

developer, a huge step for a community that had never employed an economic developer. EDGE, now composed of some two dozen citizens, plans to offer assistance to the county commission in selecting the developer and to suggest priorities that individual might address.

Says school Superintendent Lynn Hughes: "The assessment by Georgia Tech provided the data that we could work on. We've since developed an organization to address these issues, and the organization has established a mission, a vision, and a set of projected objectives. We've come a long way in this process, and the program is vital to our success. Georgia Tech was instrumental in each phase." ❖

(Contact: art.ford@edi.gatech.edu)

Echols County, bordering Florida and the Okefenokee Swamp, grew 61 percent between 1990 (2,334) and 2000 to (3,754).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Encouraging Entrepreneurship

In early February, 64 people attended a two-and-a-half-day workshop on "Energizing Entrepreneurs" in **Atlanta**. Participants in the EDI-sponsored event included 27 Georgia community representatives, as well as program managers and regional representatives from the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism (GDITT).

The program was led by Don Macke of the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, Erik Pages with Entre-Works consultants, and ENet's Don Betts, CEcD. Participants gained a better understanding of entrepreneurs and how their communities can support entrepreneurial efforts.

Gov. Sonny Perdue held the second annual "entrepreneur summit" during the event where he announced formation of the Georgia Entrepreneur and Small Business Coordinating Network. It will make recommendations to improve the support of minority business start-ups, rural and agriculture-focused entrepreneurs, entrepreneur education in the state's school systems, and assistance for community efforts to develop entrepreneurs. The network will comprise representatives from relevant state agencies and non-profit support groups, as well as two governor-appointed entrepreneurs.

GDITT Commissioner Glenn Cornell recently announced a new Web site (www.georgia.org/esbd) to serve as a clearinghouse of state and federal resources for would-be entrepreneurs, small-business owners, and communities seeking to improve their economic development strategies.

A key component of the state's strategy to foster entrepreneurship is supplying more expertise to Georgia locales. To that end, says Betts, ENet, an initiative of EDI and ATDC, is partnering with GDITT to provide additional staffing to help communities develop and implement an entrepreneur strategy.

"I'm excited that we're able to work with the state to advance this important economic issue," says Betts. "Our latest tally shows that more than 50 Georgia counties are providing extra services to entrepreneurs or have expressed interest in doing so. The entrepreneurship momentum has been building, and now we can deliver." ❖

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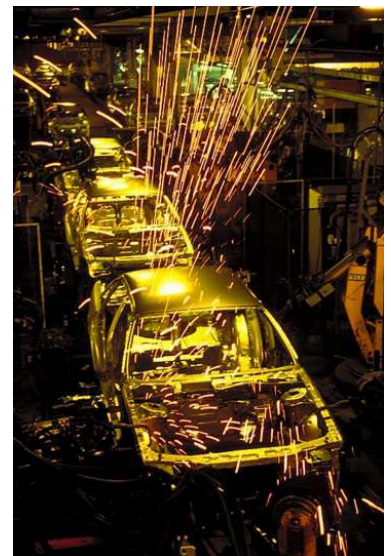
Where the Rubber Meets the Road

To better drive the possibility of attracting additional auto makers and suppliers, EDI has helped launch an automotive network in partnership with the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism (GDITT), Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE), various utilities, and other interested parties. The idea is to better position Georgia and its communities for auto-related industry and leverage the state's many resources to that end. Impetus for the group was the SEDC Automotive Conference in August 2003 that highlighted opportunities for Georgia to investigate further.

Established in 2003, the network has convened three times, according to EDI's Martha Schoonmaker, CEcD, who has fostered participation in the group. "EDI's involvement could position it to be a major player on auto-related projects and give it an opportunity to help develop a strategy for pursuing the auto industry," she says, adding that EDI staff combined can claim 75 years of supplying technical assistance to automotive-related firms in Georgia. This experience enables EDI to help communities understand what assets they may have to offer this industry.

Jill Winkelman, manager of EDI's Coastal Region, also has been a key participant in the automotive network. She attended an auto trade show in Detroit in early March and helped GDITT representatives "talk the talk," provide data, and field questions. "This is an industry that needs creativity and innovation in almost every area," she says, "from plastics to energy usage." ❖

(Contact: martha.schoonmaker@edi.gatech.edu)



GDITT

Vehicle assembly is only one part of the automotive industry.

At Your Service, Again

EDI is working with the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center (GREDC) at East Georgia College to develop a new service for helping economic development organizations operate more efficiently and effectively. Local economic development leaders often ask EDI for guidance regarding how best to operate their organizations, and they seek assistance for improving their organization's capacity to serve their communities. Operational issues such as setting of organizational priorities, securing new funding, allocating resources, training and developing staff or volunteers, measuring progress, and communicating effectively with key stakeholders are among the more frequently mentioned.

The new service will:

- (1) Identify areas that could be improved to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity within the organization through employing a quality management gap analysis;
- (2) Offer recommendations and provide a set of management tools for making improvements; and
- (3) Provide coaching, technical, and implementation assistance to local economic developers in the utilization of management tools and the adoption of quality management practices.

EDI will apply its expertise in quality management, lean processes, information technology, and overall community economic development to help economic development organizations be better prepared to achieve organizational excellence.

EDI expects the new service to be available later in the year. ❖

(Contact: joy.wilkins@edi.gatech.edu)

Making a Corridor the Hall Way

Hall County officials want to pursue the best possible growth along the Highway 365 corridor extending north of **Gainesville** to **Habersham County**, emphasizing high-wage, non-polluting industry and tourism-related development. To this end, EDI is undertaking a three-stage customized Accelerator Program project to evaluate the community's assets, identify the highest and best uses for the corridor, and generate consensus among key local interests for developing an actionable strategic plan for the route.

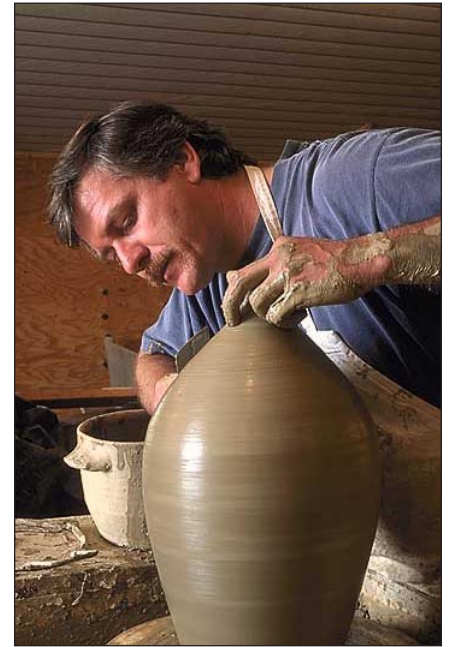
As part of this effort, EDI is interviewing various stakeholders to collect input regarding capabilities and resources related to the corridor's development, including community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The team is also developing an Economic Development Report Card that includes review of key demographic, social, health, educational, and economic data for the county and region, and, from this information, ratings for the community on growth, fiscal capacity, workforce development, and other areas.

The team then will identify industry clusters that can reasonably be attracted to the county's asset base. Peer communities will be examined for efforts and policies that have attracted and nurtured the types of industries Hall seeks for the corridor. Also, the team will investigate whether development trends—such as high-end retail and high-quality tourism—have occurred in the environs of clusters in peer communities.

In addition, EDI will assess whether the corridor is suitable for tourism-related development. Highway 365 is a main tourist route from Hall County to the Georgia mountains and beyond. Its substantial volume of tourist traffic, coupled with several tourism assets on or near the route, has led Hall County government to request an investigation of tourism potential for the corridor.

Subsequently, the team will advise Hall County's 365 Corridor task force about organizing itself, setting and reaching goals, developing strategies and actions, and devising implementation tactics. ❖

(Contact: joy.wilkins@edi.gatech.edu)



GDITT

Michael Crocker of Crocker Pottery in Lula, Georgia. Nationally recognized traditional potters are one of the many tourism assets on or near the 365 corridor.

Report from Region 9

The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) for Region 9, impressed with various economic development assessment initiatives conducted by EDI in the area, wanted to make the service available to other communities. RAC 9 submitted a proposal to the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center to fund EDI's Community Economic Development Readiness Assessments for the development authorities or chambers of commerce in **Appling, Bleckley, Candler, Evans, Jeff Davis, Johnson, and Montgomery** counties. EDI's Danny Duggar led the effort, which also included Larry Edens, CEcD; Karen Fite; Art Ford, CEcD, EDFP; Hortense Jackson; Joy Wilkins, CEcD; Martha Schoonmaker, CEcD; and Jenn Trapp. Recommendations were designed to fit the needs of each community. Some examples:

- Strengthen community economic development programs via establishing goals, tracking progress, pursuing professional development, and improving funding.
- Develop economic development Web sites.
- Launch public relations efforts to raise understanding of economic development.
- Develop strategic plans for economic development.

Consequently, community-wide meetings have been held in Johnson and Montgomery counties involving educators, county commissioners, and others. Johnson County utilized the meeting to adopt a work plan based on the CEDRA recommendations, and has already begun efforts to implement one of the key work items concerning wastewater issues.

Representatives from RAC 9, the Department of Community Affairs and EDI plan to coordinate a network meeting of participants to assist with follow-up, identify and resolve barriers, and evaluate CEDRA's benefit to communities. ❖

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Albany and Cordele Plugged In

The city of **Albany** has created a Telecommunications Task Force to examine whether government should get involved in cable television and provide Internet services to ensure the community can capitalize on related economic opportunities. EDI has worked with the task force since its inception, pro-



Albany's city government building.

viding technical resources to the group and increasing the technology capacity of the community.

In late February, Hortense Jackson of EDI's IT Solutions Center conducted a Community Technology Opportunity Assessment. The recommendations, she says, should help create new opportunities for local businesses and recruit new industry, make technology and computer usage more available to citizens, and deliver public services more efficiently.

And in **Cordele and Crisp County**, Jackson undertook another assessment in January to evaluate the area's IT development. Recommendations, offered in March, included:

- Formalize the new technology committee with a name, mission, and goals, and seek community involvement and support.
- Develop an information technology (IT) component of the local economic development plan.
- Determine current and future IT demands.
- Educate the public on IT's importance and value.
- Develop a community Web portal.
- Develop IT resource guides for companies, individuals, and the local economic development office.
- Develop a technology alliance program to promote IT training.
- Create the foundation for developing local "e-government" applications, such as permits, licenses, and bids.

The community, she says, has already agreed to begin working on creating a Web portal that will support businesses, tourists, potential entrepreneurs, and citizens. ❖

(Contact: hortense.jackson@edi.gatech.edu)

EDI's South Region

Art Ford, CEcD, EDFP, and his South Region staff cover a lot of ground. Their territory, encompassing an estimated 24 percent of the state, includes forest and wetlands, as well as metro areas and small towns. EDI's economic development tools are broadly applied across the region.

For example, Community Economic Development Readiness Assessments (CEDRAS) have been completed in **Bainbridge/Decatur County**, **Brooks County**, **Echols County** (see p. 8), and **Thomasville/Thomas County**, the latter part of a DCA Resource Team project. Among results from these efforts, according to Ford: (1) Bainbridge has followed recommendations to hold a community-wide strategic planning session and has begun investigating sources of incentive funds, and (2) Brooks County has hired a consultant to conduct an industrial park site study.

Nature-based tourism could go with the flow of the Flint River and its tributaries. Recent EDI research for a four-county joint development authority revealed numerous tourism assets and potential opportunities, ranging from wildlife management areas to a new aquarium in **Dougherty County** called River Center.

Indeed, Art Ford and TRACS manager Ann O'Neill boated their way across the relatively uncharted waters of regional tourism in fall 2003. Recommendations included: (1) improved waterway access, (2) linking River Center to Radium Springs and Chehaw Parks, and (3) preserving and marketing **Baker County's** lovely oak-canopied roads, among others. "The challenge in much of this area is to maintain landowner privacy while opening it up to tourism," he says.

Elsewhere in the region, ENet's Don Betts, CEcD, helped the **Valdosta-Lowndes County** Chamber of Commerce link local businesses and entrepreneurs with graduates of area technical colleges and Valdosta State University "to keep the local brainpower at home." The chamber, he says, has long fostered a program for small businesses and entrepreneurs, including business mentors and home-based businesses. "We recently helped develop a customized

survey and trained interviewers to obtain information from local entrepreneurs, including their use of students. The plan then is to have a focus group of students give their impressions of local businesses, with the idea of finding a better match between the two," he says.

EDI also has worked with **Albany's** Telecommunications Task Force as it examines the potential for cable television and Internet services. Hortense Jackson of the IT Solutions Center conducted a technology assessment in February and will offer recommendations from it soon that could create economic development opportunities, make information technology more available to citizens, and enhance delivery of public services (see p. 11).

LOCI projects have been a prominent activity, according to Ford who points to 11 in 2003 and 20 the year before. Projected impact from last year's analyses totals more than 1,300 jobs and capital investment of nearly \$67 million.

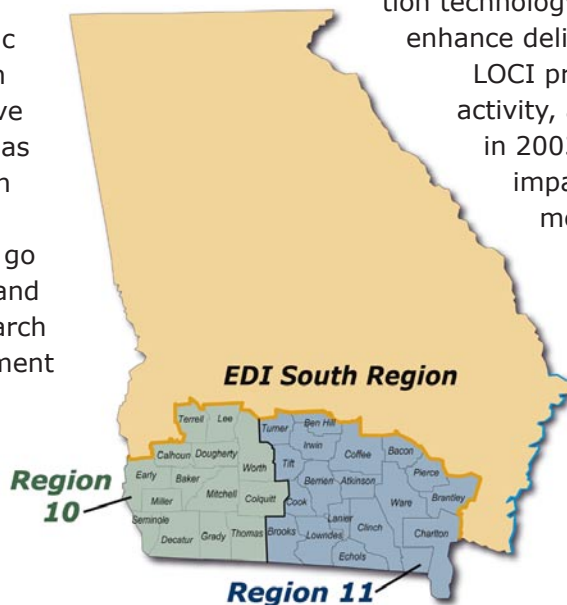
A cool FaciliTech project in **Moultrie** involved facility layout assistance to a company that makes ice machines. The firm, launched by a retired farmer, is expanding in a former can manufacturing plant, scaling up to producing four machines per day from one per week, with three-year employment at the

new plant put at 157. The project, undertaken for the development authority wanting to keep the firm from expanding elsewhere, previously benefited from a LOCI analysis. This effort involved Steve Cowart from the **Douglas** office and John Stephens from the Albany office.

According to the development authority's Darrell Moore, "The FaciliTech services provided by Georgia Tech really helped the company get up and running quicker. They helped set up the production lines in the new facility and conducted a production flow analysis to eliminate any potential bottlenecks in the process. The program offers a great incentive for new or expanding business."

"We've had a good run of different things," says Ford, who routinely signs off his e-mail with "I love South Georgia." ❖

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Professional Development Planner

May

■ Competing with Low-Cost Countries,
Atlanta, May 14

■ Georgia Economic Developers Association
Spring Workshop, **Augusta**, May 19-21
www.geda.org

June

■ Developing Non-Traditional Funding
Strategies for Your Economic Development
Programs, **Atlanta**, June 22

■ Emerging Trends in Location Analysis
(in partnership with CoreNet Global),
Atlanta, June 24-25

July



About EDI

EDI offers an array of services with a common objective: to grow Georgia's economy by providing technology-driven solutions to the state's businesses and communities. Whether the goal is attracting new companies to Georgia, expanding existing enterprises, providing technical expertise to help Georgia business and industry become more competitive, or helping communities plan for growth, EDI helps keep the state's economy moving forward.

August

■ IEDC Introduction to Economic Development,
Atlanta, Aug. 10-13



September

■ Georgia Economic Developers Association,
September 22-24, **Savannah**, GA
www.geda.org

October

■ LOCI, **Atlanta**, Oct. 14-15

November

■ Multi-Cultural Facets of Economic Development,
Atlanta, Nov. 3-4

■ IEDC Finance Credit Analysis, **Atlanta**,
Dec. 7-9

For information on professional development offerings from EDI, contact Martha Schoonmaker, CECD (404.894.0332, martha.schoonmaker@edi.gatech.edu).

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