



# the shift forward

A Strategic Plan for Troup County



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“Troup is a place with committed leadership and residents who address issues as opportunities to ensure the long-term well-being of the county and its people.”

- Boyette

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# acknowledgements

The development of **The Shift Forward**, a strategic plan to guide the county into the future, was led by the Troup Strategy Center Board, the designated Core Team and the organization’s Executive Director. The process involved many hours of stakeholder engagement with members of the Board listed to the right, which includes the Core Team members highlighted in bold, as well as many other stakeholders from the public and private sectors. Boyette would also like to thank and acknowledge over **1,600 participants** that partook in an interview/group discussion and/or completed the **Community Survey** or the **Millennial/GenZ Survey**. Highlights from the stakeholder engagement process are highlighted within this plan and additional detail may be found in the Supporting Documentation to this report.

Boyette Strategic Advisors (Boyette) would like to acknowledge the importance of this input to the development of **The Shift Forward** and thank all participants for their involvement.

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<b>Maryanne Lovejoy</b>	<b>Troup Strategy Center</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>

# project overview

Troup County offers an exceptional location around an hour from Atlanta with a diverse population and available jobs with Kia’s manufacturing plant located in West Point, which is the company’s only manufacturing facility in the U.S., as well as other major employers. With these and other assets, Troup County has substantial opportunity for future success. To ensure this future success comes to fruition, the Troup Strategy Center engaged Boyette to develop **The Shift Forward**. This plan is focused on identifying the opportunities and challenges that the organization and its partners should focus on over the next five years to further enhance county competitiveness long-term.

Below is the process utilized to develop **The Shift Forward**, which included **significant stakeholder engagement**, as previously outlined, as well as **aspirational cities/counties** and **similar organizations** that were selected as benchmarks based on their overall successes. This and other research, which will be highlighted throughout this plan, may be found in detail in the Supporting Documentation.



# the situation

The Troup Strategy Center (Strategic Planning) was established in 2009 after leaders in the county and the cities of Hogansville, LaGrange and West Point came together to complete a two-year strategic planning process. Strategic Planning was charged with the implementation of that countywide plan. The organization is currently funded from contributions from its Board members and the organizations they represent. Some of the primary successes of Strategic Planning to date are highlighted below, nothing there are many other efforts that it has supported over the years.

## Poverty

- Provided support to begin poverty initiative called Move the Mountain (later renamed **Circles of Troup County**) to **address poverty** in 2012
- Focused on **identifying and eliminating the causes of poverty** by supporting parents and children transitioning out of poverty
- Provides **weekly meetings and classes** with participants in a 12-week program teaching skills, goal setting, and financial literacy

## Trustbuilding, Inc.

- Launched in 2015
- Focused on **bridging the racial divide** in the county and ensuring all have the **same opportunities**
- Strategic Planning continues to support this effort

## Education, Workforce Training and Development

### THINC College and Career Academy

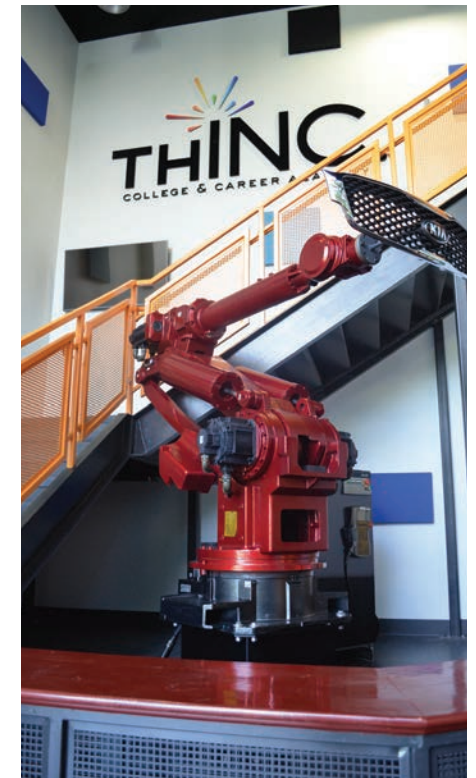
- **Charter school** opened to students in 2015 in LaGrange that is available to 9th through 12th grade Troup County students
- Designed to accommodate 500 students with both technical and soft skills
- Funded by **Troup County School System and several corporate partners**, including founding partner Kia Motors Manufacturing

### Get Troup Reading

- Began operations in 2020
- Focused on ensuring children are **ready to learn when they enter school and reading on grade level by third grade**

## Retail Recruitment

- County and all cities established **Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)**, which can be used to incent retailers and retail developers to locate



# the situation

**The Shift Forward** will focus on a unified vision that leverages and enhances these existing programs and recommends new programs for the future success of the county. It will also focus on



understanding and leveraging all existing programs through other nonprofits such as United Way of West Georgia Success by 6 Program, Get Troup Reading, Troup County Certified Literate Community Program, the Children’s Advocacy Center of Troup County, Troup Transformation, the Circle of Care Program, DASH, Trustbuilding, Inc., Partners in Education and many others.

Troup County is within an hour of **Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport**, one of the busiest airports in the world, and the growing **City of Atlanta**. It is home to two colleges/universities, with **LaGrange College** and **Point University** in West Point, and a campus of **West Georgia Technical College** in LaGrange. It is also within 45 minutes of Auburn University, the University of West Georgia and Columbus State University.

Troup County also offers access to jobs as the home of more Fortune 500 regional sites per capita than anywhere in the U.S., including Walmart Distribution Center, Duracell Manufacturing, Inc., UPS Distribution Centers, Caterpillar, Kimberly Clark Corporation and many others. In addition, the **Kia** plant covers 2,200 acres in West Point producing 340,000 vehicles per year. Kia employs over 3,000 currently with plans to continue to expand. In addition, **Remington Arms**, the largest domestic producers of shotguns and rifles in the United States, announced in 2021 it was locating its global headquarters, advanced manufacturing facility, plus a research and development center in LaGrange investing \$100 million and creating more than 850 jobs.

Other Troup County amenities include available land with infrastructure, lack of traffic, an affordable/low cost of living, tourism/recreational opportunities with **West Point Lake**, **Great Wolf Lodge**, the **Chattahoochee River**, the **Thread** and many other activities, access to arts and culture with the **LaGrange Art Museum**, **Lafayette Society for Performing Arts**, **LaGrange Symphony Orchestra** and other amenities, access to healthcare with the **Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center**, and vibrant downtown areas that continue to grow. Another major advantage in Troup County is the presence of the **Callaway Foundation**, which has been investing in the county since 1943.

# the situation

With that said, the county does continue to face obstacles, with the biggest being a high **poverty rate**, which is currently at 21 percent, compared to 14 percent in the State of Georgia, 13 percent in the U.S. and 11 percent in the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This poverty is further exacerbated by an **improving but struggling public education system, low educational attainment rates**, with only 27 percent of the population 25 and over holding an associate's degree or higher compared to over 48 percent in the Atlanta MSA, 42 percent in the U.S. and 41 percent in the State of Georgia, lack of available and affordable childcare, as well as public transportation. This then leads to **lower income levels** and potentially a **growing crime rate**.

On a related note, another challenge is the **lack of an available trained workforce** in the county to meet the needs of existing business and industry, as well as any future company locations. Nearly **57 percent** of workers in the county commute in each day for work. There is a need to **train the existing workforce**, as well as **attract new workers** to the county. But it is difficult to attract new workers when there is a **lack of attainable or workforce housing available**, as well as many **amenities** such as certain retail (Target and others), sit-down restaurants, entertainment and plentiful recreational amenities. This also impacts the ability of the county to **attract and retain young people**. In the Millennial/GenZ online survey, **62 percent** indicated they do not plan to stay in the county long-term. These challenges are leading to a population that at **1 percent growth** over the past five years is increasing at a much smaller rate than the Atlanta MSA (7 percent); State of Georgia (5 percent) and U.S. average (3 percent).

On another note, although the county is diverse with a **37 percent Black population**, many feel there is a need for further **racial reconciliation** and **more inclusion**.

**“We have diversity. We don’t have inclusion.”**  
- Stakeholder

**“If we don’t fix the education program, we are never going to have enough qualified workers and we will never solve the generational poverty issue.”**  
- Stakeholder

**“Until racial issues are addressed overtly in a sustained way, we will not be able to truly move forward.”**  
- Stakeholder

# the situation

Another potential challenge is the **lack of alignment or unification of efforts countywide**. There is no countywide economic development effort. The LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce, however, does represent businesses in the entire county, and Visit LaGrange does highlight tourism assets countywide, and there is also Destination Troup, which focuses on the county specifically. There is also no specific entity focused on supporting entrepreneurship countywide although there is a Small Business Development Center in LaGrange and **Pioneer Georgia in Hogansville** is focused on further development of the community and supporting the incubation of new businesses.

On a related note, there are many government agencies and non-profits working to address various challenges in the cities/county but there is a **lack of communication, coordination and collaboration** amongst these agencies and nonprofits and the community at-large. This leads to confusion and a lack of awareness of the programs and services available.





# core objectives

The county, through the Troup Strategy Center and its partners, have worked over the past 12 plus years to begin to address these challenges through community partnerships. There must be a **continued, focused and unified effort countywide** to ensure Troup County optimizes all opportunities for future success. **The Shift Forward** is meant to guide efforts over the next five plus years. This will be accomplished by focusing on the four core objectives below, which are described in more detail in the sections that follow.

## UNITE THE COUNTY

### Strategy 1:

Reignite the Troup Strategy Center

### Strategy 2:

Enhance Communications to Ensure Awareness and Transparency

### Strategy 3:

Support the Nonprofit Community in Troup County

### Strategy 4:

Support Countywide Initiatives and Programming

## INCREASE PROSPERITY FOR ALL

### Strategy 1:

Reduce Employment Barriers

### Strategy 2:

Enhance Support for Public Education

### Strategy 3:

Create a Talent Pipeline

### Strategy 4:

Pursue Diverse Housing Options

## CREATE A LIVABLE, EQUITABLE & SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

### Strategy 1:

Embrace Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

### Strategy 2:

Expand Retail, Hospitality and Entertainment Options

### Strategy 3:

Support Creation of Robust Downtowns

### Strategy 4:

Support the Arts

### Strategy 5:

Expand and Enhance Recreational Opportunities

### Strategy 6:

Enhance Sustainability Focus

### Strategy 7:

Address Infrastructure Challenges Countywide

## FOSTER A CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### Strategy 1:

Create an Entrepreneurial Support Program

### Strategy 2:

Enrich Educational Focus on Entrepreneurship

### Strategy 3:

Support Development of Incubator/Coworking Space



## unite the county



As previously indicated, there is a lack of alignment or unification of efforts countywide. During the stakeholder engagement process, several participants mentioned fractures between organizations and among the different government entities that need to be addressed. Many also indicated they would like to see more cooperation and collaboration among the cities and the county, as well as the community and leadership. There is also a disconnect with the nonprofits in the county and the services they provide.

The Troup Strategy Center should work to ensure this cooperation and collaboration come to fruition through implementation of **The Shift Forward**. However, the long-term viability of the organization must be ensured first so that it can work most effectively with its partners, which includes the county, cities and nonprofit sector, as well as effectively communicate its goals and accomplishments to residents and others. The recommendations in this section are focused on program changes and initiatives that result in **unity** countywide.

# reignite the troupe strategy center

## Action Item 1: Adopt new mission and vision statements for Strategic Planning

A **mission statement** focuses on today and what an organization does on a day-to-day basis. It provides a succinct expression of an organization's essential reason for existence or core purpose and should be used as a litmus test for everything the organization does.

A **vision statement** focuses on tomorrow and what the organization wants to become.

The existing mission and vision statements of Strategic Planning are not very succinct and need an update. Below are the new proposed mission and vision statements for the organization moving forward both of which focus on the idea of unity in the county. The Strategic Planning Board should **adopt these new mission and vision statements**.

**Mission Statement:** Our Mission is to provide strategic leadership on key opportunities that will improve the quality of life and well-being for all residents of Troup County.

**Vision Statement:** Our Vision is to create a unified Troup County that is the most vibrant, flourishing and inclusive county in the State of Georgia.

## Action Item 2: Consider Strategic Planning name change

Although the legal name of Strategic Planning can remain the same, the Strategic Planning Board should consider a **name change** or adoption of a new “**doing business as**” or **trade name** for the organization, which could be one of the following:

- The Shift Forward, Inc.
- One Troup, Inc.

## STRATEGY 1: REIGNITE THE TROUP COUNTY CENTER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

### Action Item 3: Explore new funding structure for Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning is currently funded by its members, which consists of representatives of the county, each of the three cities, economic development organizations, educational institutions, non-profits such as the Callaway Foundation and others, as well as corporate representation from Kia. Funding ranges from \$5,000 to \$50,000 per member each year currently but investments by members have been as high as nearly \$72,000 annually in the past.

In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization, as well as its ability to assist with the funding of the implementation of this strategic plan, a new funding structure should be explored that may include a tiered-investment structure, as well as seeking more private investment from corporate sponsors in the future.

The funding structure of other similar organizations reviewed during the benchmark research process, are outlined to the right and on the following page. These and other structures should be considered as potential models for Strategic Planning but a **more focused study of the best structure** for this effort should be pursued.



#### Northwest Arkansas Council

- A private, nonprofit organization established over 30 years ago by business leaders to help shape development of the Northwest Arkansas region
- Works to advance job opportunities, talent recruitment, physical infrastructure, health care and quality of life
- Most of Council's more than 100 members are companies, including Walmart, Tyson Foods, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Simmons Foods and George's
- Works with partners to address challenges across areas ranging from Arts and Culture to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Healthcare Entrepreneurship, Housing and many others
- Comprised of a 13-member Executive Committee and a staff of 17

#### Chattanooga Chamber Foundation/ Chattanooga Climbs

- Non-profit foundation, chartered in 1969, that delivers economic, community and leadership development services to businesses
- Governed by Chattanooga Chamber Foundation Board
- Funded through public-private partnership with 60% private funding to 40% public funding
- Chattanooga Climbs is capital campaign launched by Chattanooga Chamber Foundation to fund five-year plan focused on advancing economic/talent and other initiatives
- Skills training, mobility, support for entrepreneurs and furthering the economy are pillars of Chattanooga Climbs
- Investors range from under \$2,500 to \$100,000 plus

### Action Item 4: Seek Board approval for recommended structure

Once the study for the structure of the organization is complete and reviewed, Board approval should be obtained.

### Action Item 5: Consider additional staff support for Strategic Planning

In order to implement **The Shift Forward**, the organization will need additional staffing, which may initially involve one more full-time person but is likely to require more over time.



#### The Broward Workshop

- A private, non-profit business organization established in 1981 comprised of 100 nomination-only leaders of Broward County's businesses focused on addressing critical issues
- Broward Workshop Committees focus on Business Advocacy, Community Resilience, Cultural Affairs, Education, Racial Equity & Social Justice, Technology, Tourism and Transportation
- Organization led by an Executive Committee of four and three full-time staff members

#### Prosperity Partnership

- Evolved in 2021 out of Six Pillars Broward, a strategic visioning plan focused on community priorities and initiatives in Broward County, FL
- Six Pillars Framework focused on Talent Supply & Education, Innovation & Economic Development; Infrastructure & Growth Leadership; Business Climate & Competitiveness; Civic & Governance Systems; and Quality of Life & Quality Places
- Led by a 7-person team that is supported by a group of co-chairs, who represent regional corporations, non-profits, educational institutions, and other local organizations
- Funded by sponsorships to the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance Foundation, a 501(c)(3) foundation

## STRATEGY 1: REIGNITE THE TROUP COUNTY CENTER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

### Action Item 6: Adopt a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) organizational statement

An organizational DEI statement ensures that all stakeholders understand an organization's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Strategic Planning should develop and adopt an equity statement to illustrate its commitment to equity. A sample equity statement of the Ford Foundation, is below.

#### Ford Foundation's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Mission Statement

At the Ford Foundation, diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the core of who we are. Our commitment to these values is unwavering - across all of our work around the world. They are central to our **mission** and to our impact. We know that having varied perspectives helps generate better ideas to solve the complex problems of a changing—and increasingly diverse—world.



## STRATEGY 2

# enhance communications to ensure awareness and transparency

### Action Item 1: Create new website for Strategic Planning

A new and more robust website for Strategic Planning must be created that outlines its priorities, plans and provides regular updates (see: <https://nwacouncil.org/>). This website should include a major focus on the **The Shift Forward** plan and should have up to date information on the implementation process similar to the <https://onemacon.org> strategic plan website. This will have the impact of keeping partners and residents informed.

### Action Item 2: Develop social media presence

Any social media communication should be focused on ensuring Troup County residents and businesses understand the role of Strategic Planning and are aware of all programs, services or events relevant to the **The Shift Forward** plan implementation that may be beneficial to them. A Facebook page and Twitter page should be considered.

### Action Item 3: Develop an annual report of all initiatives and successes

For further communication and accountability, Strategic Planning should develop an annual report that highlights the status of strategic plan implementation including all initiatives and successes during that time period.

### Action Item 4: Create organizational metrics

Develop metrics or performance measures to measure the success of **The Shift Forward**. These metrics should be realistic and quantifiable focusing on results rather than process. They will provide a true barometer of success for evaluating the short-term and long-term effectiveness of the strategies and action items in the plan. Metrics may include decreasing poverty rates, increasing educational attainment rates, and a growing population, among other measures of change that will be evaluated at the end of the five-year implementation period.

### Action Item 5: Measure organization's social impact over time

At the end of five years, an impact evaluation and analysis focused on the organization's social impact should be conducted and results marketed on the website and social media channels.



## STRATEGY 2: ENHANCE COMMUNICATIONS TO ENSURE AWARENESS AND TRANSPARENCY

### Action Item 6: Create The Shift Forward Action Teams and communicate progress

An implementation/action plan has been developed for this plan. Without an engaged implementation effort, the strategic goals and action items for **The Shift Forward** will not move forward. The Strategic Planning leadership and Board members will be an integral part of moving these different initiatives forward, engaging with government, corporate and nonprofit leadership as needed.

To ensure ongoing collaboration and communication, an **Action Team** should be created for each of the **four core objectives** and that team will devise a plan, utilizing the implementation/action plan, for moving the implementation process forward. **Monthly meetings** of each Action Team should be scheduled, and a representative of each Action Team should report out at each Strategic Planning Board meeting, which may need to be changed from monthly to bi-monthly or quarterly.

Also, as previously indicated, the **public** should be informed of **progress on the implementation process** through the website and social media postings throughout the year, as well as through an annual update.

### Action Item 7: Convene city and county leadership quarterly

Many initiatives in this plan will require involvement of city and county leadership to bring to fruition. In addition, there is a need to ensure that city and county leadership continue to collaborate on these and other initiatives now and into the future. These leaders, which may include the Mayors, city manager, and county commissioner, should be convened on a quarterly basis to discuss different initiatives related to plan implementation and other matters to be identified.





# support the nonprofit community in troup county

## Action Item 1: : Include information on nonprofits on Strategic Planning website

The Troup Strategy Center already partners with many nonprofits in the community to accomplish its initiatives. The website of Strategic Planning should have a page where it **outlines all nonprofit organizations** in the county and the **services provided**. One of the nonprofits should be **featured on the website** and on **social media** each month.

## Action Item 2: Host a Nonprofit Summit

There are many nonprofit organizations in Troup County that provide different programs and support services to improve the community. With that said, there seems to be some confusion about the different roles of these nonprofits and which organization to contact if seeking assistance.

Working with the nonprofits in Troup County, organize **the first Troup County Nonprofit Summit**, which would include **non-public meetings** to bring all organizations together to have conversations about how they can partner better together and **public meetings** in which residents are invited to come to hear and speak with representatives of the various nonprofits in the community. These could be done on an annual or bi-annual basis.

## Action Item 3: Explore the creation of the Troup County Nonprofit Center

In addition to bringing the nonprofits together to collaborate and work together, many indicated in the stakeholder engagement process that they struggle in raising enough money to remain operational. Conduct a **feasibility study** related to the creation of the **Troup County Nonprofit Center**, which could house most, if not all, of the nonprofits in the county under one roof resulting in **costs savings** for the tenants and **more collaboration**. Consider partnering with **Troup County nonprofit leadership** and the **Georgia Center for Nonprofits** on this feasibility. The idea of providing space for nonprofits in the community was explored in the county previously and was widely supported but it did not receive grant funding to move forward.

### Serve Denton

- Largest nonprofit center in Denton County and one of the largest in Texas
- Current space shared by various nonprofits that pay less than 50% of current market rate for rent
- Allows nonprofits to pool their resources for things such as printing and wireless Internet
- Results in savings of around \$500,000 each year



[www.servedenton.org](http://www.servedenton.org)

## STRATEGY 3: SUPPORT THE NONPROFIT COMMUNITY IN TROUP COUNTY

### Action Item 4: Create the The Shift Forward Grant Program

Create a grant fund where nonprofits in the county can apply for funding for specific projects. Funding sources and guidelines for the program would need to be established.

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## STRATEGY 4

# encourage countywide initiatives and programming

### Action Item 1: Identify Troup holistically countywide

Work with the county and cities to create solar operated “Welcome to Troup County” signs that will be placed at major entryways throughout the county to present a holistic message.



# Strategies Overview

Strategy 1: Reignite the Troup Strategy Center	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Adopt new mission and vision statements for Strategic Planning	Strategic Planning Staff and Board
Consider Strategic Planning name change	Strategic Planning Staff and Board
Explore new funding structure for Strategic Planning	Strategic Planning Staff and Board; Potential Outside Consultant
Seek Board approval for recommended structure	Strategic Planning Board Staff and Board
Consider additional staff support for Strategic Planning	Strategic Planning Staff and Board
Adopt a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) organizational statement	Strategic Planning Staff and Board

Strategy 2: Enhance Communications to Ensure Awareness and Transparency	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Create new website for Strategic Planning	Strategic Planning Staff/Board; Consultant/Marketing Firm
Develop social media presence	Strategic Planning Staff/Board; Consultant/Marketing Firm
Develop an annual report of all initiatives and successes	Strategic Planning Staff; Consultant/Marketing Firm
Create organizational metrics	Strategic Planning Staff and Board; Nonprofit Partners
Measure organization's social impact over time	Strategic Planning Staff; Potential Outside Consultant
Create <b>The Shift Forward</b> Action Teams and communicate progress	Strategic Planning Staff and Board; County; Cities
Convene city and county leadership quarterly	Strategic Planning Staff; County; Cities

# Strategies Overview

Strategy 3: Support the Nonprofit Community in Troup County	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Include information on nonprofits on Strategic Planning website	Strategic Planning Staff; Marketing Firm
Host a Nonprofit Summit	Strategic Planning Staff and Board; Nonprofit Partners
Explore the creation of the Troup County Nonprofit Center	Strategic Planning Staff and Board; County; Cities; Nonprofit Partners; Potential Consultant
Create the <b>The Shift Forward</b> Grant Program	Strategic Planning Board, County, Cities

Strategy 4: Encourage Countywide Initiatives and Programming	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Identify Troup holistically countywide	Strategic Planning Staff and Board; County; Cities



# increase prosperity for all

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A community becomes truly prosperous when all residents have opportunities to participate and engage. Troup County has a high poverty rate at nearly 21 percent compared to 14 percent in the State of Georgia, 13 percent in the U.S. and 11 percent in the Atlanta MSA. The best way to address poverty is by addressing the roots of poverty, which may include addressing any deterrents that keep people from going to work such as transportation challenges and lack of childcare, ensuring people have access to available and attainable workforce housing and that they receive a good education and training. Also, ensuring that people have access to support and services they need in their journey out of poverty is critical.

The recommendations in this section are focused on increasing overall prosperity for all citizens of Troup County resulting in a decrease in the poverty rate over time.

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**“We must address the roots of poverty.”**  
- Stakeholder

# reduce employment barriers

## Action Item 1: Enhance mobility and accessibility

Limited transportation options hinders access to basic services, jobs and social activities. **Connectivity issues and transportation** was referenced many times as a challenge in Troup County during the stakeholder engagement process. If people cannot get to work, they will not go to work. Many stakeholders also mentioned the need for **transportation for workers** to the various business and industrial parks in the county and **transportation options between the three main cities**.

One way to identify some of the specific transportation needs in the county is to work with local employers, which may include launching an **online survey to the employees of all major employers** to determine the needs of the in-county workforce. This survey would help determine the routes most in need to ensure people can easily get to work.

A **Transit Study** may also be needed to further define the types of transportation options, which may involve additional **shuttle or bus services**, that make the most sense for the area. All efforts in this area should be in partnership with **Troup Transit**.

### Best Practice

#### Smart Ride New Albany, OH

- Largest nonprofit center in Denton County and one of the largest in Texas
- Transit alternative designed to bring workers to and from the New Albany International Business Park, along with a new bus line that transports residents to and from downtown Columbus
- Involved **partnership between city and Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)**
- Features routes between Columbus and New Albany weekday mornings and evenings with free shuttle service from bus stop that takes riders to and from companies in business park

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**“The cities or the county need to deal with the internal transportation issue.”**

- Stakeholder

## Action Item 2: Expand childcare opportunities

Access to quality and affordable childcare, as well as early learning opportunities is an essential need to ensure parents can enter and remain in the workforce. Childcare centers, such as daycares and preschools, can provide a safe and supportive environment for young children to grow and learn about positive behaviors.

In the **Troup County Education Landscape Analysis** conducted for the Callaway Foundation in 2021, it was determined that low-income families face challenges finding high quality childcare options that are affordable and there is only one 24-hour childcare center in the county that does not have additional capacity. Staffing at these facilities is also a challenge.

The first step to address this challenge is to **work with identified partners** in this space to **inventory** all existing daycares and preschool programs and understand where the gaps exist.

The second step is to **seek grant funding** to establish additional daycare and preschool facilities as needed throughout the county. Partners may include the **Callaway Foundation**, which is already focused on this challenge; **Enrichment Services Program, Inc.**, which accepts applications for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Troup County, among other services; **Community Action for Improvement**, which assist low-income families and individuals in achieving self-sufficiency and self-empowerment; **United Way Success by 6**, which is focused on increasing awareness of the importance early learning plays in school readiness; and **Get Troup Reading**, which is focused on ensuring children are ready to learn when they enter school and reading on grade level by third grade, and other organizations to be determined.

**“If we had quality childcare and transportation, we could transform lives.”**

- Stakeholder

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**“There are not enough childcare facilities that provide quality, affordable, and accessible services.”**

- Stakeholder

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**“Employers and workforce on rotating and nightshifts need affordable and accessible childcare 24/7.”**

- Stakeholder

## STRATEGY 1: REDUCE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

### Action Item 3: Engage, further support and expand Circles Troup County

Circles Troup County was created in 2012, as an initiative of Strategic Planning, to **identify and eliminate the causes of poverty and support residents in the county who want support in getting out of poverty**. Circles provides weekly meetings and classes for participants, who are selected through an application process, over a 12-week period teaching them goal setting, financial literacy and other skills. Once the course is completed, each participant is matched with a volunteer, and continues to attend weekly meetings. The goal is for the participant to receive the support they need to achieve financial stability.

Although it appears that Circles has been successful in assisting people in Troup County, there is a need to better **track and publicize this success**. The county and cities, as well as Strategic Planning, should **invest more in Circles** allowing the organization to expand and to support more residents wanting to get out of poverty. It should also assist with developing **metrics for the organization**, and helping it track and publicize its successes throughout the community.





STRATEGY 2

# enhance support of public education

## Action Item 1: Work to change perception of the public school system

Although there is a perception that the public schools are not good, many stakeholders acknowledged during this process that the system is improving and that the current leadership is good.

Based on the data below, the **Troup County School System** is **above the State of Georgia average in graduation rate and SAT score** and is **close or on par with investment per pupil and teacher:student ratio**. It is below the U.S. average in most categories but is **better for teacher:student ratio and in average SAT scores** for 2021. These are all **important accolades**. With that said, the average teacher salary appears to be well below the State of Georgia and U.S. average. However, the starting salary for teachers is in line for both. Also, based on findings in the **Troup County Education Landscape Analysis** conducted for the Callaway Foundation in 2021, there are gaps in English language arts and math proficiency rates, along racial and socioeconomic lines.

Public Education Statistics							
	Enrollment (2021)	Graduation Rate (2021)	Investment Per Pupil	% of Economically Disadvantaged Students	Teacher: Student Ratio (2021)	Bachelor's Degree Level 4 Starting Annual Salary	Average SAT Score by District (2021)
Troup	11,655	85.87%	\$10,196 (2019 - 20)	63.0%	15:1	\$41,828 (2022-23)	1089
Georgia	1,686,318	83.8%	\$10,428 (2019 - 20)	59.7% (2019-20)	15:1	\$42,350 including local (2022-22)	1086
U.S.	49,400,000 (2020)	86.0% (2018-19)	\$13,187 (2018-19)	52.1% (2019-20)	16:1	\$41,770 (2020-21)	1060

Although the Troup County School System and its partners must continue to address these challenges, there should be a **concentrated marketing/communications campaign** through **social media** and other outlets focused on the **positive accolades of the public schools**. This should initially be focused on some of the positive data points outlined above but should then focus on **ongoing positive announcements** within the school system.

“Education and the school system are trending up.”

- Stakeholder

“I believe we have a great school system, but we have a poverty problem.”

- Stakeholder

“I think we are making strides in education and must continue to support.”

- Stakeholder

“We have great leadership in our school system, but some children are not receiving the support they need.”

- Stakeholder

**STRATEGY 2: ENHANCE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

**Action Item 2: Continue to work to increase teacher salaries**

As previously indicated, the average teacher salary in Troup County is well below the State of Georgia and U.S. average, and when looking at data on starting salaries for teachers compared to some of the surrounding counties, Troup County also pays less than some of them. This potentially creates a competitive disadvantage to Troup County in teacher recruitment and may continue to present an issue for being able to attract and retain quality teachers now and into the future. Per the chart to the right, Troup County starting teacher salaries are less than Coweta County and Opelika City Schools. It is more in line with Harris County (if 2022 - 2023 data were available) and Heard County. Troup County should continue to strive to recruit and retain the best teachers in the state, and a higher salary can assist with that goal.

Work with the **Troup County School System** to determine a plan to **raise teacher salaries** over time by increasing the local supplement amount to an even more competitive level.

An additional idea is to explore the availability of potential funding under the **Federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF)**, which has provided over \$2 billion in grants to support performance-based teacher and principal compensation focused on attracting top talent to high-needs schools. Under this program, teachers and principals may be eligible for bonuses based on performance.

Public Education Statistics		
	Bachelor's Degree Level 4 Starting Annual Salary	Local Supplement
Troup County, GA (2022-2023)	\$41,828	\$2,736
Coweta County, GA (2022- 2023)	\$44,718	\$5,626
Harris County, GA (2021-2022)	\$39,502	\$2,410
Heard County, GA (2022 - 2023)	\$41,635	\$5,543
Meriwether County, GA	N/A	N/A
Chambers County, AL	N/A	N/A
Lee County, AL (Opelika City Schools 2022-2023)	\$44,288	N/A
Georgia Base Starting Salary (2022- 2023)	\$39,092 Plus Local	\$3,258
Alabama Base Starting Salary (2022 - 2023)	\$43,358 Plus Local	N/A
U.S. (2020-2021)	\$41,770	N/A

## STRATEGY 2: ENHANCE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

### Action Item 3: Consider a teacher recruitment incentive program that offers relocation funds

Although raising the teacher salary in Troup County may help to retain existing teaching staff, there is most likely a need to continue to attract new teachers to the county in the future. Many locations across the country have implemented remote worker incentive programs in recent years that provide cash incentives for workers to relocate to work remotely for the company of their choosing.

Work with the Troup County School System to explore creation of the **Troup County Teacher Recruitment Incentive Fund**, which would focus on attracting more talented teaching staff to the county by offering teachers who move to teach in the public school district and commit to stay for a certain time period, relocation funds, which may range from **\$2,500 to \$5,000** per teacher.

### Action Item 4: Explore need for additional charter schools in underserved areas

The fact that Troup County has a consolidated school system is good but there is not a high school in West Point or Hogansville and some stakeholders were concerned about students being bused for 20 to 30 minutes to school in some cases. There were also concerns expressed of disparities among different schools in the system.

**THINC College and Career Academy** is a charter school located in LaGrange for high school students under the umbrella of the Troup County School System. THINC students are engaged in learning that is connected to their career and college pathways, which include Allied Health and Sports Medicine Engineering & Technology, Engineering Drafting & Design, Fashion Merchandising & Retailing Essentials; Game Design; International Business; Marketing & Management; and Mechatronics. Dual/college credit opportunities are also available.

Explore the possibility of **opening another THINC College and Career Academy or a similar type charter school program** that may offer different pathways in **Hogansville and/or West Point**. This would give students in those cities another educational option, which could help to **eliminate any disparities** that currently exist. A charter school focused on middle school and/or high school should be the focus. In West Point, the former West Point High School property may be a good location for such a charter school.

“Wealthy schools are doing fine but the poor schools are not.”

- Stakeholder

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## STRATEGY 2: ENHANCE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

### Action Item 5: Continue early learning efforts

The percentage of 3rd grade students reading at or above grade level is lower for Troup County than all surrounding counties, other than Meriwether County. The percentage for Troup is also significantly lower than the State of Georgia.

As previously referenced, **Get Troup Reading** began operations in 2020. It is focused on ensuring children are ready to learn when they enter school and reading on grade level by third grade.

The efforts of this organization should be **supported by the county, cities, the Troup County School System and Strategic Planning**, and its **successes documented** and heavily **publicized countywide**.

### Action Item 6: Create an Education Foundation or Trust

In order to fund some of the recommendations in this section and other educational related initiatives, consider creation of an **Education Foundation or Trust**. Pursue the establishment of an **endowment** and/or launch a **capital campaign** to raise additional funds. A **board** or **committee**, comprised of leadership of the Troup County School System, higher educational institutions and others, should be established to guide the investment into different educational initiatives.

Public Education Statistics	
	% Reading at or Above Grade Level Target (3rd Grade) - 2020 - 2021
Troup County, GA	33.46%
Coweta County, GA	52.10%
Harris County, GA	47.65%
Heard County, GA	59.54%
Meriwether County, GA	24.05%
Georgia	43.59%

#### Douglas County Education Foundation (GA)

- Established in 1993
- Raises money from local businesses, individuals, and regional foundations
- For the 2019-2020 school year, the foundation awarded over \$51,000 to students for scholarships and provided more than \$37,000 in Classroom Impact Grants

## STRATEGY 3

# create a talent pipeline

### Action Item 1: Explore creation of the Troup Workforce Collaborative

Consider creation of the Troup Workforce Collaborative, which would be a **county-based partnership** focused on **increasing the talent pipeline in the county**. This collaborative would also include representatives from economic development groups, Troup County Public Schools, local colleges and universities, major employers and other to be determined. It would be responsible for implementation of all programs and initiatives related to creating a talent pipeline.

### Action Item 2: Create a mentor program for identified at-risk students

A mentor program involves the development of a **professional relationship** in which an experienced person (the mentor) assist another (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the mentee's professional and personal growth. The mentor will share their experience and wisdom with the mentee resulting in personal growth and development.

Work with the **Troup County School System** to explore the **creation of a mentor program** that connects identified **at-risk high school students** with existing business and industry and professionals that represent different industries such as manufacturing, distribution, finance, education, healthcare, and other to be determined. The mentor program may involve monthly one-on-one meetings over a school year of the mentee and mentor in a field the mentee is interested.

“There are opportunities for students to broaden their vision of what they could do after graduation from high school.”

- Stakeholder



## STRATEGY 3: CREATE A TALENT PIPELINE

### Action Item 3: Create a College Scholarship Fund for underserved or at-risk students

The percentage of residents with an Associate's degree or higher at **27 percent** in Troup County is **significantly lower** compared to the State of Georgia at 41 percent; the U.S. at 42 percent and the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) at 48 percent. This same pattern holds true for Bachelor's degrees and Master's degrees.

Although not every student graduating from high school is meant to go to college, there are some that do not have the opportunity to go as they cannot afford it. In order to encourage those students to go to college, consider the creation of the **Troup County College Scholarship Fund**. The **Education Foundation or Trust** as previously described, could be a source of funding for these scholarships.

### Action Item 4: Relaunch Troup County Works

The Troup County Works website was originally created to allow job seekers and employers in Troup County to connect. At one point, it had more than 250 employers and 5,000 job seekers registered on the site.

Explore the **creation of a new Troup County Works website** that includes this information and other relevant workforce data that may be helpful to both job seekers and potential employers in the county.

### Action Item 5: Expand exposure and explore creation of new locally-funded apprenticeship programs

Work with **West Georgia Technical College**, the **Troup County School System** and **local manufacturing employers** to expose existing and explore the need for expanded apprenticeship programs.

### Action Item 6: Engage with local and regional colleges and universities

Engage the **career services departments** of local and regional colleges and universities on **existing and future job opportunities** in the county.



### Action Item 7: Explore creation of new training programs to upskill potential workforce

Kia and other manufacturing employers in the county have jobs openings that they are having difficulty filling. Several stakeholders mentioned the lack of entry-level workers to fill positions as a major challenge.

Explore creation of a **Skill Up Program**, similar to the one launched in Chattanooga described to the right, in Troup County to provide **new occupational skills for existing potential workers in the county**. **West Georgia Technical College** may be one partner in this initiative, along with the **Troup County School System, Kia** and other **major employers**.

### Action Item 8: Enhance high school career and technical education programs and support Logistics, Transportation and Manufacturing Complex

West Georgia Technical College (WGTC) and the Troup County School System (TCSS) already have a dual enrollment program that allows high school students to take college courses for credit. In Summer 2021, WGTC and TCSS partnered to open WGTC's Precision Engineering and Manufacturing Lab at ThINC College and Career Academy located on WGTC's campus.

WGTC is currently seeking funding for a 55,000 square foot Logistics, Transportation & Manufacturing Complex on the LaGrange East campus to train local and regional workforce talent for over a dozen high-demand fields. The proposed facility is projected to support enrollment of 850 additional students.

Work with WGTC and the TCSS to pursue new logistics and manufacturing career and technical education programs for high school students, and support the development of the proposed Logistics, Transportation and Manufacturing Complex.

#### Skill Up Program Chattanooga, TN

- A partnership among Chattanooga State, the Benwood Foundation, the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce and local industry
- Provides six weeks of training in nationally recognized credentials for the Manufacturing Skills Standards
- Students are paid \$12.50 per hour while attending courses and regional foundations
- Upon program completion, students have gained occupational skills to fill high-demand jobs for local businesses



## STRATEGY 3: CREATE A TALENT PIPELINE

### Action Item 9: Continue to support business and education partnerships

Continue to build **business and education partnerships** to ensure that curriculum at the Troup County School System, LaGrange College, Point University and the LaGrange campus of West Georgia Technical College meet the **needs of existing business and industry**.

In March 2022, West Georgia Technical College (WGTC) and the West Georgia Technical College Foundation hosted the first **Troup Partners in Progress** event, which involved attendance by industry partners and community leaders to discuss how to work together more. At this meeting, WGTC introduced the plan for the proposed new 52,000 square foot Logistics, Transportation and Manufacturing Complex at WGTC's LaGrange Campus.

These types of **events that bring educational partners and industry together** should continue, with other local colleges/universities in Troup County engaged, with the goal of **creating a program like PIE** in Columbus, Georgia.

#### Partners in Education (PIE) Columbus, GA

- Established in 1987 as joint venture of Muscogee County School District and Greater Columbus Chamber
- Created to engage business community more with public education
- Involved partnership between a school and businesses with parties committing to specific activities such as tutoring, mentoring, coaching, guest lectures, and monetary contributions to benefit students, accomplish school goals and improve achievement
- Partnership initiated either by school or school district recruiting a business partner, or a business partner contacting school district or individual school.



**Action Item 10: Explore opportunities with Be Pro Be Proud Georgia**

Be Pro Be Proud Georgia, as described to the right, is an initiative started by the Cherokee Office of Economic Development (COED). The **Be Pro Be Proud Mobile Workshop** can conduct school campus visits where students can spend time exploring mobile simulations related to technical careers. The Troup County School System should consider **booking a tour stop** and **opportunities to partner with** COED on this initiative should be explored.

**Action Item 11: Develop a unified workforce strategy**

Consider development of a **countywide workforce alignment plan** focused on identifying gaps, assessing opportunities, supporting diversity in the workforce, strengthening existing businesses and workforce, aligning workforce resources, and ensuring a specific entity is charged with reacting to changing workforce needs.

**Be Pro Proud Georgia**

- Works to change perception of technical careers and training by engaging students at school and introducing them to technical careers through virtual and augmented reality experiences
- Interested students are then connected with technical career employers and training providers
- Initiative originated with the Cherokee Office of Economic Development



www.beproudproudga.org

## STRATEGY 3: CREATE A TALENT PIPELINE

### Action Item 12: Initiate a talent recruitment program

Create a Talent Recruitment Program that provides a financial incentive to remote workers relocating to Troup County, as well as other workers moving to Troup County to seek a job with a Troup County employer. The program can be modeled on the NWA Life Works Here Initiative described to the right on a smaller scale, potentially providing a \$5,000 stipend and other support services. The program could be called “Be a Trouper.”



#### Northwest Arkansas (NWA) Life Works Here Initiative

- NWA Council investing more than \$1M to attract top talent to the region
- Initiative sponsored by NWA Council financial support from the Walton Family Foundation
- Talent attraction campaign seeks to capture attention and interest of those looking to leave major U.S. cities with goal of attracting workers to fill region's 10,000 open positions
- Benefits include relocation support for individuals of \$10,000 and a bike
- Selected candidates provided with a NWA Talent Ambassador, who provides services such as networking with area recruiters, sharing information about current opportunities and open jobs, and fielding questions about the region

# pursue diverse housing options

## Action Item 1: Augment and expand the support for Dependable Affordable Sustainable Housing (DASH) for LaGrange countywide

The lack of housing inventory in Troup County was identified as a major challenge through the stakeholder engagement process. This included a lack of workforce housing, rental housing, multi-family housing and even senior housing, as well as concerns of existing substandard housing that presents health and safety risks to occupants. This challenge is further illustrated through the findings of the 2019 Housing Study in Troup County, which found that **“in contrast to the strong employment growth, Troup County has received ONLY HALF of its fair share of recent household growth.”** The study noted that a large share of the region’s household growth is concentrating in Coweta and Lee Counties. With that said, **Hogansville has plans for the construction of 3,000 new single and multi-family homes** in the years to come, and **LaGrange also has new multi-family projects** in progress currently.

**DASH for LaGrange** was formed in 2002 to **address inadequate housing concerns**, primarily concentrated in the former mill villages in LaGrange. In 2003, DASH, in partnership with the City of LaGrange, which worked to provide needed infrastructure, began purchasing substandard properties, rebuilding them and selling them, most often to first-time homeowners. Proceeds from the sale of the homes went to a revolving fund that was used to continue the rehabilitation of homes, as well as to provide homeownership educational services. Since 2003, DASH has developed **406 quality, affordable rental units**, rehabilitated or built **93 single-family homes** in the **Hillside neighborhood**, **eliminated 200 plus units of substandard housing** and invested over **\$73.5 million** in Troup County. DASH has also provided counseling services to more than **1,800 low-income residents** resulting in homeownership and stability. The organization’s vision is to provide “vibrant, safe, diverse communities where families are proud to be part of the neighborhood.”

The county and cities, as well as Strategic Planning, should **invest more in DASH** allowing the organization to continue to expand its services **countywide**. This should also be in coordination with efforts of the **LaGrange Housing Authority**, the **West Point Housing Authority**, which is under the management of the Griffin Housing Authority and the **Housing Authority of Hogansville**.

**“We must amplify the work that groups like DASH and Circles of Troup are doing by 100.”**

- Stakeholder

**“Housing is a major issue. There is no inventory. How are you going to attract people to the community if there are no places to live?”**

- Stakeholder

**“We have got to have sustainable high-quality housing.”**

- Stakeholder

**“Multi-family housing is not represented.”**

- Stakeholder

## STRATEGY 4: PURSUE DIVERSE HOUSING OPTIONS

### Action Item 1: Explore partnership with Purpose Built Communities

Established in 2009 after the successful revitalization of the East Lake neighborhood in Atlanta, **Purpose Built Communities** is focused on guiding communities seeking to revitalize their neighborhoods. It was built on the premise that home ownership leads to wealth over time, children who live in safe, stable homes have a greater chance of educational success and vibrant neighborhoods have less crime, healthier residents and more opportunity. Developing high-quality **mixed-income housing** is a key element to neighborhood revitalization and a key component of the organization's model and that is one of the types of housing that Troup County needs.

Explore a **partnership** with **Purpose Built Communities** to further enhance neighborhood revitalization efforts and encourage new multi-family housing developments.

### Action Item 2: Consider creation of the Troup County Neighborhood Services Division

Neighborhood revitalization will allow Troup County to provide equitable and sustainable housing to existing and future residents, while also improving the overall look of the community.

The county should create a **Neighborhood Services Division**. Having a division at the county level to oversee all neighborhood and housing improvements in the county, coordinating with the three housing authorities, as well as DASH, will allow a more cohesive effort countywide in this area. It will also allow it to potentially obtain funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) at the Federal level and the Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) in Georgia.

The creation by the newly created Neighborhood Services Division of a program that may be called the **Rebuilding Troup Neighborhoods Program** should also be considered. This program should include a **housing rehabilitation programs, seeking development of more affordable housing units, a cleanup campaign** and the **creation of a loan program** to assist both homeowners and neighborhood associations with the costs of revitalization.

#### Best Practice City of Yuma, AZ Rebuilding Yuma Neighborhoods

- In effort to clean up image, city took targeted approach to revitalizing neighborhoods
- Program developed and administered by Department of Community Development and Neighborhood Services
- Surveyed stakeholders, held community meetings and developed partnerships to ensure plan resident driven
- Submitted plan to HUD and applied for funding sources
- Administered Code Enforcement Program cleanup campaign, housing rehabilitation programs, and built affordable housing units
- Loans and grants provided to homeowners and neighborhood associations to help with revitalization costs

# Strategies Overview

Strategy 1: Reduce Employment Barriers	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Enhance mobility and accessibility	Troup Transit, Economic Development; County, Cities; Strategic Planning
Expand childcare opportunities	Strategic Planning Staff/Board; Callaway Foundation; Enrichment Services, Inc.; Community Action for Improvement; United Way Success by 6; Get Troup Reading
Engage, further support and expand Circles Troup County	Strategic Planning Staff/Board; Circles; County; Cities

Strategy 2: Enhance Support of Public Education	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Work to change perception of the public school system	Troup County School System; Chamber; Strategic Planning Staff
Continue to work to increase teacher salaries	Troup County School System; Chamber; County, Cities, Strategic Planning Staff
Consider a teacher recruitment incentive program that offers relocation funds	Troup County School System; County, Cities, Chamber; Strategic Planning
Explore need for additional charter schools in underserved areas	Troup County School System; THINC College and Career Academy; County, Cities, Chamber; Strategic Planning Staff
Continue early learning efforts	Troup County School System; Get Troup Reading; County, Cities, Chamber, Strategic Planning Staff/Board
Create an Education Foundation or Trust	Troup County School System; LaGrange College; Point University; West Georgia Technical College LaGrange; Strategic Planning Staff/Board

### Strategy 3: Create a Talent Pipeline

Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Explore creation of the Troup Workforce Collaborative	Strategic Planning; Troup County School System; LaGrange College; Point University; West Georgia Technical College; Major Manufacturing Employers; Chamber
Create a mentor program for identified at-risk students	Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created); Troup County School System; Major Manufacturers, Strategic Planning
Create a College Scholarship Fund for underserved or at-risk students	Education Foundation or Trust (to be created); Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created)
Relaunch Troup County Works	Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created)
Explore creation of a local apprenticeship program	Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created); Troup County School System; Local Manufacturing Employers; West Georgia Technical College would have lead role
Engage with local and regional colleges and universities	Troup County School System; LaGrange College; Point University; West Georgia Technical College
Create training programs to upskill existing workforce	Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created); West Georgia Technical College would have lead role; Local Manufacturing Employers
Enhance high school career and technical education programs and support Logistics, Transportation and Manufacturing Complex	Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created); West Georgia Technical College and Troup County School System would have lead role;
Continue to support business and education partnerships	Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created); Troup County School System; West Georgia Technical College LaGrange College; Point University
Explore opportunities with Be Pro Be Proud Georgia	Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created)
Develop a unified workforce strategy	Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created); Potential Outside Consultant
Initiate a talent recruitment program	Troup Workforce Collaborative (to be created)

## Strategy 4: Pursue Diverse Housing Options

Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Augment and expand the support for Dependable Affordable Sustainable Housing (DASH) for LaGrange countywide	DASH; Strategic Planning; LaGrange Housing Authority; West Point Development Authority; Housing Authority of Hogansville; County; Cities
Explore partnership with Purpose Built Communities	DASH; Strategic Planning; County; Cities
Consider creation of the Troup County Neighborhood Services Division	County; Strategic Planning
Encourage county and cities to consider incentives for workforce housing developers	County; Cities; Strategic Planning
Encourage county and cities to consider programs to encourage homeownership	County; Cities; Housing Authorities; Strategic Planning



# create a livable, equitable, and sustainable environment



Communities today must develop, embrace, and promote their livability assets. Most people and companies want to locate, live and work in a place that is considered livable, which may include being diverse, equitable and inclusive, offering cultural, entertainment, and recreational activities, embracing sustainability, and focusing on health and wellness, among other factors.

Equity should be the foundation of a livable community ensuring proper access to opportunities, services and amenities for all residents of a community regardless of income, race/ethnicity, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other protected classes or characteristics. Sustainability, which refers to doing business without negatively impacting the environment, community or society, is another major component of livability.

Troup County must strive to be even more of a livable, equitable and sustainable community to ensure its future growth, development and long-term success.



# embrace diversity, equity + inclusion [dei]

## Action Item 1: Enhance efforts of Trustbuilding, Inc.

Racism and the legacy of racism was a common theme mentioned in the stakeholder engagement process. Trustbuilding, Inc., formerly Racial Trust Building, Inc. was launched in 2015 by former Troup County Commission Chair Ricky Wolfe and former State Representative Carl Von Epps, Jr. to focus on improving race relations in the county. Southern Truth and Reconciliation (STAR), which partners with communities that desire to acknowledge their historical past of racial conflict and injustice to create a new narrative built on reconciliation and justice, and Hope in the Cities, which facilitates conversations that lead to the acknowledgment of historical issues, acceptance of personal accountability, and reconciliation, were engaged in this effort. STAR facilitated the first trust-building workshop held in LaGrange in March 2015, attended by 30 invited community leaders. Since then, more than 350 residents have completed weekend training sessions at LaGrange College facilitated by Hope in the Cities.

The mission of Trustbuilding, Inc. "is to bridge the racial divide in Troup County through trust-building, research, community collaboration, and action, in order to remove barriers that prevent full access to opportunities for all."

All DEI initiatives in Troup County should be led by Trustbuilding, Inc. and there should be an effort to reignite the efforts of this organization through more **workshops with leadership** and **training programs for residents, financial and marketing support** from the county and cities and other to be determined. The Board of Trustbuilding Inc. should be focused on implementing and identifying new strategies to advance DEI efforts throughout the county. This may include the launching of a **DEI Summit in Troup County** on a smaller scale than the one in Greenville described to the right.

### Greenville (SC) Chamber DEI Initiatives

- Greenville Chamber has had a focus on DEI since at least 2012
- Chamber hosted its 5th annual DEI Summit in October 2021 (virtually)
- DEI Summit is an annual conference that educates attendees regarding the important work of DEI that engages more than 600 attendees each year
- Includes Upstate Diversity Leadership Awards
- Has recognized and honored women in leadership with ATHENA Leadership Award since 2001

## STRATEGY 1: EMBRACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)

### Action Item 2: Enhance efforts of Trustbuilding, Inc.

Encourage the county and city governments to create programs that focus on contracting with women and black-owned businesses for local contracts. This may include hosting contracting and supplier events to increase awareness of potential vendor and contract opportunities.

### Action Item 3: Explore opportunities with the U.S. Black Chambers, Inc.

The U.S. Black Chambers, Inc. (USBC) provides leadership, and advocacy through the creation of resources and initiative that support a network of African American Chambers of Commerce and business organizations in developing and growing Black enterprises. Explore opportunities to join the USBC as a member.

### Action Item 4: Encourage creation of the Troup County Department of Equity & Community Engagement

Encourage the county government to create a division or department focused on supporting minority-owned businesses, promoting DEI, and working with Trustbuilding, Inc. and other organizations focused in this space on trust building exercises within the community.



# expand retail, hospitality and entertainment options

## Action Item 1: Develop a Retail Recruitment Strategy

During the stakeholder engagement process, many stakeholders expressed concerns related to the **lack of retail, dine-in restaurants and entertainment** in the cities and county or lack of amenities that attract young people or a more diverse population. The need for more **independent, non-chain restaurants** was also specifically mentioned by many people. Perhaps the most common theme on this topic was the need for a **Target** to locate in Troup County. Other big box stores mentioned included **Best Buy, Sam's Club or Costco**. Entertainment options mentioned the most frequently included a **bowling alley, Top Golf, Dave & Busters, and Sky Zone**. Stakeholders also identified the need for an **extended-stay hotel**.

Troup County should seek support in the retail recruitment area and consider engaging a **retail recruitment firm to identify the types of retail businesses it is lacking** through a gap analysis and assist with the process of then **recruiting those identified businesses** to the county. Retail Strategies is one such firm and Buxton Group is another.

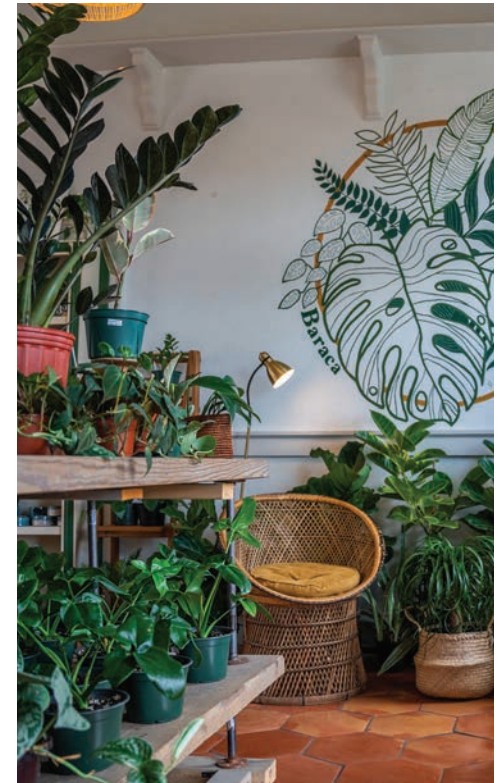
The retail needs of each city should be addressed separately as part of this study. The **LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber)** and the **LaGrange Economic Development Authority** should take the lead in all retail related initiatives working with the cities, county and downtown development authorities.

## Action Item 2: Identify and market to local and regional commercial developers

Working with partners, the **Chamber** and **economic development groups** should identify a **list of local and regional developers** to target for commercial development. The focus should be on developers that have completed similar commercial projects in the region.

**“We must create a community that can attract young people and workers to live.”**

- Stakeholder



## STRATEGY 2: EXPAND RETAIL, HOSPITALITY AND ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS

### Action Item 3: Consider future public-private partnerships with developers

**Public-private partnerships** with developers can lead to more development overall and a good and trusting relationship between counties, cities and developers. The county and cities must be prepared to invest in any future mixed-use commercial development that is determined to be viable and beneficial.

### Action Item 4: Work with county and cities to develop local incentive programs to entice retailers and commercial developers

Working with the county and city governments, determine potential incentive offerings for high-impact retail and commercial development projects, which may include the following:

- Establishment of new **Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)**, which can be used to incent retailers and retail developers to locate
- Creation of a **one-stop shop for development review, permits, and licensing** that can expedite applications for high-impact projects
- Offering reductions in **building permits and plan review fees**, and **impact fees**
- Exploring a fund for **public infrastructure improvements** for certain high-impact projects

### Action Item 4: Actively and aggressively begin the process of recruiting a Target

Based on the typical Zip Code Profile, a Target store will locate in zip codes with a fairly significant population, and even larger surrounding area population, in addition to above-average income, high economic activity, and high-population density. From this data, it can be inferred that Target stores tend to locate in more urban areas and in some cases suburban areas. In 2022, Target plans to open approximately 30 stores that will range in footprint, from mid-size locations in dense suburban areas to small-format stores in city centers.

The closest Target store to LaGrange is an estimated 34 miles away in Newnan; the closest to West Point is 26 miles away in Opelika, Alabama; and the closest to Hogansville is over 21 miles away, also in Newnan. Troup County needs to review and evaluate where it stands with the **data points above from a competitiveness perspective** and put together the **case study** for why a Target store should locate in the county. This than needs to be shared with developers that work with Target and/or corporate real estate professionals at Targets corporate headquarters.

In addition, a **social media campaign** should be organized that will be driven by **Troup County residents** focused on **Target corporate employees (C-Suite and others to be identified)** and **Board members**.

Typical Zip Code Profile		
	Target	Walmart
Population	24,447	27,772
Surrounding Area Population	429,878	140,615
Median Household Income	\$70,992	\$56,352
Economic Activity Index (/10)	8.3	6.9
Population Density	2,066	654
% White Collar Professionals	21%	16%
Population Age	38	38

### Action Item 6: Develop a restaurant recruitment strategy

In the Community Survey launched for this project, over 255 people answered restaurants/nice dine-in places when asked what new businesses or activities are needed in Troup County. This was also a prevalent answer on the Millennial/GenZ survey. Restaurants are a key component of creating more vibrant cities, and Troup County must develop a plan that involves supporting this sector. Part of this plan should include creative ideas to attract restaurants to Troup County, supporting existing restaurants through grants and creating a new incentive program to attract new restaurant businesses.

First, **include restaurants** as part of the **Retail Recruitment Strategy** previously recommended.

Second, consider an **event to bring food trucks to the downtown areas of the three main cities** on the first Friday of each month, rotating monthly, in the hopes of eventually attracting more brick-and-mortar restaurants. The idea would be if some of these food truck businesses are successful enough at these events, they may eventually set up a brick-and-mortar restaurant in Troup County.

Troup County must also ensure that its **existing restaurants** continue to thrive and **work with them to meet their needs**, as well as **attract new restaurants**. Troup County should consider **incentives** such as a low-interest loan program in partnership with a local bank, discounted fees and permits and reduced costs ad rates or other free press for the new and existing business. A **marketing campaign** to encourage local residents to support existing and new restaurants should also be implemented.



# support creation of robust downtowns

## Action Item 1: Better coordinate downtown development efforts and planning

Encourage more coordination with the **three downtown development authorities** in the county, which may include working together to **update existing** or **develop new downtown development plans** for each city and collaborating on implementation of those plans and solutions to potential challenges.

## Action Item 2: Create a positive marketing story about the county and each individual city

Identify and market the positive **attributes for the entire county**, as well as the **unique attributes of each city**.

## Action Item 3: Create more connections with LaGrange College and downtown LaGrange

LaGrange College is located close to downtown LaGrange and is connected via The Thread, which is mostly greenway trails and side paths connecting parks, downtown, and the college. This provides some connection with downtown LaGrange and the college. Work with LaGrange College to determine additional ways to connect downtown LaGrange to the college, which may include creating more biking and walking paths for students to get easily to downtown, open space along the way and new retail, restaurants and attainable housing along the way, as well as free public transportation as recommended below.

## Action Item 4: Explore free public transportation in and around the downtown LaGrange area

In Chattanooga, Tennessee, the Chattanooga Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) provides a free electric shuttle for transportation in the downtown district. This should be explored in downtown LaGrange as another way to connect LaGrange College and other areas in and around the downtown area. The possibility of using an electric shuttle to provide transportation between the three main cities should also be explored.

### North Dakota State University (NDSU)

- Fargo, North Dakota has taken advantage of expansion of NDSU to revitalize core of downtown, bringing a 104-unit mixed-use housing development into the area
- Eliminated minimum parking requirements and encouraged multi-modal transportation options that young people are more likely to use

**Action Item 5: Focus on development opportunities along the Chattahoochee River in downtown West Point**

There is land along the Chattahoochee River in West Point that is owned by the Downtown Development Authority. The City of West Point has a plan for riverfront development. Some ideas may include a new park development and/or some type of mixed-use development that could include workforce housing, retail and restaurants. This could be done in partnership with the City of West Point, Point University and potentially the county, and may involve the city providing the land and/or reducing the land cost, or some of the other programs previously outlined, as an incentive for the project developer.



www.adobestock.com

**Greenville, SC  
Riverfront Development**

- In early 2000s, downtown Greenville’s transformation was underway, but city had not taken advantage of one of its greatest assets, the Reedy River
- Building on a master plan created in 1999, Falls Park on the Reedy became city’s signature park, accentuated by Liberty Bridge, a 355-foot curved suspension bridge
- Falls Park officially opened in September 2004 and proved to be catalyst for private development on South Main Street and in the West End
- \$13 million park helped spur over \$100 million in private investment within two years

### STRATEGY 3: SUPPORT CREATION OF ROBUST DOWNTOWNS

#### Action Item 5: Continue to focus on attraction of mixed-use development or redevelopment projects in downtown areas

Identify potential product (sites or existing buildings) in and around downtown areas that would be good locations for new or revitalized mixed-use development projects. Once potential sites for mixed-use/office have been identified and a plan for infrastructure is put in place, begin marketing the sites/buildings to developers in the Atlanta area and elsewhere that have developed successful mixed-use/lifestyle centers. These projects often include retail/restaurants, residential, and office, and would ideally be located where it can be linked to the existing or planned trail system in the county. Ideally a new **flagship hotel** with **conference center space** could also be part of one or more of these developments.



www.adobestock.com



## STRATEGY 4

# support the arts

### Action Item 1: Create the Troup County Arts Commission

Explore the creation of the Troup County Arts Commission to ensure the arts and cultural environment continues to thrive. Leadership of the arts and cultural organization in Troup County that should be involved may include Lafayette Society for Performing Arts, LaGrange Arts Museum, LaGrange Symphony, and others, as well as leadership of the county and cities, the Chamber, Visit LaGrange, and the three downtown development authorities that represent each city and others to be determined.



[www.visitchattanooga.com](http://www.visitchattanooga.com)

#### Arts Build Chattanooga

- Nonprofit created in 1969 by a group of local business leaders and citizens, as a “United Arts Fund” (UAF) to raise money and strengthen Chattanooga’s arts and cultural organizations
- Since then, organization has invested more than \$76M in Chattanooga arts community
- Currently 44 other UAFs operating in the U.S.
- ArtsBuild receives annual support from Tennessee Arts Commission and City of Chattanooga and relies on annual distribution from endowment fund but relies mostly on donations from individuals, businesses, as well as private foundations

## STRATEGY 4: SUPPORT THE ARTS

### Action Item 2: Explore creation of Troup County United Arts Fund (UAF) fundraising organization

UAFs are local arts agencies that focus on raising money from local individuals, businesses, and foundations to provide to local arts and cultural institutions in the community. UAFs seek to consolidate fundraising efforts in one organization. In the past, UAFs have funded operations or programmatic grants to the core institutions that define the city's cultural identity such as the symphony, ballet, theater, and museum. Today, UAFs are more involved in cultural planning, implementing programs that engage the community through the arts, and providing capacity-building programs and other services to arts organizations in their communities. One of the first initiatives of the Troup County Arts Commission should be the creation of a Troup County UAF organization. Seek grants from the **Georgia Council for the Arts** to help fund this effort initially.

### Action Item 3: Support expansion of the LaGrange Art Museum

The LaGrange Art Museum has impressive plans for an expansion and renovation of the existing museum. The newly formed Troup County Arts Commission should embrace and work together to ensure that this plan comes to fruition.

### Action Item 4: Develop a public art campaign countywide

The Troup County Arts Commission should develop a **public art campaign countywide** focused on displaying the work of local artists.

#### Public Art Chattanooga (PAC)

- PAC oversees all temporary and permanent public art projects on city property and maintains city's public art collection of over 180 works
- PAC is administered by the city and the Public Art Commission, partnering with the private sector to support public art projects
- The Public Art Commission, which is Mayor-appointed, reviews and approves all public art projects



www.shaulnarose.com



Photo by j. adams www.publicartchattanooga.com



www.shaulnarose.com



www.noogatoday.6amcity.com

### Action Item 5: Establish a monthly pop-up gallery art walk

Consider the establishment of a **monthly pop-up gallery art walk** that features local and regional artists that would rotate to the three main cities in the county.

### Action Item 6: Create the Troup County Arts Festival

Over time, establish an annual **Troup County Arts Festival** that would **rotate to one of the three main cities** in the county. This festival should be a family-friendly event over the weekend that includes food trucks, live music and a boutique market highlighting local and regional artists and crafters. A creative name should be determined for this festival.



# expand and enhance recreational opportunities

## Action Item 1: Connect The Thread countywide and explore other regional connections

There is a growing demand for **walkable urban places** globally. People want to **live, work and spend their time** in places that are **walkable and connected**.

The Thread is a **multipurpose trail** connecting parks, downtown LaGrange, and LaGrange College, as well as schools and neighborhoods. Plans for The Thread Master Plan were adopted by the City of LaGrange in 2016. The Thread currently has 29 miles of trails planned. Friends of The Thread (FOTT), a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, was formed in 2016 to partner with city and county in implementing the Plan.

The Trust for Public Land created a paddling trail along a **52-mile stretch of the Chattahoochee River** called the **Blueway Water Trail**, which extends from West Point Dam in LaGrange to Columbus, Georgia, and includes launch points, portages, and camp spots. There is a gateway in the City of West Point.

Develop a **plan to expand The Thread** throughout the **county considering potential linkages with the Blueway Water Trail**. This will ultimately have the impact of **bringing the cities together** and creating **common ground** for future growth. The trails can serve as a shared “thread” among **cities, businesses and residents** joining everything and everyone together. The possibility of expanding The Thread **regionally** over time should also be explored.

## Action Item 2: Pursue state and Federal funding for new trail development

The **Transportation Enhancements (TE) program** is the largest source of funding for trails and related facilities. It is administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

The **Recreational Trails Program (RTP)** provides funding for trail construction, maintenance and education. It is a matching grant with 80 percent federally funded and 20 percent state funded. RTP is administered by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

The **Path Foundation** may be another source of funding.

**Action Item 3: Create bike share program countywide**

The City of LaGrange is considering a **bike share program** and **Calumet Park** was mentioned as a possible location for a bike hub. **LaGrange College** may be another good location to serve the student population. Bike share programs should be pursued in the **City of Hogansville** and **West Point** as well, potentially in partnership with **Point University**. Also, ensure that a plan is put in place to develop **new bike paths** throughout the county.

**Action Item 4: Expand green space and recreational opportunities countywide**

Many stakeholders, both in the interviews and surveys, referenced the need to develop **more parks/green space** in the county. Troup County Parks and Recreation provides access to many **public parks** in LaGrange, West Point and Hogansville. Continue to work to **enhance and increase green space and recreational opportunities through new park development** in West Point, Hogansville, and the unincorporated county.

**Bike Chattanooga**

- Offers a bike share system with 400+ bikes and 40+ stations throughout downtown Chattanooga



[www.bikechattanooga.com](http://www.bikechattanooga.com)

## STRATEGY 5: EXPAND AND ENHANCE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### Action Item 5: Improve existing or develop new recreational facilities

A community recreational facility is an important quality of life amenity that affects individuals, families, and neighborhoods. It can serve to enhance the lives of residents by offering opportunities to improve overall health and wellness. A community recreational facility can also serve as a tool to bring the community together.

Many stakeholders, both in the interviews and surveys, referenced the need to **improve existing or develop new recreational facilities** in the county. Troup County Parks and Recreation has several public recreational facilities located in LaGrange, Hogansville and West Point with different levels of amenities. The need for improvements to these facilities was mentioned in the stakeholder interviews. Each **facility should be assessed** and a **plan to improve** each to meet the needs of residents should be developed.

### Action Item 5: Explore feasibility of a multi-sports complex centrally located in the county

Many stakeholders also mentioned the potential opportunity for some type of **multi-sports complex** in the county both to serve the community and attract more visitors. One successful example of this is the **LakePoint Sports Complex** development in Emerson, Georgia, which is located about 40 minutes northwest of Atlanta, described to the right. In addition to the sports amenities the complex offers, existing and planned amenities include on-site hotels, restaurants, themed retail, bowling, ziplines, water parks and more. LakePoint Sports was originally privately funded but later received a **\$32-million bond** from Bartow County to support the development of the indoor facility. Although the company did file for bankruptcy in 2018, it restructured coming out of bankruptcy in late 2018 poised for success.

The **feasibility** of development of a similar but maybe smaller-scale development in Troup County should be explored with a focus on locating the complex in a **central location** in the county where it can be accessed by all residents easily.

#### LakePoint Sports Complex Emerson, GA

- Premier youth sports destination on 1,300 acres serving more than 30 sports year-round, including cheer, baseball, basketball, soccer volleyball, lacrosse, and gymnastics  
1.1 million visitors each year with a \$100 million annual economic impact
- LakePoint Champions Center is 170,000 square foot multi-use center, with eight meeting rooms and world's largest continuous wood floor where 12 full-court basketball games or 24 full-court volleyball games can play at once
- Campus includes eight Major League-sized baseball fields and three multi-use fields, as well as a 10-court beach volleyball pavilion and a three-lake wakeboarding park



[www.lakepointsports.com](http://www.lakepointsports.com)

## LakePoint Sports Complex Emerson, GA

## STRATEGY 5: EXPAND AND ENHANCE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### Action Item 7: Concentrate on future development of West Point Lake

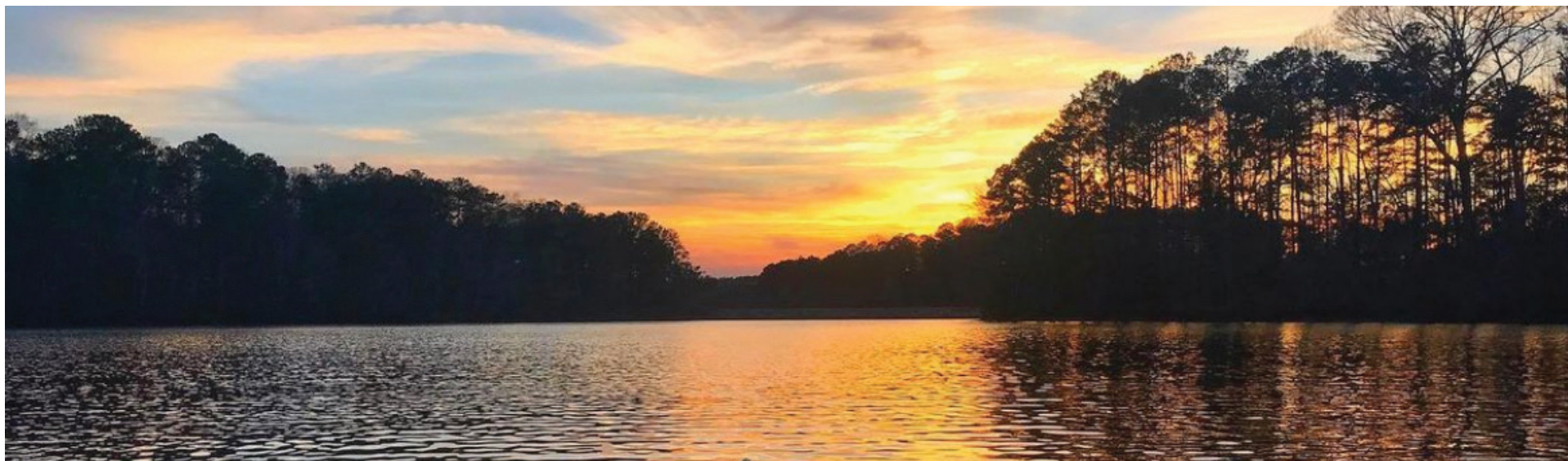
West Point Lake, which is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has 525 miles of shoreline providing opportunities for fishing, camping, boating and other recreational activities. The lake includes campgrounds, two commercial marinas, beach areas, fishing piers and public hunting areas. Boats, kayaks and paddleboards can be rented from Highland Pines Resort and Marina, and the Chatahoochee River can be explored with kayak rentals from GLL Marine.

However, the lake is an underutilized asset for the county both from a recreational and tourism perspective. First, explore **increasing the public access** to the lake, as well as the availability of boats and kayak rentals. Second, **identify potential developers** for a **hotel/resort/conference center** at the lake, as well as **new housing**. Third, consider **creation of a TAD** to incent developers.

Lastly, continue to pursue the **redevelopment of Pyne Road Park**, a public campground with 22 sites for tent and RV campers, and continue to renovate and expand the trail system, as well as consider the establishment of another marina here. Also, assess whether Pyne Road Park is a potential location for a **proposed hotel/resort/conference center**. Note that the county is breaking ground on a new conference center to be called the Oakfuskee Convention Center at Pyne Road Park.

#### Ritz-Carlton Lake Oconee Greensboro, GA

- Georgia Power dammed up the Oconee River in 1979 to create Lake Oconee, a 19,000-acre lake
- Lake Oconee, located 75 miles east of Atlanta, has 374 miles of shoreline
- Lake Oconee today has about 100 subdivisions and developments including the Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Reynolds Plantation, which includes six golf courses, 11 restaurants, four full-service marinas, the Sandy Creek Sporting Grounds, 21 miles of walking and biking trails, fitness facilities, over 40 Member operated clubs, and events and activities daily







[www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)

## Ritz-Carlton Lake Oconee

# continue and enhance sustainability focus

## Action Item 1: Improve recycling options countywide

The Troup County Sanitation Department manages **nine convenience centers** and **three attendant-assisted convenience centers**. Troup County residents are encouraged to use these services in which trash, recyclables to include metal and cardboard, and other disposable items can be taken to Troup County convenience centers anytime during open hours of operation.

The **City of LaGrange** operates **two 24-hour drop-off recycling sites** that residents may take their recyclables to any time. The City of LaGrange accepts cardboard, plastic bottles, and newspaper. The City of LaGrange did do curbside recycling for many years, but it was not successful.

**Hogansville** offers **recycling services** through a private company, Advanced Disposal.

The **City of West Point** offers **residential garbage, recycling, and yard waste**, which is **picked up at the curb**. Special scheduled pickups are required for disposing of metal items (such as appliances). The City of West Point does not collect hazardous materials or electronics.

Explore the opportunity to establish **countywide single-stream weekly curbside recycling**. Single stream recycling is a system in which recyclable materials such as cardboard, paper, and plastic, metal, and glass containers are collected together for processing. Single stream recycling now accounts for most commercial and residential recycling due to the efficiency and cost savings it offers. By making it easier for resident to recycle, it encourages more people to recycle.

The more that people recycle, the less garbage winds up in landfills and incineration plants and the better for the environment long-term.

### Northwest Arkansas (NWA) Recycles Initiative

- Launched in 2021 and focused on creating more recycling opportunities including growing regional coordination around recycling, improving data and transparency, and building public awareness and knowledge about region's systems
- Hired a regional recycling manager to coordinate efforts and launched a public awareness campaign
- Council and partners will continue to work to improve cities' recycling contracts and encourage growth of a more circular regional economy, one that reuses more materials and sustains new jobs

### Action Item 2: Continue to focus on county beautification

**Keep Troup Beautiful** is a non-profit environmental organization focused on litter prevention, recycling, beautification and waste management education and other projects. It was organized in the 1990s by a group of concerned citizens and is an affiliate organization of Keep America Beautiful and the Keep Georgia Beautiful Foundation. Many stakeholders mentioned the need to “clean-up” the community and eliminate blight.

**Reignite the efforts of Keep Troup Beautiful** through support from the county and cities, as it appears the website for the organization is no longer active and the Facebook page has not had a new posting since 2020. It does appear the organization has previously participated in the **Great American Cleanup event**, that in 2021 collected **over 1.4 million pounds** of litter and debris; recycled over **1 million pounds** of materials; cleaned more than **2,500 miles** of roadways, waterways, parks, and trails; and planted **nearly 3,000 trees and shrubs**.

The City of LaGrange has also been involved in litter clean-up in the city.

**Georgia’s Adopt-A-Highway** program involves volunteers removing litter from state roadsides. It does not appear Troup County is currently participating in this program.

Once reignited, the organization should **lead efforts** around **litter clean-up and prevention**, organize an event in Troup County for the **Great American Cleanup** and **Adopt-A-Highway program** and lead other efforts to **eliminate blight** in the community, working with the county and appropriate city governments.

### Action Item 3: Seek Tree City USA designation for all cities

The Tree City USA program provides communities with a four-step process to **maintain and grow their tree cover** and gives them a way to show their commitment to environmental change.

**LaGrange** has been a designated Tree City USA for 21 years. The City of LaGrange should work with **Hogansville and West Point** in seeking Tree City designation, involving the reignited **Keep Troup Beautiful** to assist.

## STRATEGY 6: CONTINUE AND ENHANCE SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS

### Action Item 4: Host an Arbor Day Celebration

In Georgia, **National Arbor Day** is celebrated on the third Friday in February. Many cities in Georgia host a celebration of Arbor Day in their community. In addition, during the week of Arbor Day, the **Arbor Day Foundation** will plant one tree for each Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook post with the hashtag #ArborDay, up to 75,000 trees, and in the past, Kimberly-Clark has matched those efforts resulting in up to 150,000 trees planted.

Troup County should **participate in and host** an Arbor Day celebration in the future. This initiative could also be led by a **reignited Keep Troup Beautiful**.

### Action Item 5: Develop a plan and seek funding for clean up of dilapidated buildings and homes

During the stakeholder engagement process and through the tour of the county, a need to clean up dilapidated homes and buildings came to light. Maintaining property values and fostering economic development opportunities is more difficult in blighted areas. In addition, vacant and abandoned structures are unsightly, attract criminal activity, and are a potential threat to public safety.

A plan must be developed to **identify and revitalize** these **dilapidated buildings and homes**, which do not send a positive message to those visiting Troup County and considering locating in the county. In addition, seek funding under the Federal **Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)**, which will provide emergency assistance to state and local governments to acquire and redevelop abandoned or foreclosed properties that might otherwise become sources of abandonment and blight within their communities. NSP funds can not be used to acquire homes from current owners but can be used for **foreclosed, abandoned or vacant property**.

The **LaGrange Housing Authority** and other city housing authorities may be the best partner in this initiative working with DASH and other identified organizations.

### Action Item 6: Review and assess existing county and city ordinances related to the upkeep of property

Cities and Counties can **adopt ordinances** relating to the **upkeep of property**. These ordinances may provide for notification to the owner outlining the conditions needing to be corrected and may require the owner to take the necessary steps to correct the conditions. They may also outline how the city and county may correct the conditions if the owner fails to take appropriate action.

Review all **existing city and county ordinances** related to the **upkeep of property** to ensure the county and its cities have the power to act through local codes and ordinances when dilapidated, vacant or abandoned properties are determined to pose a public safety risk. In addition, consider passing an **Unfit Dwelling Ordinance**, which allows the **demolition of unfit dwellings in certain circumstances**.



# address infrastructure challenges countywide

## Action Item 1: Develop plan to expand water and sewer infrastructure over time

During the stakeholder engagement process, some mentioned that there are **sewer and water issues in the unincorporated parts of the county**, and that **lack of infrastructure** was limiting the ability to **build more housing**, which is needed. The areas that are most in need of this infrastructure that have the best opportunity for **future housing, commercial and industrial development** must be identified, and a **plan** put in place to be able to **expand this infrastructure** over time as new projects arise.

## Action Item 2: Ensure broadband is expanded countywide

According to data from the **Broadband Georgia** availability map, Troup County has over 31,000 served locations and **3,840 unserved locations** for a total of **11 percent unserved**. It was announced in February 2022 that Diverse Power received a \$25 million grant from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to expand broadband infrastructure through its subsidiary providers Kudzu Networks in portions of Troup County, mainly the eastern and northeastern portion, as well as other counties. The project will involve a total investment of \$39 million and is estimated to take 24 to 48 months to complete. Another provider, DovTel Communications received \$12.5 million for fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) network deployment in Heard, Troup, and Carroll counties and there may be other providers that received funding under the ARPA or other resources.

Troup County must **understand where the unserved locations** are in the county and whether those will be addressed by the current planned projects by broadband providers. For those areas where it will not be addressed, the county must **work with broadband providers** to establish future service.

### Northwest Arkansas Council Infrastructure Advocacy

- Works to advance infrastructure priorities to support economic competitiveness, development and population growth in NWA
- Advocates for budgets and approvals at state and local level
- Infrastructure projects include highways, recycling, water, workforce housing, air service, and public transportation

### Action Item 3: Explore qualification as a Broadband Ready Community

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs has designated **40 Georgia counties or cities** as **Broadband Ready Communities**. Designated **Broadband Ready Communities** recognize that high speed internet is critical infrastructure to their community and have prioritized the need for expansion, incorporated the need for broadband into their goals, and promoted themselves as “expansion ready.” To be designated under the program, communities must show compliance with the adoption of both a Comprehensive Plan inclusive of the promotion of the deployment of broadband services and the adoption of a Broadband Model Ordinance.

Troup County should explore **designation** under this program.

### Action Item 4: Advocate for transportation infrastructure improvements at local, state and Federal level

Many stakeholders expressed concern about growing challenges with traffic as the county grows and more employers expand resulting in more in-commuting workforce potentially. A few also expressed an interest in pursuing the **expansion of Interstate 85** to three lanes in the future, specifically in the 15-mile stretch between West Point and LaGrange.

There should be a targeted focus on **advocating for budgets and approvals** at the Federal, state and local level related to needed transportation infrastructure improvements that impact the county.

### Action Item 5: Assess and address other infrastructure challenges countywide

Many stakeholders also expressed concern about the need to **invest in infrastructure improvements** in **West Point and Hogansville** to support future growth. The county should work with the cities to determine the infrastructure challenges and develop a plan to address in the future.



[www.bankscountyga.org](http://www.bankscountyga.org)

**“People are commuting into the county for work but there is not transportation infrastructure to support it.”**  
- Stakeholder

# Strategies Overview

Strategy 1: Embrace Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Enhance Efforts of Trustbuilding, Inc.	Trustbuilding, Inc.; Strategic Planning Staff and Board; Chamber
Encourage support of locally-owned minority and black-owned businesses	County; Cities; Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber; Trustbuilding, Inc.
Explore opportunities with the U.S. Black Chambers, Inc.	Trustbuilding, Inc.; Strategic Planning Staff and Board; Chamber
Encourage creation of the Troup County Department of Equity & Community Engagement	County; Strategic Planning Staff; Trustbuilding, Inc.

Strategy 2: Expand Retail, Hospitality and Entertainment Options	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Develop a Retail Recruitment Strategy	Chamber; Economic Development; Strategic Planning Staff; Outside Consultant
Identify and market to local and regional commercial developers	Economic Development Groups; Chamber
Consider future public-private partnerships with developers	Economic Development Groups; Chamber; County; Cities
Work with county and cities to develop local incentive programs to entice retailers and commercial developers	Economic Development Groups; Chamber; County; Cities; Strategic Planning Staff
Actively and aggressively begin the process of recruiting a Target	Economic Development Groups; Chamber; County; Cities; Strategic Planning Staff
Develop a restaurant recruitment strategy	Economic Development Groups; Chamber; County; Cities; Downtown Development Groups; Strategic Planning Staff



### Strategy 3: Support Creation of Robust Downtowns

Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Better coordinate downtown development efforts and planning	Downtown Development Authorities; Cities; Strategic Planning Staff
Create a positive marketing story about the county and each individual city	Downtown Development Authorities; Cities; Marketing Firm; Strategic Planning Staff
Create more connections with LaGrange College and downtown LaGrange	Downtown LaGrange Development Authority; LaGrange College; City of LaGrange; Strategic Planning
Explore free public transportation in and around the downtown LaGrange area	Troup Transit; Downtown LaGrange Development Authority; City of LaGrange
Focus on development opportunities along the Chattahoochee River in downtown West Point	Downtown West Point Development Authority; City of West Point; County
Continue to focus on attraction of mixed-use development or redevelopment projects in downtown areas	Strategic Planning; Economic Development Groups; Downtown Development Groups; County; Cities

### Strategy 4: Support the Arts

Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Create the Troup County Arts Commission	Lafayette Society for Performing Arts; LaGrange Arts Museum; LaGrange Symphony; Chamber; Visit LaGrange; Downtown Development Authorities; County; Cities Chamber; Visit LaGrange; Downtown Development Authority; Strategic Planning Staff and Board
Explore creation of Troup County United Arts Fund (UAF) fundraising organization	Troup County Arts Commission (to be created); County; Cities
Support expansion of the LaGrange Art Museum	Troup County Arts Commission (to be created); County; Cities
Develop a public art campaign countywide	Troup County Arts Commission (to be created); County; Cities
Establish a monthly pop-up gallery art walk	Troup County Arts Commission (to be created); County; Cities
Create the Troup County Arts Festival	Troup County Arts Commission (to be created); County; Cities

## Strategy 5: Expand and Enhance Recreational Opportunities

Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Connect The Thread countywide and explore other regional connections	The Thread; Troup County Parks and Recreation; County; Cities; Visit LaGrange
Pursue state and Federal funding for new trail development	The Thread; Troup County Parks and Recreation; County; Cities
Create bike share program countywide	The Thread; Troup County Parks and Recreation; County; Cities; Visit LaGrange
Expand green space and recreational opportunities countywide	Troup County Parks and Recreation; County; Cities
Improve existing or develop new recreational facilities	Troup County Parks and Recreation; County; Cities
Explore feasibility of a multi-sports complex centrally located in the county	Troup County Parks and Recreation; County; Cities; Visit LaGrange
Concentrate on future development of West Point Lake	Troup County Parks and Recreation; County, City of LaGrange; Visit LaGrange

## Strategy 6: Continue and Enhance Sustainability Focus

Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Improve recycling options countywide	Troup County Sanitation Department; County; Cities
Continue to focus on county beautification	Keep Troup Beautiful; County; Cities
Seek Tree City USA designation for all cities	Keep Troup Beautiful; Cities
Host an Arbor Day Celebration	Keep Troup Beautiful; County; Cities
Develop a plan and seek funding for clean up of dilapidated buildings and homes	County; Cities; Housing Authorities; Downtown Development Authorities
Review and assess existing county and city ordinances related to the upkeep of property	County; Cities; Housing Authorities; DASH

## Strategy 7: Address Infrastructure Challenges Countywide

Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Develop plan to expand water and sewer infrastructure over time	County; Cities; Economic Development
Ensure broadband is expanded countywide	County; Cities
Explore qualification as a Broadband Ready Community	County; Cities
Advocate for transportation infrastructure improvements at local, state and Federal level	Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber
Assess and address other infrastructure challenges countywide	County; Cities



# Foster a culture of entrepreneurship



Troup County is known for its manufacturing base and has been very successful in this area. Although it should continue to focus on supporting existing and attracting new manufacturers, there is a need for the county to diversify into other areas.

Entrepreneurs are an economic development asset that encourages the development of innovative products and ideas. Other than the Chamber partnership with the **University of Georgia Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**, and the presence and activities of **Pioneer Georgia in Hogansville**, there is no separate support organization advocating on behalf of the entrepreneur in Troup County, and the need for this was referenced during the stakeholder engagement conducted for this project.

## STRATEGY 1

# create entrepreneurial support program

### Action Item 1: Designate entity for support of entrepreneurship in Troup County

**Strategic Planning**, in coordination with the **Chamber**, should lead all initial efforts related to entrepreneurship until a new entity is formed. **Pioneer Georgia in Hogansville**, which is focused on supporting the incubation of new businesses, should also be involved in these efforts.

### Action Item 2: Consider partnership with local higher educational institutions

LaGrange College currently offers a Business Degree with a concentration in Marketing and Entrepreneurship, as well as a minor in Entrepreneurship. Begin discussions with **LaGrange College** about partnering to develop an entrepreneurship support program for Troup County that may be housed at the college or in a location to be determined in downtown LaGrange.

### Action Item 3: Name the program

A creative name for the program should be determined, which could be **Startup Troup**.

### Action Item 4: Define the mission of the program

This mission of the organization should be focused on identifying support programs for entrepreneurs at the local, regional and state level, and to create new support services and programs that will help entrepreneurs start and grow innovative businesses in Troup County.

### Action Item 5: Create a 1 Million Cups (1MC) Program

1MC is a free, weekly national program, developed by the **Kauffmann Foundation**, designed to **educate, engage, and connect entrepreneurs**. 1MC is based on the notion that entrepreneurs discover solutions and network over a million cups of coffee. There are programs in more than 160 cities today. This program should be considered for Troup County.

#### Entrepreneurial Program NEXT Greenville, SC

- NEXT, created in 2006, to assist entrepreneurs in building a collaborative ecosystem
- Provides mentoring, networking, and three coworking spaces
- In 2020, supported 121 companies, 33 of which were women or minority-owned



[www.greenvillenext.com](http://www.greenvillenext.com)

## STRATEGY 1: CREATE ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

### Action Item 6: Explore creation of minority business support programs

Explore support and grant programs to support minority entrepreneurs in their endeavors.

### Action Item 6: Highlight entrepreneurship focus on website and in social media

A **section on entrepreneurship** should be added to the **Strategic Planning** and/or **Chamber website** that includes information on the programs available and upcoming entrepreneurial events in the county. Other online resources that may be helpful to entrepreneurs may include business plan resources and examples, business structure options, financing and funding options, marketing ideas and educational resources. Eventually, the **new entrepreneurial program formed** should have its own **freestanding website**.

### Action Item 7: Track and report entrepreneurial success

**Success** of the entrepreneurial program should be **tracked and reported annually**, including number of entrepreneurs supported, jobs created, investment made, incentives awarded, programs held and attended and other to be determined.



### Greenville Minority Business Accelerator (MBA) Greenville, SC

- Program originated from Greenville Chamber's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion initiative to advance economic inclusion in 2012
- In 2021, Bank of America grant expanded MBA program statewide Program led by Charleston, Columbia, and Greenville
- Individual programs held in each of the three markets
- Supports minority-owned companies by providing targeted training, access to business coaches, and large corporations
- Participants leave program with a three-year Strategic Growth Action Plan to guide development

## STRATEGY 2

# enrich educational focus on entrepreneurship

### Action Item 1: Enhance public school educational programs focused on entrepreneurship

An **inventory** of all entrepreneurship educational programs in the **Troup County School System** should be conducted to gain an understanding of the programs that exist and any **gaps** that need to be addressed. **New programs** should be pursued, as needed.

A program similar to the **Chattanooga LAUNCH High School Entrepreneurial Education Program** should be considered over time that includes a pitch of the student's small business plan developed over a semester at a competition that could be sponsored by **LaGrange College**.

### Action Item 2: Inventory and enhance existing entrepreneurial programs at local higher educational institutions

Develop an understanding of the **entrepreneurial educational programs** available at **higher educational institutions** in the county. As previously stated, LaGrange College currently offers a Business Degree with a concentration in Marketing and Entrepreneurship, as well as a minor in Entrepreneurship. LaGrange College should be approached about the possibility of expanding its entrepreneurial programs in the future. Point University does not appear to have existing entrepreneurial education programs, but this may be something it would consider under its existing Business degree program. Point is also in the process of hiring a professional to lead entrepreneurial efforts, so it is a focus. West Georgia Technical College LaGrange campus also offers a Business program and the possibility of adding an entrepreneurial focus under this program may also be a possibility.

#### Chattanooga LAUNCH High School Entrepreneurial Education Program Chattanooga, Tennessee

- Focuses on introducing business fundamentals to high school students at eight local high schools over a semester, teaching them to launch and grow successful entrepreneurial ventures
- Program emphasizes market opportunities, viability, feasibility, innovation, and basic concepts required to develop a competent business plan
- Upon completion of program, students present and pitch their small business plans at a regional competition, held at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
- Team who wins is awarded a \$10,000 prize of startup financing and services

## STRATEGY 3

# support development of incubator / coworking space

### Action Item 1: Support existing and develop new incubator and/or coworking space

As previously mentioned, the mission of **Pioneer Georgia in Hogansville (Pioneer)** is to further develop the community and support the incubation of new businesses. The organization has engaged in several initiatives since it acquired the 115-year-old Hogansville train depot in 2017 and converted it into a coffee house, pub and retail store. In January 2021, Pioneer launched the **Artist Collaborative**, a **business incubator** and gathering space for startups and creatives that focuses on everything from the growing film industry and small tech startups to creators such as leather makers potters and others. In 2022, Pioneer opened its Youth Drop-in Center, which will focus on programs and activities for youth in the community. Pioneer also has a business grant program that will provide a free one-year commercial lease and \$10,000 for an entrepreneur willing to start or locate its business in Hogansville.

The **county and cities** must support Pioneer Georgia and **encourage new incubator or coworking space** in **LaGrange** and **West Point** in the future. It may make sense for these spaces to have different areas of focus, so they are not competitive with each other. For example, the location in Hogansville could continue to focus on artist or creative type startups, while West Point may focus on some type of mini-manufacturing makerspace. An idea for LaGrange is described in more on the next page.





**Action Item 2: Explore creation of a Kitchen Incubator**

The idea of creating a kitchen incubator in or near the downtown area of LaGrange should be explored. The idea here would be that entrepreneurs starting these food-centric businesses may eventually want to locate in the downtown area adding to its vibrancy and satisfying stakeholder’s wishes for more dine-in restaurants in the county. Note that West Georgia Technical College LaGrange Campus also has an existing Culinary program.



www.chattanoogatrend.com

**Kitchen Incubator of Chattanooga (KIT) Chattanooga, Tennessee**

- Provides over 10,000 sq. ft of food-centric startup space focused on entrepreneurs of color
- Designed for food-centric businesses in beginning stages of business
- May be a fit for:
  - Food truck owners looking for commissary and storage
  - Caterers, bakers, or distributors in need of a kitchen
  - Small businesses looking for a physical location to sell their food at periodic pop-ups or food truck markets
- Program works with members to earn ServSafe certification, obtain business license, and become licensed by the Hamilton County Health Department

# Strategies Overview

Strategy 1: Create Entrepreneurial Support Program	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Designate entity for support of entrepreneurship in Troup County	Strategic Planning Staff and Board; Chamber; Pioneer Georgia
Consider partnership with local higher educational institutions	Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber; LaGrange College; Pioneer Georgia
Name the program	Strategic Planning Staff and Board; Chamber; Pioneer Georgia
Define the mission of the program	Strategic Planning; Chamber; Pioneer Georgia
Create a 1 Million Cups (IMC) Program	New Entrepreneurial Entity (to be created); Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber; Pioneer Georgia
Explore creation of a minority business support programs	New Entrepreneurial Entity (to be created); Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber; City; Counties; Pioneer Georgia
Highlight entrepreneurship focus on website and in social media	New Entrepreneurial Entity (to be created); Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber
Track and report entrepreneurial success	New Entrepreneurial Entity (to be created); Strategic Planning; Chamber

Strategy 2: Enrich Educational Focus on Entrepreneurship	
Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Enhance public school educational programs focused on entrepreneurship	New Entrepreneurial Entity (to be created); Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber; Troup County Public School System
Inventory and enhance existing entrepreneurial programs at local higher educational institutions	New Entrepreneurial Entity (to be created); Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber; LaGrange College; Point University; West Georgia Technical Collage LaGrange

### Strategy 3: Support Development of Incubator/Coworking Space

Action Item	Potential Action Team Members
Support existing and develop new incubator and/or coworking space	New Entrepreneurial Entity (to be created); Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber; Pioneer Georgia; County; Cities
Explore creation of a Kitchen Incubator	New Entrepreneurial Entity (to be created); Strategic Planning Staff; Chamber; County; Cities; West Georgia Technical College



# endnotes



# Introduction

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