Our Purpose: Empower members for success and enhance communities

• INFLUENCE AT THE CAPITOL
The Georgia REALTORS® continuously work with the Georgia General Assembly to maintain a business-friendly environment on issues including infrastructure, transportation, education, and protection of small business interests. The Georgia REALTORS® support legislation that keeps housing affordable.

44,500
MEMBERS THROUGHOUT GEORGIA

• SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS
The GAR Disaster Relief Fund has distributed more than $370,000 to REALTORS® whose home and/or livelihood has been affected by natural disaster.

GAR awarded approximately 326 scholarships to agents in 2019.

• GEORGIA HOUSING INDICATORS
Housing inventory in Georgia is at 2.2 months, according to GAR’s monthly housing indicators. Want to know more about the Georgia housing market, including average sales price, pending sales and more?

Contact: GAIindicators@garealtor.com
$34,095 was raised for the Georgia Food Bank Association in June 2020, and funds raised allowed for 136,000 meals to be provided to those in need. $75,000 distributed to communities throughout Georgia for COVID-19 relief. These funds were distributed to 50 of our local boards who made requests for needs within their communities. Actions taken with these grants included:

- 51 food pantries or food insecurity programs funded
- 13 programs funding food from local restaurants to frontline workers
- 10 programs focusing on victim advocacy (such as women, children, and minorities)
- 9 programs to provide direct relief or support to hospitals
- 8 rent/utility assistance programs; and five homelessness relief programs

To mark our 100-year anniversary in 2020, GAR invested $90,000 in local charities and non-profit organizations in communities throughout Georgia, including Boys & Girls Clubs, technical colleges, food banks, local chapters of Habitat for Humanity, and more.

www.garealtor.com
CONTENTS

GEORGIA 2020 INVESTMENT GUIDE

[Image 20x405 to 288x705]

8 Business Climate Overview
Georgia’s resilient business climate continues to break records, even amid a global pandemic.

12 Interview with Governor Kemp
Governor Brian P. Kemp shares his take on Georgia’s economic success and his plans for maintaining momentum.

16 Statistical Profile
A look at Georgia in facts and figures.

20 Higher Education
The Peach State’s leading research institutions bolster the state’s innovative environment with key partnerships and collaboration.

24 Georgia Global Commerce
When it comes to international business, nobody does it better than Georgia.

26 Entrepreneurship & Innovation
Georgia’s entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem extends in all directions, touching a variety of industries.

30 Infrastructure
From Georgia Ports to Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the Peach State’s robust transportation infrastructure quickly moves goods to markets around the globe.

36 Workforce
Well educated and enthusiastic, Georgia’s workforce is bolstered by several industry-led workforce development programs.

38 Broadband
Reliable, high-speed internet is just around the corner for Georgia’s rural communities.

44 Metro Atlanta Profile
Metro Atlanta’s business climate allows small businesses to take root and thrive.

48 Aerospace
The No. 1 state for aerospace manufacturing attractiveness naturally rises above the rest.
GEORGIA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Atlanta Land Group & Massell Commercial Real Estate

STOCKMAR AIRPORT

1 of 35 private airports in USA on 135 acres with 41 T-Hangars, 6 Quonsets, 1 large private hangar, on-site 10K gallon fuel farm, 45 minutes to Atlanta, GA


HARMONY CHURCH ROAD/GA 400

Adjacent to planned 700 acre mixed-use development
All tracts are zoned Commercial Highway Business.

506 ACRES IN HOGANSVILLE

506 acres development opportunity with frontage on I-85, 54 miles from Atlanta, 58 miles from Auburn, AL

450 ACRES IN CORDELE, GA

6,000 feet frontage on I-75, opportunity for industrial, commercial, residential and mixed-use

65 ACRES ON SIGMAN RD & I-20

65 acres, excellent frontage and visibility, zoned commercial

KW Commercial
Peachtree Road
804 Town Boulevard
Suite A-2040
Atlanta, GA 30319
O: 404-419-3500

Graham Massell, CCIM
Office #: 404.419.3613
Cell #: 404-754-9800
graham@massell.com

Jay Leslie
Office #: 404-419-3652
Cell #: 404-277-9191
jleslie@Atlantalandgroup.com

MASSELL
COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Strategic Space Solutions
Income Property Sales

Atlanta Land Group
50 Agribusiness
Georgia’s abundant fields feed the world.

54 Automotive
A massive new electric vehicle battery plant solidifies the state’s status as a leading location for automotive parts manufacturing.

56 Cybersecurity
As a top global cybersecurity hub, Augusta is well positioned on the front lines fighting cyber crime.

58 Defense
U.S. Special Forces use innovative technology to build better soldiers thanks to Georgia Tech research.

60 Film & Entertainment
Major motion picture producers are right at home in Georgia’s booming film and TV sector.

62 FinTech
With 70% of all transactions worldwide now passing through Georgia, the Peach State quietly has become a global leader in fintech.

64 Food Processing
World famous food and beverage brands continue to expand in their hometowns.

66 Life Sciences
The life sciences are experiencing strong growth in employment and new company startups.

68 Logistics & Supply Chain
A key component of the state’s economy, Georgia’s logistics sector won’t slow down for anything — not even a pandemic.

70 Trade
Georgia’s team of international experts helps small businesses navigate foreign trade.

72 Manufacturing
“Georgia Made” products earn the state’s stamp of approval.

74 Technology
Georgia is the data center capital of the Southeast, with good reason.

76 Quality of Life & Photo Gallery
A unique combination of economic opportunity, recreational attractions, natural landscapes and affordability create a high quality of life across the state.

80 Index to Advertisers
The Westside Business Park Spec Building is very visible and easily accessible. The space is perfect for logistics or light manufacturing.

For more information call 229.259.9972
buildlowndes.com
Our Alliance moves industry

With 3 cargo ports, 3 airports, 3 rail carriers, and 3 major interstates, SE Georgia MOVES industry.

Find out what our Alliance can do for you. Contact Peggy Jolley at 912-429-2000 or peggyjolley@segalliance.com

segalliance.com
Nothing demonstrates the resilience of the Georgia business environment more than the economic development performance registered by the state over the last three months.

At the height of the global COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding recession, the Peach State put up record-setting business expansion numbers. Let that sink in for a minute: record-setting — as in best all time.

Gov. Brian P. Kemp announced it on Oct. 1. “We’re incredibly proud to have announced this unprecedented number of jobs for hardworking Georgians over the past three months,” he said. “As the Top State for Business for seven consecutive years, we continue to shatter our previous numbers, and most importantly, create opportunities in every region of the Peach State.”

The 10,012 new jobs announced in the first quarter of fiscal year 2021 represent a 48% increase from the same period a year ago, while the total capital investment of $3.71 billion represents an 85% increase from Q1 of FY2020.

Scott McMurray, deputy commissioner of Global Commerce for the Georgia Department of Economic Development, says that this performance in the first quarter “puts Georgia on a record-setting pace. We are off to a great start in this new fiscal year, and we may be in for another record year in terms of total jobs.”

How does performance like that happen during a global pandemic and an unprecedented economic slowdown? McMurray says there are many factors behind the recent surge. “Pent-up demand was absolutely a factor,” he notes. “We did have a lot of decisions in the pipeline that were waiting until we came out of the initial crisis.”

After a six-week shutdown to much of the national economy back in March and April, the project activity level began to pick up again in Georgia in May, says McMurray. “A lot of companies contacted us and said that they wanted to move forward with their projects. Since then, we have really not slowed down at all.”

When Site Selection Magazine recently interviewed business executives and site consultants who read the publication, the respondents listed several reasons why they voted Georgia the nation’s No. 1 business climate for a record 8 years in a row:

**Why Georgia Keeps Breaking Records**

State with the nation’s best business climate outperforms even during a pandemic.

*by RON STARNER*
You’ll enjoy the connection.

We invite you to experience the location, the assets, the people and the connected culture of Toombs County for yourself. Contact us to learn more about potential for your company’s growth and the pro-business assets in Toombs County. The only connection you need to make is the first one.

Toombs County
development authority

Community + Commerce + Connectivity
912.537.4466
www.toombsconnect.com
The **10,012 new jobs** announced in the first quarter of fiscal year 2021 represent a **48% increase** from the same period a year ago, while the **total capital investment of $3.71 billion** represents an **85% increase** from Q1 of FY2020.

Source: Georgia.org

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**We don’t go away once the company expands here. By moving to Georgia, they know they are going to be taken care of.**

— Nick Masino, President & CEO, Gwinnett Chamber

- Ease of doing business.
- Competitive operating costs.
- Favorable tax rates and incentives.
- Labor skills in plentiful supply in virtually every major industry.
- World-class transportation network.
- A growing market.
- Labor-management relations that are stable and good.

The votes of these business leaders coupled with actual project performance propelled Georgia to its record-setting eighth consecutive win in the annual Site Selection Business Climate rankings. At the same time, another publication, Area Development, was naming Georgia its Top State for Doing Business for a record seventh consecutive year.

Nick Masino, president and CEO of the Gwinnett Chamber and Partnership Gwinnett, says there are also intangible reasons why Georgia performs so consistently at such a high level. “It’s really the story of Metro Atlanta and all of Georgia,” he says. “Newcomers can not only come here; they thrive here. Almost everyone in Atlanta is from someplace else. We are all used to being new. That is a cool thing. That makes us unique. That is part of the secret sauce of how we all work together. It makes this place a very rich place to do business. It is just so welcoming. It is a pretty amazing place.”

Another factor, Masino adds, is the aftercare businesses receive. “We don’t go away once the company expands here,” he notes. “By moving to Georgia, they know they are going to be taken care of. Our work just begins once the company opens its business here. We will go out of our way to make sure that business succeeds in Georgia.”

These factors are a big reason why 18 Fortune 500 companies choose to maintain their global headquarters in Georgia; and why more such companies are pondering that move.

In fiscal year 2020, companies from all over America and the world made the decision to invest big in Georgia. They included household names like Amazon, Kroger and Mars Wrigley. They also included companies like Stitch Fix and SK Innovation, a Korean battery company that is investing more than $2 billion in its Jackson County plant to produce batteries for electric vehicles.

McMurray says it is all about providing great, high-paying jobs to Georgians and their families. “Success breeds success,” he says, “and Georgia is currently in the middle of its most successful run ever.”

The 10,012 new jobs announced in the first quarter of fiscal year 2021 represent a 48% increase from the same period a year ago, while the total capital investment of $3.71 billion represents an 85% increase from Q1 of FY2020.
WHERE AMBITION IS A NATURAL RESOURCE.

Devoted to supporting economic development, SelectCobb is in the business of attracting top-tier enterprises and talent. With our county’s impressive array of competitive advantages, we’re excited to welcome even more of the world’s trailblazers and industry leaders.

SELECTCOBB selectcobb.com
GEORGIA’S PROJECT PIPELINE IS FULL
Maintaining the No. 1 business climate in America doesn’t just help companies and workers during the good times. In fact, having a business-friendly environment pays its biggest dividends when times are tough. Georgia is a perfect example. In a year when the world has been wracked by the devastation of COVID-19, the Peach State has produced some surprisingly good economic numbers.

According to data released by the Department of Economic Development, more than 10,000 jobs were created across all regions of the state during the first quarter of fiscal year 2021, generating more than $3.71 billion in new investments. That’s a 48% increase in new jobs created and an 85% increase in new investments compared to the same quarter in the previous fiscal year. This news also comes just as Site Selection magazine’s November 2020 issue reports Georgia finishing in first place again — for the eighth year in a row — on its annual ranking of state business climates.

In early October, Site Selection Editor in Chief Mark Arend met with Governor Brian P. Kemp for his take on Georgia’s economic development success and his plans for maintaining the state’s job-growth momentum. Following are highlights of that interview.

What is the state of the state, in terms of economic development, as 2020 winds down?

Gov. Brian P. Kemp: Our pipeline of projects right now is unbelievable. It’s as deep and with as many prospects as we’ve had in decades. That’s saying a lot when you think about what Governor Deal’s run was like, which was incredible. We’re seeing job totals in this last fiscal quarter way ahead of last year, we’re seeing projects in all parts of the state in all kinds of industries — corporate headquarters announcements, major IT investments, lots of projects tied to the ports on the coast. We’re seeing several food processors and others going into rural Georgia that will produce solid employment with good benefits. I feel very good about where we are.

You made rural economic development in Georgia a priority early on. How would you characterize progress in that area?

Gov. Kemp: I’m very happy about what our record is there, which is a 30% increase in projects in rural Georgia in the last year. A map showing projects in the last year almost makes it look like there are new projects in every county, which is not the case, but it’s close. It shows that we are focused on all parts of the state, and it’s helping diversify that rural economy. These investments will be very good for rural Georgia. Something else we’re working on is making sure we have more mega sites around the state that are ready to go and more development-ready sites and retooling that as part of our rural strategy. These areas want a shot at some of the bigger deals. Sometimes there’s not the employment base for that, but in some cases there is.

Georgia was both praised and criticized for its pandemic response. Your thoughts on that and what lies ahead for Georgia businesses?
Gov. Kemp: Opening early, dealing with all the pressure, but ultimately being successful got a lot of people looking at us. A lot of suppliers in the state had to shut down because their supply chains were shutting down. And they’re sending the message to their suppliers that they need to be in a more stable environment. We’re working all those suppliers, particularly the ones overseas that want a U.S. presence.

Meanwhile, we’re going to take a good chunk of our CARES Act funding to pay for the money that the Department of Labor here is borrowing for benefits. The way that money gets paid back is raising the rates on the employers, which is basically like a tax increase in the middle of a pandemic. It will be over $1 billion that we’ll set aside to cover those costs into December. This will save an average of $350 per employee. I’m excited about that. And industries that paid the highest rates are the ones that are the hardest hit right now — restaurants, the hospitality industry. This will be very helpful to them. Everything I’m hearing about 2021 is very positive. I don’t think it will be a banner year for companies because they’re having to price very competitively. But I think they will see more positive cash flow and will bring more people back to work. We want to help keep them going until full recovery hopefully in 2022.

How did the last legislative session do in terms of addressing the state’s pandemic recovery? Was it responsive to efforts your office was making to minimize the impact on business and industry?

Gov. Kemp: Very late in the last session I asked the economic development team to look at our tax credit program and see if there was anything we could do to help our existing businesses. A lot of them were getting these credits based on the number of jobs they had to produce in a certain amount of time. They were getting penalized because they’ve had to lay people off. They would have to make up for the laid off workers and still meet their number. We worked with the legislature to have a short period of time when there was a sunset on that provision — we’re basically not counting the 2020 and 2021 numbers. They don’t get penalized and are very happy about that. It came together very quickly at the end. Thankfully, the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker wholeheartedly bought into it. Late in the session it can be hard to get things done. Not everyone was focused on economic development like I was.

We also added an additional $1,500 to all our existing tax credit structure for PPE suppliers, so we minimize sourcing masks, gowns and other PPE from outside of the state. There’s a sunset on that too, but it’s to see if we can capitalize on companies that know they have to move to produce U.S.-made goods, and it gives people here who are retooling their businesses an incentive to do that.

In terms of the bond package, we really focused on shovel-ready projects and infrastructure — maintenance and repair more than new buildings. We’re moving ahead education and other buildings where they’re needed, but anything we could wait on we did. This will keep a lot of money turning, which keeps our economy strong.
DRIVEN FOR SOLUTIONS. POWERED BY PASSION.

At Thomas & Hutton, we’re more than just a consulting and professional services firm. We partner with local and state level economic development agencies to help our clients create their vision and provide solutions for attracting industries to our communities. We assist our local communities in collaborating with state level partnerships to create a vision, locate sites, and plan and develop commerce and industrial parks that foster economic growth.

thomasandhutton.com
## Georgia by the Numbers

### TOP 20 PROJECTS OF 2020 YTD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Investment (US$M)</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SK Innovation Co., Ltd.</td>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>Chemicals</td>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stack Infrastructure, Inc.</td>
<td>Alpharetta</td>
<td>IT &amp; Comm.</td>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>Data Center</td>
<td>281.5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWDC Industries Limited</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>Research &amp; Development</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frito-Lay North America, Inc.</td>
<td>Perry</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage</td>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazon.com, Inc.</td>
<td>Appling</td>
<td>Transport &amp; Logistics</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Distribution Warehouse</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bang Energy</td>
<td>Lithia Springs</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Mfg., Dist. Warehouse</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry Group Public Limited Co.</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage</td>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPL Food LLC</td>
<td>Augusta</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage</td>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>Mfg., Dist. Warehouse</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinus Inc.</td>
<td>McDonough</td>
<td>Consumer Products</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Distribution Warehouse</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidl US, LLC</td>
<td>Covington</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Distribution Warehouse</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta Reign</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>Bus. &amp; Fin. Services</td>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coca-Cola Refreshments USA, Inc.</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Distribution Warehouse</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chemours Company</td>
<td>Jesup</td>
<td>Chemicals &amp; Plastics</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEDIA Gebrüder Dingerkus GmbH</td>
<td>Dalton</td>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port City Logistics, Inc.</td>
<td>Port Wentworth</td>
<td>Transport &amp; Logistics</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Distribution Warehouse</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Corporation</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>IT &amp; Comm.</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Office, Data Center</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medline Industries, Inc.</td>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Mfg., Dist. Warehouse</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazon.com, Inc.</td>
<td>Newnan</td>
<td>Transport &amp; Logistics</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Distribution Warehouse</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Home Depot Inc.</td>
<td>East Point</td>
<td>Mach., Equip. &amp; Const.</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Distribution Warehouse</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TOP 20 PROJECTS OF 2020 YTD

#### PROJECTS BY SECTOR

- **Transport & Logistics**: 57 projects
- **Food & Beverage**: 26 projects
- **IT & Communications**: 26 projects
- **Machinery, Equip. & Const.**: 25 projects
- **Business & Financial Services**: 18 projects
- **Life Sciences**: 16 projects
- **Wood Products**: 12 projects
- **Consumer Products**: 12 projects
- **Chemicals & Plastics**: 11 projects
- **Metals**: 10 projects
- **Textiles**: 8 projects
- **Other**: 19 projects

#### PROJECTS BY TYPE

- **Manufacturing**: 99 projects
- **Distribution Warehouse**: 89 projects
- **Office**: 45 projects
- **Headquarters**: 14 projects
- **Research and Development**: 5 projects
- **Data Center**: 4 projects
- **Call Center**: 1 project

*Source: Conway Analytics*
Georgia by the Numbers

GEORGIA HAS BEEN NAMED THE #1 STATE FOR BUSINESS CLIMATE FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS AND THE #1 STATE FOR DOING BUSINESS FOR THE LAST SEVEN YEARS. (Site Selection, 2013-2020; Area Development, 2014-2020)

#1 State for Business Climate

- Labor Force of 5.1 M
- #2 Moving Destination in the Nation
- World’s #1 Busiest Airport (for the 22nd consecutive year)
- World’s #1 Most Efficient Airport (for the 17th consecutive year)

STATE FOR BUSINESS CLIMATE

- Median Age is 37.2
- U.S. Median is 38.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019

World’s #1 Busiest Airport

Source: Airports Council International, 2020

World’s #1 Most Efficient Airport

Source: Air Transport Research Society, 2020

FORTUNE 500

- 18 Fortune 500 Headquarters

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018

TAXES

- Corporate Income Tax Rate (single factor sales tax apportionment)
- Millage Rates Set Locally by Each County and City
- Georgia has a number of tax credits which allow for applying to payroll withholding, a great cash equivalent opportunity for companies where eligible.

IN THE METRO ATLANTA REGION OF 29 COUNTIES, THE TOTAL (STATE AND LOCAL) SALES TAX RATE RANGES FROM 6% (Cherokee, Cobb and Gwinnett counties) to 8.9% (City of Atlanta in Fulton and DeKalb counties).

- 5.75%
- Real and personal property are assessed at 40% of fair market value.
EDUCATION

GEORGIA RANKS AS THE #1 STATE FOR LEADING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.
(Area Development, 2020)

1 of the Nation’s Top 25 Business Schools
EMORY UNIVERSITY’S GOIZUETA BUSINESS SCHOOL
U.S. News & World Report, 2020 rankings

2 of the Nation’s Top 20 Public Universities
GEORGIA TECH AND THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

2 of the Nation’s Top 10 HBCUs
SPelman COLLEGE AND MOREHOUSE COLLEGE

COST OF LIVING

Cost of Living Index: Select U.S. Metros

Source: C2ER Cost of Living Index, 2019 Annual Averages *New York values are for Manhattan
Macon-Bibb County: The Global Choice for Industrial Investment in the Southeastern U.S.

Macon-Bibb County has a rich history in global industrial partnerships, and for a good reason. With plentiful infrastructure and a readily trained workforce, Macon-Bibb County continues to entice new global investors through the hard work of the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority.

Located in Central Georgia, Macon-Bibb County has the distinct ability to support operations by air, land, sea and rail. The county hosts the convergence of I-75 and I-16, the major north/south and east/west interstate arteries. It is two hours west of the Port of Savannah as well as an hour-and-a-half from Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson Airport. Lastly, Macon-Bibb County is home to Robins Air Force Base and the Middle Georgia Regional Airport, leaders in maintenance, repair and overhaul services for the United States Air Force and other major aerospace companies.

One of the early global partners to lay-down roots in Macon-Bibb County is the Japanese-owned YKK. Since opening their Macon plant in 1974, the company has produced textiles and metal zippers to meet a global demand. Freudenberg, a German company, followed YKK’s lead and launched a $50 million-dollar Macon-Bibb plant in 1986, which produces polyester fibers sourced from recycled soda bottles. In 2008, the Japan-based Nichihia Corporation opened its first U.S. manufacturing facility in Macon-Bibb County. The Nichiha corporation specializes in fiber-cement products in residential and commercial applications.

In 2020, Georgia was named the “top state for doing business” by Site Selection for the eighth consecutive year. This has likely contributed to the success of Macon-Bibb County in securing three additional major global investors in the past five years. The first of which was Kumho Tire, a South Korean tire manufacturer which in 2016 opened its first U.S. based plant. On the heels of this opening, Canada-based Irving Tissue announced in 2017 plans to open their first U.S. based plant in Macon-Bibb County. Their initial $470 million-dollar investment was bolstered with the announcement of an additional $400 million-dollar expansion at the plants grand opening, essentially doubling its capacity.

The most recent conglomerate to expand to the county was Brazil-based Embraer, which began operations at the Middle Georgia Regional Airport in 2018. Embraer is the third-largest aircraft manufacturer in the world and performs commercial jet aircraft maintenance services.

Macon-Bibb County’s Industrial Authority has been the heartbeat of new and existing industry within the county since 1962. Through innovative approaches to community and industrial partnerships, the Industrial Authority has secured its reputation as a global leader in economic development. They welcome future partners to come see why Macon-Bibb County is one of the fastest growing business hubs in the southeast.
Georgia’s universities work together to bring new innovations to the world.
Did you know some of the world’s greatest inventions and discoveries were first made in Georgia? From shade-tolerant Bermuda grass to the world’s most prescribed treatment for HIV, innovations from Georgia’s universities run the gamut.

Georgia has a wide-range of nationally top-ranked institutions of higher education — Georgia Tech and University of Georgia are two of the top 15 public universities. In addition to the state-wide universities, Georgia also has the Technical College System that offers degrees and certificates in high-demand job fields, often at no cost to the student for tuition or materials. Two of the top 10 Historically Black Colleges, Spelman College and Morehouse College, are also located in the state.

One of the state’s best assets is the University of Georgia’s Innovation Gateway. The online gateway creates an easy avenue for industry to license university discoveries with commercial potential. UGA was No. 1 for new products reaching the market in 2017. UGA has more than 200 invention disclosures annually and $531 million from startups. Today, UGA is ranked among the top 5 universities for new products reaching market — and it has been four years running.

Meanwhile, Georgia State University has one of the nation’s fastest-growing research portfolios. GSU research expenditures have risen 159% over the last decade and have exceeded $200 million annually.

COLLABORATION CENTRAL

A defining feature of the state’s universities is their willingness and enthusiasm for collaboration. In August, public and private universities in the metro Atlanta area joined together to create the Atlanta Global Research Institute.
and Education Collaborative (AGREC). The partnership is between Georgia Tech, Georgia State University, Emory University, Spelman College and Agnes Scott College and aims to help connect the region’s international assets through an emphasis on supporting “global at home” projects that serve students, faculty and community partners and define the metropolitan area as a hub for global education and research.

“Georgia Tech is proud of our strong roots in Atlanta,” said Chaouki T. Abdallah, executive vice president for Research at Georgia Institute of Technology. “This expanded collective is a tremendous opportunity to continue to partner with like-minded institutions and scholars here at home and to cultivate a thriving, globally focused ecosystem that benefits the citizens of the greater Atlanta region.”

Georgia Tech and Emory University are the only two member schools of the prestigious Association of American Universities. They also have a public-private partnership to share and collaborate to best use resources and expertise. Additionally, Georgia Tech serves as one of the core partner universities associated with Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. Georgia Tech researchers have a unique access to ORNL facilities and opportunities to collaborate with Oak Ridge scientists.

AN UNPRECEDENTED ALLIANCE

The Georgia Research Alliance (GRA) was founded 30 years ago after the state lost out on a high-tech project to Austin, Texas. Not willing to let another high-tech opportunity slip away, the alliance was formed between industry leaders, higher education and government. GRA has leveraged $649 million in state funding into $4.9 billion in federal and private research grants. Investment has supported the creation of 160 new Georgia companies and 1,539 professionals employed by companies who received GRA support.

In 2018, eight Georgia Universities entered an agreement to open mutual access to technology. The Georgia Core Facilities Partnership allows university scientists to access the vast collection of high-tech instruments across the state. The partnership is between five public institutions and four private universities.

GRA’s investment and involvement has led to consistent science and technology breakthroughs from Augusta University, Clark Atlanta University, Emory University, Georgia Tech, Georgia State University, Mercer University, Morehouse School of Medicine and University of Georgia.

As part of the agreement, each agree to waive administrative overhead costs for researchers — often a significant cost for researchers. Researchers can easily search an online inventory of technology allowing them to quickly locate needed equipment across the state’s 100 campus facilities. One such piece of technology is housed at the University of Georgia in Athens. The PacBio Sequencer is a nearly $500,000 machine that captures long sequences of information in DNA allowing researchers to peer deeper into genetics.

GRA’s Eminent Scholars program recruits superstar scientists to the state’s universities. Each Scholar occupies an endowed chair, and the university raises private funds to match GRA’s investment in the chair. GRA also makes key investments in the labs of these Scholars, so that they’re able to attract more Federal and private research dollars (currently around $330 million annually).
GEORGIA STATE IS AT THE TOP OF THE LIST

of the fastest growing research universities in America. We make major contributions to the local and statewide economy, produce a skilled and diverse workforce, and foster productive partnerships with corporations, government agencies and non-profits. Georgia State is essential to the economic vitality and future of Georgia.

See the power and potential of our work at research.gsu.edu.
When La Regina Atlantica announced its first U.S. processing facility for its famous tomato sauce in Bacon County, Georgia, on Oct. 9, the news confirmed what many site selectors already knew about the state: when it comes to international business, nobody does it better than Georgia.

A U.S. subsidiary of Italian company La Regina di San Marzano, La Regina Atlantica joins a lengthy and growing list of global firms doing business in Georgia. In fiscal year 2020, the state landed significant investments from Taizhou Huali New Materials Co. Ltd. of China in Murray County ($27 million and 315 jobs); Kubota Manufacturing of America Corp. of Japan in Hall County ($85 million and 67 jobs); and SK Innovation of South Korea in Jackson County ($940 million and 600 jobs).

La Regina is investing $20 million and bringing 250 jobs to Alma as part of its corporate expansion in the U.S. as it prepares to move into a 226,000 sq. ft. building it purchased. According to BusinessWise, Italian companies operate 141 facilities in Georgia, making Italy one of the top 10 foreign direct investors in the Peach State.

The UK tops the chart with 583 plant locations in Georgia, followed by Germany with 513, Canada with 452, Japan with 343, and the Netherlands with 293. Switzerland, France, Australia and South Africa also rank in the top 10. Italy ranks No. 8.

In terms of total employment in Georgia due to FDI, BusinessWise data has confirmed Japan is the leader. Japanese firms employ 30,508 Peach State residents. German firms place second in employment, with 25,951, followed by the UK with 22,248, Canada with 16,871, and the Netherlands with 10,769.

Over the past five years, international companies have announced 424 investment projects in Georgia, accounting for $10.1 billion in investment and 33,073 new jobs. Recent deals include KIA Motors, Kubota, Lidl, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, ThyssenKrupp and Taurus.

In fiscal year 2020, internationally owned companies accounted for 46% of all plant investment in Georgia ($3.3 billion out of $7.3 billion) and 26.6% of all jobs (6,428 out of 24,133).

Every region of the state landed corporate expansion investment last year, as 82 of Georgia’s 159 counties secured at least one FDI project. From Columbus to Valdosta, and from Savannah to Rome, international investors placed their bets on workers in the Peach State.

Nearly half of all investment in Georgia hails from other countries.

by RON STARNER
PHYSICAL ASSETS SEAL THE DEAL

When asked why Georgia continues to perform among the nation’s leaders in attracting FDI, Scott McMurray, deputy commissioner of Global Commerce for the Georgia Department of Economic Development, said that three factors stand out:

• “No. 1 is the City of Atlanta metro area. As capital of the Southeast USA, it is a magnet. Our diverse state provides businesses opportunities wherever they go.”
• “No. 2 is Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the No. 1 airport for passenger traffic in the world.”
• “No. 3 is the Port of Savannah, the third-largest port in the U.S. and the most efficient port in throughput in the country.”

McMurray adds, “In terms of the way we do economic development, it all boils down to one word: partnership. We rely on our public and private partnerships. We have great relationships with all our sister agencies. We have great relationships with all our universities. Consultants and companies all say that we are all working on the same page”

McMurray says several trends keep driving FDI in Georgia: electrification of the automotive industry; continued growth and advancement in new battery technology; increased demand for food and beverage processing; and climbing interest in cybersecurity.

Foreign prospects are showing increased interest in Georgia even though many of them can’t travel to Georgia due to COVID-19. “We have been very pleasantly surprised at how productive we have been with Microsoft Teams, Zoom and WebEx,” says McMurray. “Our clients have been very receptive to this technology. People still have to come look at the building to make a final decision, and we’ve been doing those visits under safety protocols.”

FROM LAWNMOWERS TO COUNTERTOPS

McMurray said he was particularly pleased with how Brazilian company Guidoni, which makes quartz countertops and other products out of cultured stone, was able to pivot and take over a large building that had been vacated by Husqvarna. “Over 1,000 people lost their jobs when Husqvarna shut down,” he says. “But in about a year we were able to cultivate a relationship with Guidoni and eventually recruit them to come into that space.”

As a result, the Brazilian firm is investing $96.6 million and hiring 455 people in Telfair County at its new manufacturing plant, providing jobs for many of the formerly displaced workers.

While Global Commerce is the largest office within the Georgia Department of Economic Development, McMurray is quick to share the credit with others. “We may get a lot of the headlines, but it is the whole office of Georgia Economic Development that is responsible for this success,” he notes. “It’s everyone in international trade, the film office, tourism and the visitors center. They all play a huge part in bringing global commerce to Georgia.”
How does a nebulous concept like innovation benefit an economy? The vectors extend in all directions, charged and recharged by poles of knowledge, culture, entrepreneurism and technology.

The startup and entrepreneurial culture of metro Atlanta was one factor that led Microsoft in May 2020 to choose the city for one of two new R&D and software development hubs, a client-facing workplace that will focus on artificial intelligence and cloud services. The company will create 1,500 new jobs in a two-facility office development called Atlantic Yards in midtown Atlanta, at the same Atlantic Station site in midtown that won awards for its reimagining of a former steel manufacturing complex.

That’s how innovation regenerates itself. “Atlanta has a rich culture and history of innovation, making it a unique place for tech growth,” said Terrell Cox, general manager, Microsoft. “We are excited to expand our presence and further engage with the community and surrounding region, contributing positively to technical opportunity, digital fluency and economic development.”

Microsoft already operates a cloud computing engineering center in the Coda Building at Technology Square (adjacent to campus buildings of Georgia Tech) and maintains offices in Alpharetta and Buckhead.

Georgia Tech, the University of Georgia, downtown Atlanta’s Georgia State University and the growing campus of Kennesaw State University are just four of the many institutions playing a role in producing the software design talent sought by Microsoft. They also play a role in helping the region’s overall innovation ecosystems rank highly in the Global Startup

by ADAM BRUNS

Coda at Tech Square and the surrounding neighborhood of academic, scientific, commercial, corporate and residential development embody the best of Georgia’s innovation ecosystem. 

Photo by Mark Arend

The report finds that after Greater Washington, D.C. (including the northern Virginia location picked by Microsoft for its other hub), Atlanta is the next biggest upward mover, coming in at No. 23, up five spots from the previous year. That means it beats out such globally respected capitals of entrepreneurialism as Vancouver, Denver, Sydney, Salt Lake City, Hong Kong and Montreal.

The upward trajectory comes from Atlanta’s strengths in market reach and talent, and despite its low showing when it comes to funding. In the talent category, the metro area gets high marks for tech talent quality and access, and for a wealth of experience in the region among those who have scaled up from the startup stage.

Startup Genome finds that the global startup economy remains large, creating nearly $3 trillion in value, a figure on par with the GDP of a G7 economy. So it makes sense for a city with Atlanta’s growth and momentum to capitalize.

Georgia’s Centers of Innovation (COI) are a leading resource for facilitating business innovation. Five individual centers operate statewide with a focus on Aerospace, Energy Technology, Information Technology, Logistics and Manufacturing. Operated by the Georgia Department of Economic Development, COI provides the leading technical industry expertise, research collaborations and business partnerships to help the state’s strategic industries connect, compete and grow.

POLES OF INNOVATION

Innovation and invention take different forms throughout Atlanta and Georgia. Among the poles cultivating such work are TechSquare Labs, co-founded by technology entrepreneur and investor Paul Judge, a Morehouse College and Georgia Tech alumnus who also co-founded computer security firm Pindrop and has invested in more than 60 tech startups.

Then there’s Atlanta Tech Village, a 103,000 sq. ft. community of innovation — the fourth largest tech center in the U.S. — where tech entrepreneurs can feed off each other’s energy and ideas. The aim of founder David Cummings is nothing less than to create 10,000 jobs and fuel Atlanta’s rise to a top-five tech-startup center in

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The Water Tower: A new breed of innovation center dedicated to the challenges facing the water industry. TheH2OTower.org

Rowen
A collaborative space including a combination of offices, research facilities, public spaces and residences that fosters knowledge sharing. RowenLife.com
In the shadow of Mercedes-Benz Stadium and not far from the historically black college cluster known as Atlanta University Center sits the Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (RCIE), founded on the same property that was once the headquarters for the legendary construction leader Herman Russell’s H.J. Russell & Company, which has now moved to a new HQ space in Atlantic Station next door to where Microsoft is landing. The Center is backed by a stellar array of corporate, foundational, government and business leader sponsors.

“The Russell Center will be a game changer for entrepreneurs in the city of Atlanta and beyond,” said Jerome Russell, president of H.J. Russell & Company and chairman of the RCIE board, in 2018, “connecting the next generation of revolutionary entrepreneurs to the tools and relationships needed to turn dreams into reality.”

Another place aiming to do that is Curiosity Lab at Peachtree Corners, launched in September 2019 in the northeast suburb in Gwinnett County as the “world’s first 5G-enabled living laboratory for testing, demoing and deploying autonomous vehicle and smart city technology.” The Lab has welcomed testing and research investments from such organizations as Bosch, ASHRAE and Tortoise, a remote-driven e-scooter company.

“Joining Curiosity Lab as a resident company and member has created new opportunities for us to engage with nontraditional partners and accelerate our growth,” said Eyal Elyashiv, founder and CEO of Cynamics, which calls itself “a disruptive AI-based Network Visibility Solution for Threat Prediction and Performance Optimization.”

The Lab is located in part of a corporate park known as Technology Park Atlanta that, among other things, was the birthplace of the computer modem. The Lab features a 3-mile autonomous vehicle test track, 5G connectivity, dedicated DSRC units, a network operations control center, smart traffic light and smart poles, the Olli autonomous shuttle and a 25,000 sq. ft. tech incubator. It’s located in a growing city of 40,000 that is building out a new town center and network of greenway trails, as well as putting out an RFP for electric vehicle infrastructure and services.

Peachtree Corners City Manager Brian Johnson responded to a few questions about this innovation node.

**Walk us through a recent site selection win.**

**Brian Johnson:** Our commitment to technology innovation and business growth, alongside our responsive City Council and leadership, are a significant advantage to companies looking for a home, not to mention our zero millage rate. We have already seen multiple businesses shift operations to Peachtree Corners as a result of the environment we’re building, including Brightree, ASHRAE, Soliant Health and others. Brightree and ASHRAE evaluated several cities in the metro Atlanta area for the relocation of the global headquarters. As with any relocation search, companies look for access to amenities, workforce and the community’s future. What set Peachtree Corners apart from these other cities was our investment in the future, and the creation of Curiosity Lab. Each of these businesses brings valuable jobs and technical expertise to the Peachtree Corners community as we grow into a next-generation smart city.
How have you been able to connect the test bed environment at Curiosity Lab with Gwinnett County and Georgia’s larger-scale investment attraction efforts, and with other Georgia communities with their own smart city ambitions?

Johnson: We work closely with our partners at the regional and state levels to collaborate on the research that is being done at Curiosity Lab. Because of the research Bosch is doing around transportation, they are being evaluated by the Georgia Department of Transportation to assist them with their technology road map around traffic optimization. Curiosity Lab engages with ecosystem partners and community leaders throughout the state to help them spearhead their own economic development initiatives and smart city ambitions. We also partner with The Ray, who operates a similar facility on I-85 in conjunction with Georgia Department of Transportation, where we have shared projects to help facilitate the advancement of technology in both a rural highway system and a suburban area of metro Atlanta, which is the very essence of Curiosity Lab and its vision.

How have partners helped bring the Curiosity Lab vision to life?

Johnson: Curiosity Lab is a public-private partnership that is only made possible through the investment of multiple supporters and stakeholders. The City has led the way on establishing its infrastructure and managing initial investments, while Georgia Power and academic partners such as Georgia Tech and Kennesaw State bring much-needed expertise and additional dollars to expand our capabilities and areas of interest. The Georgia Department of Economic Development also helps to highlight Curiosity Lab’s infrastructure as an important asset for all of Georgia, one that advances innovation for both existing Georgia companies and as a draw for prospects. Access to more than $6 million in testing infrastructure, at no charge and for companies of all sizes, is a strategic advantage for the state and emphasizes the message that Georgia is serious about innovation.
As the logistics and transportation hub of the Southeast, Georgia’s robust transportation infrastructure offers key access to the globe.

Not only does Georgia offer the most extensive rail system in the Southeast — with more than 4,600 miles of railway — it’s also home to the busiest airport in the world and the fastest growing port in the U.S. Georgia’s central location in the Southeast offers access to 80% of the U.S. market with either a two-hour flight or a two-day truck drive.

A testament to the state’s strengths, 80% of the world’s top third-party logistics (3PL) firms operate in the state. Some 3PLs with major operations in the state include C.H. Robinson, Expeditors, J.B. Hunt, DHL Supply Chain and more. In addition, many logistic leaders like Delta Air Lines, UPS, Saia and Manhattan Associates have their headquarters in the state.
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Accessible to Rail
Served by Georgia Central Railway, with 211 miles of rail; two connector rail lines, Norfolk Southern in Macon and CSX in Savannah, provide potential connections for rail service to metropolitan areas and ports

Ready to Work
Labor force of more than 450,000 within 60 miles; Georgia boasts the number-one workforce training program in the country, Quick Start; Oconee Fall Line Technical College provides workforce training programs to support the Park's skill needs

Super-Sized and Shovel-Ready
Zoned acreage with utilities, approved for over 17 million square feet with parcel-size flexibility; Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) Program offers fast-track construction projects through advanced due diligence

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The Port of Savannah is home to the nation’s most extensive chilled cargo infrastructure, with 119 electric-powered refrigerated container racks accommodating 2,856 refrigerated containers at a time.

GATEWAYS TO GLOBAL TRADE
The Georgia Ports Authority is the state’s gateway to global trade. With deepwater ports in Savannah and Brunswick and the inland terminals of Appalachian Regional Port (in Crendall), Bainbridge and Northeast Georgia (in Gainesville, set to open in 2021), the Peach State provides efficient and affordable access to global and domestic markets.

In preparation for continued growth, The Georgia Ports Authority has committed to $1.4 billion in capital investment on equipment and project improvements over the next decade. One such project is the recent Savannah Harbor Expansion Project which allows the port to serve larger New Panamax vessels, saving transportation costs for companies shipping cargo through the port.

The Port of Savannah is the fastest growing and third-busiest container port in the nation, with more ocean carrier service calls than any other port on the East Coast. Additionally, more than 3 million sq. ft. of warehousing is available within 30 miles of the Port of Savannah — the largest concentration of import distribution centers on the East Coast. Approximately 85 miles south of Savannah, the Port of Brunswick handles cargo for more than 30 auto and heavy equipment manufacturers and is the nation’s busiest seaport for new automobile imports.

Whether by rail, road, water or air, Georgia’s logistics infrastructure rises to the top of most charts.

One of the state’s strongest logistics assets, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, is the busiest passenger airport in the world and handles more than 677 metric tons of cargo on
32 air carriers. Home to three cargo complexes with more than 2 million sq. ft. of warehousing, the airport also has the only USDA-approved On-terminal Perishables Complex in the Southeast. Every day, 2,700 flights arrive and depart from the airport going to 150 U.S. cities and 70 international cities in 50 countries.

**ATLANTA LINKS**

**TECHNOLOGY AND LOGISTICS**

A historic railroad hub, Atlanta is a key link in the state’s robust supply chain. Couple the city’s logistics infrastructure with its innovative tech talent and you’ll find a unique ecosystem of supply chain technology firms. Deloitte named the city the No. 2 metro area for digital supply chain in the U.S.

According to the Deloitte report produced in collaboration with the Metro Atlanta Chamber, 19 of the top 100 IT logistics providers have a presence in the region — nine of which have their headquarters in the city. An additional 17 corporate innovation centers are located in the city and focused on developing and applying new technologies to their supply chains.

Georgia Tech’s Supply Chain and Logistics Institute in Atlanta is a key asset for the region’s growing industry. From data-driven research to solve first and last mile problems to rebuilding broken supply chains following a natural disaster, Georgia Tech’s Supply Chain and Logistics Institute can offer solutions to logistics problems of all varieties.

**COOL AND QUICK**

Whether moving frozen foods or life-saving pharmaceuticals, Georgia’s more than 67 cold chain facilities provide a reliable infrastructure for time and temperature sensitive products. With more than 19.5 million sq. ft. of cold storage, Georgia has the eighth largest refrigerated space capacity in the U.S.

Four of the top five refrigerated warehouse companies have operations in Georgia, including Americold, Lineage, AGRO Merchants (formerly Nordic), and US Cold Storage. Americold and AGRO are headquartered in the state.

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Whether drawing from the state’s deep talent pool or recruiting talent from out of state, companies are able to build their dream teams in Georgia. With a labor force of 5.1 million and a total population of 10.6, Georgia is home to a robust and growing talent base. According to recent population projections, an estimated 13 million people will call the state home by 2040. While the state’s population continues to grow, so too do companies across the state. In fiscal year 2019 alone, the Georgia Department of Economic Development supported the creation of nearly 29,000 new jobs through the location of 332 projects, 74% of which were located outside of metro Atlanta.

Across the state, 85 public and private universities awarded about 140,000 degrees and certificates in the 2018-19 academic year. In the greater Southeast region, the colleges and universities within 250 miles of Atlanta enroll nearly 1.5 million students. Approximately 43% of metro Atlanta’s population have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Whether located in the metro area or the state’s more rural communities, employers have an abundance of well-educated talent to choose from. This didn’t occur by accident, either. For nearly 50 years Georgia has been at the forefront of workforce development. Earlier this year, Georgia earned the top ranking among states in the South Atlantic Region from Site Selection Magazine’s 2020 Workforce Development Rankings. The magazine also ranked the state No. 1 for business the last eight years in a row.

“Working hand in hand, the University System of Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia, and our leading workforce development program, Georgia Quick Start, have
produced a top-notch workforce that companies can count on to get the job done,” said Gov. Brian Kemp. “Looking ahead, we are committed to working with our partners throughout state government and in local communities to ensure that more businesses call Georgia home and continue to create opportunities for families throughout our state.”

QUICK START

The Technical College System of Georgia’s Quick Start program is the oldest and top ranked workforce training program in the country — and its available at no cost to qualified companies moving into or expanding in the state. In the decades since it was founded, Georgia Quick Start has trained more than 1 million employees across the state.

Companies within every major industry sector have used the program to quickly and efficiently build their teams. Quick Start offers strategic workforce consultation, pre-employment assessment, customized post-hire and job-specific training and professional development for leadership teams.

Quick Start runs a number of innovative centers across the state working with various sectors, including the Georgia BioScience Training Center in Social Circle, the Georgia Cyber Center in Augusta and the newly built Georgia Advanced Manufacturing Training Center outside of Savannah. Additionally, Gulfstream and Savannah Technical College partner to train avionics technicians and airframe mechanics on campus not far from the company’s headquarters.

RURAL PROGRAMS FINETUNE LOCAL WORKFORCE

In LaGrange, students of the THINC College & Career Academy are equipped with technical and career-specific skills. Founded in 2015, the academy is part of the Troup County School System and offers duel enrollment and advanced placement classes. The academy’s Work-Based Learning and Youth Apprenticeship program works with more than 150 local and regional employers to help train students in critical skills for the workforce.

In partnership with Textron Specialized Vehicles, makers of the E-Z-GO golf cart, students spend half the day in traditional classes and the other half getting hands-on experience making components for the company’s golf carts. The program targets at-risk students and helps them to not only earn a high school diploma but also to find employment.

In South Georgia, Coffee High School Students earn hands-on experience through the school’s STEAM Summer Internship Program. Qualifying students work with more than 20 employers who provide real-world experience in a variety of sectors, including manufacturing, engineering, finance, life sciences, technology and more.

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Even before the global COVID-19 pandemic, access to high-speed internet was essential to our way of life. As global shutdowns and social distancing measures were put into place, the need for fast, reliable internet connection only became more pronounced.

Fortunately, Georgia was already well underway on a proactive approach to bringing that essential access to the state’s rural communities with the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative.

We recently spoke with Deana Perry, executive director of the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, about the initiative and its early successes.

**How has the pandemic fueled the need for broadband access and what lessons has the state learned in the process?**

**Deana Perry:** Our team was well aware of the digital divide in Georgia, and COVID-19 definitely made it more salient for others statewide. As it became more apparent that Georgia would be affected by the virus, our team, along with the state Department of Education, worked diligently with Gov. Kemp to provide a statewide resource that shared information from service providers for free and reduced-cost services as well as locations offering free Wi-Fi. The impact on education collided with the need for working adults to have reliable internet access to continue working from home. Telehealth is also an essential part of the broadband initiative as rural health care providers are crippled without access to internet. This, in turn, hinders the quality of service.

**How will Georgia’s rural broadband expansion facilitate growth across the state?**

**Perry:** Broadband access will enhance the quality of life for Georgia’s residents and businesses. High-speed internet remains out of reach for many in rural Georgia and this is widely acknowledged to be a significant barrier to economic growth. Local government leaders from across Georgia have recognized this fact due to potential investors’ prioritization of internet access. This crucial aspect of conducting business is often a significant determining factor regarding business decisions in the state.
GEORGIA’S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ARE A KEY PARTNER IN MAKING GEORGIA THE NO. 1 STATE FOR BUSINESS.*

*According to Site Selection Magazine

Georgia’s 41 EMCs serve industry in 157 of 159 counties and 73 percent of the state’s land area. Together with their statewide trade association and generation and transmission partners, EMCs work continuously to provide member-owners with safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

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How did this initiative for expansion come about?

Perry: Legislation passed in 2018 supported broadband expansion and spurred the creation of the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Our team, in collaboration with the Georgia Technology Association, formed an inter-agency team with additional state entities to develop the governance framework.

The FCC released a map illustrating unserved areas in the state based on Census-level data, but our team developed a location-level based map which revealed that many of Georgia’s residents lived in unserved areas. Therefore, the need for expansion is imperative for all aspects of life: home, education, business and industry, to name a few.

Can you share an example of rural areas that have successfully brought broadband to their communities?

Perry: Several communities have received Broadband Ready Certification from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. This designation recognizes cities and counties that have prioritized broadband in their Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, they have demonstrated compliance with the adoption of a Broadband Model Ordinance.

Oglethorpe County was the first community to receive this honor in 2019. Since then, they have been able to effectively use local investment and leverage public-private partnerships to increase internet access in the county.

Evans County and the City of Claxton marked the first multijurisdictional designation. Both communities were recognized in February of this year. Additional designees include the cities of Dublin, Fitzgerald, Hiawassee and Woodbury and the following counties: Banks, Harris and Lumpkin.

Broadband efforts in Georgia have been bolstered by ReConnect funding. This federal program supports the expansion of broadband infrastructure and services in rural communities.

Evans and McIntosh counties were both recipients of USDA ReConnect funding. Pembroke Telephone Company received $4M to build a fiber-to-the-premises network in Evans County, bringing high-speed internet to residents, businesses and farms. Darien Telephone Company used $1M for similar services in McIntosh County, and Dovetel Communications received $12.5M to expand access in Heard, Troup and Carroll counties.

What are the greatest challenges to getting broadband in rural areas and how does Georgia aim to overcome those challenges?

Perry: We know where the unserved locations are, but the solutions lie in public-private partnerships which include financial investments. Service providers also have to weigh the cost and benefits of investing in broadband expansion. However, our team is dedicated to developing solutions that will benefit our communities as well as providers in order to help narrow the digital divide in the state.

What should companies looking to locate in the state understand about this initiative and the role it will play in communities in the coming years?

Perry: Georgia continues to be ranked as the top place in the nation to conduct business, and broadband is a significant factor in economic development. The GBDI demonstrates a multilevel dedication to high-speed internet access and how it affects groups such as service providers, business owners, and individuals and families. Our team is invested in what can be a boon to sustainable success in our state.
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Jackson
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Mansfield
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Thomaston
Thomasville
Washington
West Point
Whigham

Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia
1-800-333-MEAG
www.meagpower.org
ROLLING ON THE RIVER

AUGUSTA

Augusta Corporate Park

1800 total acres, 1500 available
Zoned Heavy Industrial
9 miles from Interstate 520

AugustaEDa.org 706.821.1321

COLUMBIA COUNTY

White Oak Business Park

600 acres zoned Manufacturing
Tenants include Club Car & Amazon
Access to Interstate 20

DevelopColumbiaCounty.com 706.312.1375
GREATER AUGUSTA, GEORGIA RIVER REGION

52 New/Expanding Companies, including Cyber, Nuclear and Healthcare  4,000 New Jobs

$1.7 Billion in Private Investment  Labor Shed of 420,000 People

January 2018 through October 2020

WAYNESBORO

Raymond Tract

500 acres zoned Industrial
Direct Access to US Highway 80
Under 2 mi. from commercial corridor

2020 #1 BEST PLACE TO LIVE
Evans, GA • Money.com

2020 #1 MOST NEIGHBORLY COMMUNITY
Neighbor.com

BURKE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
BURKE COUNTY

SelectBurke.com 706.554.2923

It’s all happening in Augusta.
When our team at Conway Data Analytics examined the data from the 2020 INC. 5000, we found some location insights that even INC. itself had not explored. When it comes to fast-growing companies, Georgia’s looking good and Atlanta’s looking even better.

The Peach State was No. 7 in the nation for most companies on the list, with 199 and No. 6 per capita. With 100 companies on the list, Atlanta was No. 3 among cities, behind New York and Chicago, and ahead of places such as Austin and San Francisco. Among Atlanta’s fast upward movers was the No. 1 company on the INC. list, software firm OneTrust, as well as such varied companies as logistics firm LoadUp Technologies (No. 837), human resources firm BlueSky Resource Solutions (No. 1,497), Sock Fancy (No. 3,172) and Lowe Engineers (No. 3,296).

Guess what? Even if some of them aren’t small anymore, they were all small businesses once. And they found the growth medium they needed in Atlanta. The 29-county metro region’s numbers are even more impressive. Adding in companies from such places as close-by suburb and corporate magnet Alpharetta (21 on the list), Roswell (10), Marietta (9) and Norcross (8) and the tally of INC. 5000 firms comes to 179, which would surpass the Big Apple at No. 1.

Metro Atlanta clearly has become a growth medium where companies can take root and thrive.

Those data were corroborated a few weeks later when, despite the largely accepted notion that the pandemic has sparked an exodus from cities, a CBRE report on strategic cost considerations for location strategy in the COVID-19 era grouped Atlanta in the expanding category.

Among the characteristics of expanding cities, CBRE said, were the following:

- Strong population growth
- Expanding economies
Fulton County, GA

160 FINTECH COMPANIES
Call Fulton County Home

Fintech is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the economy. Thanks to metro Atlanta’s high-concentration of tech talent, 70% of transactions are processed by Georgia-based fintech corporations.

38 INNOVATION CENTERS

The metro Atlanta area boasts 38 innovation centers—and counting—with educational programs that offer mentoring, connections to investors, and access to a community of tech innovators.

#1 STATE FOR DOING Business

Georgia’s business climate has been ranked #1 in the nation for the eighth consecutive year by Site Selection, and Area Development ranked Georgia top state for doing business for fifth year in a row.

The country’s most innovative companies and institutions call Fulton County home. Here, ingenuity, scientific discovery, and technology developments come together to forge a business climate that supports research and technology development in industries ranging from fintech to telecommunications to healthcare IT and biomedical research.

With the South’s highest concentration of educational institutions and world-class research labs and innovation, centers top talent flock to Fulton County, making it the ideal place to bring new ideas to life. Connect with us to learn more about what Fulton County has to offer and what Select Fulton can do for you.

CONNECT WITH US
(O): 404.612.8074
Email: info@selectfultoncounty.com
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@SelectFultonCounty
and universities (HBCUs) has uncovered historical challenges, but also no shortage of successes in Atlanta. A theme emerging from the reporting: If a region treats its small, medium-sized and family-owned businesses well, it doesn’t just build a strong community of services, amenities and neighbors. It also populates an equally strong ecosystem serving the needs of multinationals looking to invest.

Andre Perry, the David M. Rubenstein Fellow at the Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Policy Program, focuses his research on race and structural inequality, education and economic inclusion. He sees a lot to like in Atlanta that you don’t find in many other cities, and corporations stepping to the plate are a big reason why.

“You don’t get the black middle class the way you do in Atlanta without Delta, without the airport, without [former Atlanta Mayor] Maynard Jackson strategically leveraging contracts,” he says. “You see it with Delta, UPS, Coca-Cola, major companies with headquarters hiring significant numbers of black people. There are significant levels of poverty in Atlanta like a lot of cities. But there are large numbers of black people living the American dream — they can own a home, have some type of retirement fund, pass things along to their children. It comes not just from individuals trusting black people, but from major corporations making a home in a black city, and saying, ‘I’m going to trust that blacks can take my company to the next level.’ ”

It’s also evident that a promising resource for economic growth beyond corporate largesse and social responsibility is individual entrepreneurs themselves.

Jewel Burks Solomon co-founded startup Partpic, which was shepherded by the Rise of the Rest Seed Fund at Revolution, the company launched by AOL Founder Steve Case to promote startup ecosystems in places other than the coastal meccas. Today she is the head of Google for Startups in the U.S. Her mission is to create more access to the technology innovation ecosystem. And Greater Atlanta is her home base for that work.

Google in June 2020 announced the Google for Startups Black Founders Fund, a $5 million initiative to provide non-dilutive (i.e. no ownership transfer) cash awards of up to $100,000 to black-led startups in the U.S., a nation where less than 1% of venture capital goes to black founders. In October, awards were announced for 76 founders. Broken out by location, an astonishing 33 of those 76

The report found there was a year-over-year increase in online real estate brokerage Redfin users looking to migrate to the area from Q2 2019 to Q2 2020. In addition, unlike some super-expensive coastal cities, positive contributions to Atlanta’s population growth have come from a balance of natural increase, domestic and international migration.

MINORITY REPORT

Entrepreneurs of color comprise a growing part of that migration. An ongoing series of reports by Site Selection magazine on economic development related to majority-black communities, black-led businesses and historically black colleges

• Strong educational institutions
• Inward migration of talent
• Strong quality of life, lower costs of living, less traffic, unique cultural offerings.

MINORITY REPORT

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founders — 43% of the national total — were based in Atlanta or its suburbs.

They include such firms as STEAM skills educational product firm Brown Toy Box, food waste and hunger reduction technology firm Goodr, Countalytics, tea purveyor Just Add Honey, video-sharing app Kommute, Music Tech Works, power solutions company Optimal Technology Corporation, esports firm Pharaoh’s Conclave, automated savings app Qoins and photo labeling property inspection company U Scope Technologies.

There are more where those came from. Among them is Tyler Scriven, CEO and founder of entrepreneurial community Saltbox, who talked to Site Selection’s Savannah King in 2019 about his move from Silicon Valley to Atlanta.

“The business environment for minority entrepreneurs in Atlanta is better than most,” he said. “Why? Because there’s a strong community of both African American and female entrepreneurs in this city. Community is crucial for minority entrepreneurs. We need to see others that have succeeded, others that have overcome challenges and others that can help lift us up. And they can find that in Atlanta.” Moreover, he said, “since moving to Atlanta three years ago I’ve seen a notable improvement in access to capital for early-stage companies. The ecosystem is still relatively small, but it is thriving and growing.”

“I believe that the next two decades of entrepreneurial innovation will be more interesting outside of Silicon Valley than within, and I want to be at the forefront of that innovation.”
— Tyler Scriven, CEO and founder of entrepreneurial community Saltbox, on his move from Silicon Valley to Atlanta, Site Selection magazine, September 2019

From job opportunities to business investments to affordable housing, Invest Atlanta is building a prosperous, equitable Atlanta for all. Learn how the City of Atlanta’s economic development agency can help you thrive.
It stands to reason that the state with the world’s busiest airport would also be a global leader in aerospace technology, R&D and manufacturing.

Home to Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Georgia is also home to more than 800 aerospace companies that run the gamut from aircraft manufacturing to drone testing.

It’s all part of a legacy of aviation that pre-dates the era of space flight. When young engineers started studying the science of jet propulsion at Georgia Tech back in the 1940s, they had no idea that one day their research would put humans on the moon, the International Space Station and likely one day on Mars.

Over the course of that 80 years, Georgia has fashioned an aerospace sector that ranks among the best in the world. According to the PwC 2020 Aerospace Manufacturing Attractiveness Index, Georgia ranks currently as the No. 1 state in the country for aerospace manufacturing. The ranking is a composite score of six categories in which Georgia scores first in infrastructure, fourth in tax policy, fifth in industry, 10th in costs, 10th in economy and 12th in labor.

In other words, Georgia excels in every important measurement when it comes to providing an environment for aerospace success. The PwC report goes on to say that firms are drawn to Georgia because of low costs, business-friendly policies and a major international airport.

The confirmation has come over the last five years, during which Georgia added another 1,700 aerospace-related jobs due to corporate investments and expansions. These hires have brought total aerospace

Georgia’s aerospace manufacturing sector is rated the best in the U.S.

by RON STARNER

Gulfstream Aerospace maintains its global HQ in Savannah.

Photo courtesy of Gulfstream
employment in the Peach State to more than 100,000 today.

Georgia is the 5th largest exporter of aerospace products in the U.S. and aerospace products are the No. 1 export of the state. In addition to manufacturing, Georgia has the third largest maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO) sector in the U.S., and an air transportation sector led by Delta Air Lines.

Meanwhile, Georgia’s aerospace leaders, established players like Gulfstream Aerospace, Lockheed Martin, Meggitt, Pratt & Whitney, StandardAero, Triumph, Thrush and Universal Alloy Group continue to thrive in a state that produces the best engineering graduates in the field each year. Alumni from Georgia Tech are the most coveted in the industry, as every one of Tech’s engineering doctorate programs is ranked in the top 5, according to U.S. News & World Report.

Many of these grads make their way each year to Delta Air Lines, whose workforce has long been considered the gold standard in aviation and aerospace. Delta operates the largest engine test cell on the planet in Atlanta. The world’s largest airline also purchased an oil refinery that now supplies the company with approximately 80% of its domestic jet fuel. Delta has also developed luggage identification technology and a biometric boarding system.

Georgia is also a world leader in aerospace R&D. Alumni from Georgia Tech are the most coveted in the industry, as the graduate aerospace engineering program ranks No. 4 in the U.S., according to U.S. News & World Report. In 2017, Georgia Tech alone had $133.8 million in R&D expenditures in aerospace, aeronautical and astronautical engineering. The space program is alive and well in the Peach State too. A recent study conducted by researchers at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro found that Camden County ranks as one of the best locations in America for space launch. “Camden County has a significantly higher level of specialization in the primary launch sector than does the state of Georgia,” the report by the Center for Business Analytics and Economic Research (CBAER) concluded. “The addition of a spaceport could help increase the employment and wages already present in this area.”

“Georgia is the No. 1 state in which to do business, as well as the number one state for aerospace manufacturing,” said Steve Howard, Camden County administrator and Spaceport Camden project lead. “Coupled with Camden’s existing expertise in the space industry, we are poised for massive growth with the approval of Spaceport Camden.”

**U.S. Military Defense Spending is $13.7B in Georgia**

Source: U.S. Department of Defense
Fields of Plenty

Georgia delivers to the world’s dinner table.

The famous Vidalia onion grows in 20 counties in South Georgia.

Photo courtesy of ExploreGeorgia.org
Agriculture is Georgia’s oldest and largest industry and has played a central role in the state’s history. As colonialists, the first Georgians delivered corn, rice, wine and indigo to England. Inventor Eli Whitney fashioned the first cotton gin near Savannah in 1793, thus revolutionizing the cotton industry. In 1977, Georgia sent a peanut farmer named Jimmy Carter to the White House.

As the largest state east of the Mississippi River, Georgia is blessed with abundant land and a moderate climate that sustains the growth of dozens of crops as well as livestock that include cattle, hogs, sheep, goats, poultry and turkey. Consumers covet the state’s sweet peaches and its famous Vidalia onions. Georgia supplies more than half of the country’s peanuts.

According to the 2020 Ag Snapshots Report issued by the University of Georgia’s Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development, agriculture contributes some $76 billion annually to Georgia’s economy, based on direct revenues approaching $14 billion. The agriculture industry, says the report, accounts for 399,200 jobs.

Georgia is perennially the No. 1 state in the nation in the production of peanuts, broilers and pecans. It also ranks near the top when it comes to blueberries, spring onions, cotton, watermelon, peaches, eggs, cucumbers, sweet corn, bell peppers, tomatoes, cantaloupes, rye and cabbage.

The 2018 National Commodity Rankings, issued by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, offer a vivid illustration of Georgia’s agricultural bounty. The state placed 15 commodities in the ranking’s top five (please see graphic).

Georgia is a powerhouse in the timber industry, as well, with 24 million acres of timberland, which is tops in the nation. According to the Georgia Forestry Association, the state ranks first in annual timber harvest volume and exports of pulp, paper, paperboard mill product and wood pellets. Annual economic impact of the timber industry amounts to more than $36 billion and supports close to 150,000 jobs.
FOOD PROCESSING

Georgia’s agricultural harvest supports a growing food processing industry. Food and beverage processing account for $10.6 billion in gross state product and about 73,000 jobs statewide. It’s Georgia’s top manufacturing sector.

According to a report by Georgia Power Community and Economic Development:

“With more than 41,800 farms producing a variety of food commodities, Georgia’s processors capitalize on an abundance of raw materials. Georgia is home to a highly skilled, affordable workforce, exceptional transportation infrastructure and world-class technological resources geared toward promoting the success of the food processing industry.”

Led by The Coca-Cola Company, more than 800 food and beverage processors call Georgia home. They include Pilgrim’s, Fieldale Farms, Tyson Foods, Perdue Farms, Koch Foods, PepsiCo and Frito Lay.

In September 2020, sports beverage company Bang Energy picked Lithia Springs, west of Atlanta, as the site of its first manufacturing and distribution facility in the Southeast. The Florida-based manufacturer is to invest $145 million and create 600 new jobs, according to Georgia Gov. Brian P. Kemp. The state-of-the-art plant is expected to allow the company to produce 4,000 cans per minute.

Native Georgia company FPL food is expanding in its home base of Augusta. The vertically-integrated beef processor is investing $110 million to expand its Augusta carcass cooler and fabrication floor. Scheduled for completion in September 2021, the project will allow the company to process up to 2,500 cattle weekly. The company also has operations in Reidsville, Midville and Thomasville, where it’s the city’s biggest employer.

Other recent food processing investments include projects by Coca-Cola ($86 million); Ly Brothers ($55 million); Batter Up Foods ($34.3 million), Sugar Bowl Bakery ($37 million) and Ferrero ($23 million).

IN BRIEF

• The Port of Savannah’s proximity to major food producers recently made it the top port in the nation for exports of containerized agricultural goods. In calendar year 2019, agriculture accounted for 60% of the port’s exports.

• Poultry researchers at the University of Georgia are partnering with a team from Kansas State University to study how to effectively control the spread of COVID-19 in the nation’s meat and poultry processing facilities. The research is funded by a $1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

• The Georgia Grown program certifies local agriculture producers across the state. Member businesses are added to a statewide searchable list to help increase exposure to potential customers, suppliers and partners.

• The North Georgia Farm Trail covers agitourism attractions in five North Georgia counties. The trail includes not only homegrown goods and natural attractions, but also historic sites, farm-to-table restaurants, local wineries and craft breweries.

• Fort Valley State University in Peach County is Georgia’s top producer of African-American graduates with degrees in agriculture, agriculture operations and related sciences.

2018 NATIONAL COMMODITY RANKINGS*

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Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service

*Ranking in terms of total production. Data for some states not available due to nondisclosure, which could affect Georgia rankings.
Put Down Roots

Abundant water supply from the Floridian aquifer

Over 130,000 skilled workers within a 30-minute drive

Invested over $125 million in new schools

Agriculture capital of the South

COLQUITT COUNTY, GEORGIA

CITIZENS BUSINESS PARK

FOR LEASE

2 parcels:
65 acres & 70 acres

Zoned Industrial

Nearest Interstate:
I-75 - 36 mi.

Nearest Airports:
Municipal - 9 mi.
Regional - 40 mi.
International - 68 mi.

Nearest Port:
Inland - 55 mi.
Shore - 149 mi.

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Barbara Grogan | President
229.921.1457 | bgrogan@selectmoultrie.com
A massive EV battery plant offers a jolt to Georgia’s economy.

by GARY DAUGHTERS

Manufacturing projects don’t come much bigger than the one that’s unfolding in Commerce, Georgia, 70 miles northeast of Atlanta. SK Innovation Group’s 2.4 million sq. ft. electric vehicle battery plant represents Georgia’s largest economic development deal in decades. The South Korean conglomerate has committed to investing $2.6 billion and creating 2,600 jobs to manufacture EV batteries at the 283-acre site in Jackson County. The project will make Georgia one of the biggest EV battery hubs in the world.

“Georgia is cementing its place as the Southeastern U.S. hub for the electric battery and vehicle market in large part thanks to SK innovation, and it is exciting to see the growth in demand for these quality products,” said Gov. Brian P. Kemp in June 2020, as SK announced an expansion of its original plan to build two battery plants at Commerce 85 business park. Increased interest in the company’s products triggered plans to spend an additional $940 million to build a third facility at the park.

Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz, Hyundai-Kia Motors and Ford are among the companies that purchase SK Innovation’s lithium battery cells, a key component in propelling the electric vehicle market, which is growing exponentially. With current volumes at about 10 million, EV sales are expected to surpass 320 million units by 2020. The plants in Commerce are expected to have capacity to produce enough battery cells each year to power the equivalent of more than 300,000 electric vehicles.

The South Korean company announced the on-boarding of its first 60 employees at the site in September 2020. They include production supervisors, engineers...
and logistics specialists who are to serve as workforce trainers. The company says it plans to hire more than 1,000 skilled workers by the end of 2021.

SK also announced a workforce development partnership with Georgia Quick Start and nearby Lanier Technical College. Quick Start is Georgia’s award-winning workforce training program that provides customized workforce training solutions at no cost to qualified businesses. Lanier Tech provides technical and adult education to support economic development in Jackson and surrounding counties.

“SK Battery America is able to recruit talented employees and train them to be successful through the great partnership that we have with Georgia Quick Start and Lanier Technical College,” said Hwang Jun-ho, president of SK Battery America. “It is inevitable that our partnership will only grow stronger and will bring future (opportunity) for the Jackson County community and SK Battery America.”

Georgia is an increasingly popular destination for overseas automotive firms seeking footholds in the U.S. In July 2020, Germany’s GEDIA Automotive Group announced plans to build an advanced manufacturing facility Dalton that’s to begin production with a focus on EV parts. GEDIA is to invest $85 million in the project, delivering 200 jobs to Whitfield County.

GEDIA supplies lightweight parts to Volkswagen, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo and other automakers around the world. The Georgia plant will be the company’s second in the United States, joining a plant in Michigan.

“This project is an essential step into the future for GEDIA,” says Markus Schaumburg, co-CEO of GEDIA Automotive. “Moving closer to OEMs allows us to serve the American market even better.”

GEDIA plans to build a 180,000 sq. ft. facility on a Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) site. The GRAD certification promotes the fast-tracking of construction projects through advance due diligence. To qualify for GRAD status, properties must undergo environmental, geotechnical, zoning and utility assessments and earn final approval from a board of advisers from the public and private sectors. More than 8,000 jobs have been created on GRAD certified sites.

Porsche, which established its North American headquarters adjacent to Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in 2015, recently confirmed plans to double its footprint with what the company called a “multimillion dollar” investment. The German automaker announced that it’s a adding a 33-acre development to its existing 27-acre facility, which includes the popular Porsche Experience Center Atlanta that has welcomed more than 270,000 visitors. The expansion is to include a service center, Porsche Classic Factory Restoration facility and an extension of the test track at the Experience Center.

Kjell Gruner, president and CEO of Porsche Cars North America said the investment demonstrates the company’s commitment to what he called its “American hometown of Atlanta.”

“We are excited,” he said, “to announce this next phase of development that lays the groundwork for additional economic activity in the region.”

Georgia’s $3B Automotive Industry Employs More Than 50,000 Workers At More Than 300 Facilities.
Security and risk management content provider CSO, a unit of IDG Communications, includes Augusta on its 2019 list of the top 10 global cybersecurity hubs. That list includes such heavy hitters as New York City; the Washington, D.C. metro area; Maryland; the San Francisco Bay Area; and Israel. Augusta is punching above its weight to be sure, but a closer look reveals why it belongs on that list.

In July 2018, the Georgia Cyber Center’s Hull McKnight building had its grand opening. This building is the first part of the $100 million cybersecurity facility located on the Nathan Deal Campus for Innovation. Former Governor Deal initially announced a $58 million investment for a new cyber training center in January 2017.

The 167,000 sq. ft. building is designed to bring together academia, private industry and government to establish cybersecurity standards across state and local agencies to develop and practice protocols for responding to cyber threats. The center has been strategically constructed in the city of Augusta to share the location with the U.S. Army Cyber Command headquarters, the central post for all the Army’s cybersecurity operations.

**Georgia’s Own Global Cybersecurity Hub**

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**Georgia Leads the Way**

The Georgia Cyber Center is a unique public-private collaboration that includes Augusta University, Augusta Technical College, the University System of Georgia’s (USG) research institutions, the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), the City of Augusta, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), the Georgia Department of Defense and other state, federal and private-sector partners.

“The protection of Georgia’s citizens, businesses and institutions in the digital realm is becoming significantly more necessary as cybercrime continues to grow,” said Gov. Deal at the opening ceremony. “Building on our efforts to keep Georgia safe and maintain its status as the No. 1 state in which to do business, we are taking action to ensure that Georgia leads the way on cybersecurity.”

The initial building was fully leased before construction was finalized, and continued demand warranted a second building. The state provided an additional $35 million in funding, and the city of Augusta contributed an additional $12 million, for the construction of another 165,000 sq. ft. facility, which opened January
Georgia State University Earns Cybersecurity Designations

The National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have announced that Georgia State University in Atlanta has earned two prestigious cybersecurity designations, thanks to the school’s demonstrated commitment to both cybersecurity research and training. In June, the school was designated as both a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research and a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education.

Only 45 universities nationwide have received designations in both cyber defense and education, and through this special program, students and faculty are eligible for scholarships and grants through the Department of Defense Cyber Scholarship Program and the Federal Cyber Service Scholarship for Service Program, as well as funding opportunities from other sources such as the National Science Foundation.

The National Centers of Academic Excellence program was established by the NSA in 1999 to reduce vulnerability in the nation’s information infrastructure by promoting higher education and research in cyber defense. With the designation, colleges and universities are formally recognized by the U.S. government for their robust cybersecurity-related programs.

10, 2019. Total square footage of the campus is 330,000, with a total investment of $105M. The second facility serves as an incubator hub for technology startups as well as a training space for the state’s cybersecurity initiatives and workforce development programs. The facility is responsible for training all of Georgia’s 85 state departments in cybersecurity, and supports innovative companies focused on developing new technologies through partnerships.

WHO’S MOVING IN & WHO’S EXPANDING

Perspecta Inc., a leading U.S. government services provider, held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at its new facility in the Georgia Cyber Center on Oct. 6. The office is strategically located close to Perspecta’s U.S. Army Cyber Command (ARCYBER) customer, headquartered nearby at Fort Gordon. With the move to Augusta, Perspecta will create 178 job opportunities in support of ARCYBER’s headquarters relocation from Fort Belvoir in Virginia.

SOFTACT Solutions, LLC (STS) announced in March the opening of a principal office in the Shaffer MacCartney Building of the Georgia Cyber Center. Committed to helping create the ecosystem that is required to make the Fort Gordon Cyber district a nationally recognized destination for Cyber talent and innovation, STS has embraced the idea of true partnership with academia, industry, and government by partnering with Augusta University, the Georgia Cyber Center and the Alliance for Fort Gordon to create an environment necessary to cultivate local talent for the cyber workforce and drive a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship while simultaneously meeting the needs of our government partners both regionally and nationally.

In October 2019, Parsons Corporation, a leading cybersecurity technology provider, announced plans to expand its operations at the Georgia Cyber Center by adding more than 80 new jobs. The expansion is the result of Parsons’ growing cyber business as U.S. Army Cyber Command at Fort Gordon continues to promote the growth of the industry in Augusta. Parsons initially announced a presence there in August 2019.

In August 2019, BAE Systems opened offices in the Georgia Cyber Center, growing its presence in Augusta and furthering its commitment to innovation. The company values the area’s highly skilled workforce and proximity to key customers. “We’re incredibly excited about our partnership with the Georgia Cyber Center and continuing to grow our workforce in the Augusta and Ft. Gordon areas,” said Peder Jungck, vice president and general manager of BAE Systems’ Intelligence Solutions business. “The potential for collaboration, innovation and mentorship that comes from sharing a campus with some of the brightest minds in cybersecurity today is truly limitless.” The company currently has more than 400 employees in Fort Gordon and Augusta providing advanced analytics and information assurance mission support.

GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GUIDE 57
Members of the U.S. Special Forces endure extreme physical challenges during training. Knowing how hard to push can spell the difference between a combat-ready warrior and one that incurs a potentially serious injury.

In April 2020, the U.S. Office of Naval Research approved a $1.6 million grant to the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) to advance the art of machine learning and artificial intelligence in human performance and adaptation. GTRI researchers are working to utilize data from wearable sensors to create a “virtual coach” to better inform military training.

“Most of the time, the way the military trains people is purely based on the previous knowledge and personal experience of the drill sergeant — what we call doctrinal guidance,” says Alessio Medda, a GTRI senior research engineer who is leading the project. “So, imagine if you could have something like a virtual coach as you go through a run that will tell you if your pace is okay, or if you need to slow down, or if you are about to get an injury because your gait is not appropriate for the type of exercise you are doing.”
The project is called SHARPI, which stands for “Supporting Human Adaptation for Readiness and Performance Improvements.” It’s just one example of how Georgia Tech, one of the nation’s leading research institutes, serves as a well of forward-leaning knowledge to the U.S. armed forces and the defense industry. GTRI is, since 1995, a Defense Department University Affiliated Research Center.

Founded in 1934 as the Engineering Experiment Station, GTRI has grown to more than 2,400 employees in 34 locations across the country and performs more than $500 million of research annually for government and industry. Its areas of specialty include aeronautical systems and avionics, air and missile defense systems, autonomous systems and robotics, electronic warfare, cybersecurity, and space systems.

In July 2019, the U.S. Air Force awarded GTRI a five-year, $245.5 million contract for engineering, researching and developing advanced electronic warfare and avionics systems. The contract extends decades of partnership between GTRI and the Air Force’s Electronic Warfare & Avionics program office (EW&A), which is responsible for supporting the hundreds of software systems installed on or supporting 60 different kinds of aircraft.

“GTRI delivers essential engineering capability across the mission of EW&A and provides a long-term, strategic relationship beyond just the EW&A program office to include other parts of the USAF,” said Col. James Wilson, the division’s senior materiel leader. “This contract will streamline the opportunity for the EW&A program office to leverage the capabilities of GTRI across USAF.”

Georgia Tech’s work for the Pentagon extends across all of the military services, the Department of Homeland Security and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). Under a $2.35 billion, extendable contract, GTRI is collaborating in on-going research with the Army Aviation and Missile Research, Development and Engineering Center. GTRI also is an active participant in the Army’s Artificial Intelligence Hub based out of the National Robotics and Engineering Center at Carnegie Mellon University.

General James C. McConville, who holds a master’s degree in aerospace engineering from Georgia Tech, is the current U.S. Army Chief of Staff. A decorated helicopter pilot, McConville credits Georgia Tech for much of the success of his military career.

“Georgia Tech is a tremendous school of higher learning, and it helped me as a leader to think critically, innovate and solve the most difficult problems. Georgia Tech also taught me the power of technology and to challenge the status quo,” McConville said. “The practical knowledge I gained helped me find tangible ways to overcome challenges while expanding my sense of what is truly possible if we work as a team and don’t limit our creativity.”

Georgia seized the No. 1 ranking in the 2020 Aerospace Manufacturing Attractiveness Rankings by PwC, the professional services network. Georgia bested Ohio, Washington, North Carolina and Texas, which formed the remainder of the ranking’s Top 5. “The state’s Aerospace and Defense workforce of 108,000 is employed by more than 800 aerospace companies,” said PwC. “Aerospace products, valued at $10.8 billion, account for the state’s top exports and represent the second largest manufacturing industry in the state, representing $57.5 billion in economic impact.” Georgia’s aerospace industry placed in the top 10 for categories including cost, infrastructure, industry, economy and tax policy. PwC identified Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, Gulfstream Aerospace, Airbus Aerial, Pratt & Whitney and Meggitt Polymers & Composites as top aerospace players in Georgia.
Before the global COVID-19 pandemic, Georgia’s film industry set a record. In 2019, the 391 film and television productions that filmed in Georgia spent $2.9 billion in the state, supported 3,040 motion picture and television industry businesses, and delivered $9.2 billion in total wages.

One of Georgia’s not-so-secret weapons is its film, television and digital entertainment tax credit. Georgia’s Entertainment Industry Investment Act provides a 20% tax credit for companies that spend $500,000 or more on production and post-production in Georgia, either in a single production or on multiple projects. A badge of pride for the state, Georgia also grants an additional 10% tax credit if the finished project includes the state’s promotional logo — Georgia’s iconic peach.

“A lot of states have really good incentives, some are even better than Georgia, but what we have is the complete package,” explained Lee Thomas, deputy commissioner of the Georgia Film Office at the Georgia Department of Economic Development. “Georgia has the world’s busiest airport. We have a temperate climate, so you can shoot year-round. We have a tremendous crew base, which is assisted in

Georgia’s film and television industry takes center stage.

by SAVANNAH KING
part by having the Georgia Film Academy here. We have a lot of infrastructure and we’ve been growing for a long time. A lot of support service companies have moved here and that makes it cheaper for productions because they can get services locally. We compete frequently with New Mexico and they have a very specific look. But Georgia has mountains and coastline and big cities and small towns. All of that together makes Georgia very desirable.”

No other film production center has seen more growth in film and television infrastructure over the past decade than Georgia. Direct spending alone by the film industry grew by 4,000% from 2007 through 2018. In fiscal year 2019, just under 400 productions filmed in Georgia, which includes 26 feature films, 31 independent films, 214 television series, 91 commercials and 29 music videos.

While the pandemic brought much of the world to a screeching halt — including Georgia’s film industry — it wasn’t for long. In June, major motion picture, television and streaming companies — including The Walt Disney Co., NBCUniversal, Netflix, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Paramount Pictures and Warner Bros. — announced they would bring back and hire 40,000 production workers to be employed on 75 production projects over the next 18 months. The projects represent investments of more than $2 billion into the state’s economy and includes plans to purchase goods and services from over 17,000 small Georgia businesses.

“The entertainment production industry is coming back and ready to jump-start the Georgia economy by creating jobs and generating greatly needed investment and spending in communities across the Peach State,” said Governor Brian P. Kemp.

GEORGIA FILM ACADEMY

One of the industry’s strongest workforce pipelines is the Georgia Film Academy, a collaborative effort of the University System of Georgia and Technical College System of Georgia. Georgia Film Academy classes are offered for college credit at more than 25 institutions across the state. The program offers opportunities to fast track students into craft internships leading to apprenticeships and jobs.

In March, Georgia Film Academy Executive Director Jeffrey Stepakoff announced that the academy will have more than 7,000 student enrollments across Georgia. The academy is also starting new professional graduate programs for Georgia filmmakers and content creators, starting with the new University of Georgia-Georgia Film Academy-Trilith Studios joint Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) program, which starts this fall.

“From Savannah to Dalton to Athens, from Gainesville to Griffin to Gwinnett County, we are proud to build a business that belongs to all of Georgia,” said Stepakoff. “Never in the history of filmed entertainment has there been a story like Georgia’s. What has happened here, and the pace at which it has happened, is unprecedented.”

TRILITH MAKES A HOME

In October, Pinewood Atlanta Studios, one of the largest purpose-built studios in North America, rebranded as Trilith Studios. The rebrand followed UK-based Pinewood Group Limited’s recent sale of its stake in Pinewood Atlanta to its Atlanta-based partners.

Home to blockbuster films like Avengers: Endgame, Avengers: Infinity War, Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2 and a host of other films from the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), the 700-acre full-service film studio is located in Atlanta, just 20 minutes from Atlanta’s international airport. The 6-year-old studio announced in March it would expand with a new four-story creative center to house content and technology companies on-site.

The site also features a unique live-work development concept called Trilith. This new 935-acre master development includes the studio and multiple vendor businesses, custom homes and microvillages, restaurants and schools, all aimed at servicing the film and creative industries. Trilith will be responsible for creating more than 7,000 jobs, including those related to the 60-plus businesses located on the site.
Welcome to Transaction Alley

The electronic commerce of the world converges in Georgia.

by RON STARNER

The last time you used your debit card to pay for groceries, or used Apple Pay to buy gas, there’s a good chance you employed the skills of a financial technology worker in Georgia.

With 70% of all transactions worldwide passing through Georgia, the Peach State is a global leader in fintech. Consider the impact of this industry in Georgia:

- The top 15 Georgia-based fintech firms generate annual revenue of more than $114 billion.
- Six of the 10 largest U.S. payment processing companies are headquartered in Georgia.
- More than 38,000 professionals working in Georgia (and more than 130,000 worldwide) are employed by fintech firms that are based in Georgia.
- Combined, these firms process over 118 billion transactions totaling more than $2 trillion per year and support almost 4 million merchants.

Thanks to the rapid growth of fintech, the roster of companies in the Peach State now reads like a Who’s Who of this sector: First Data, WorldPay, Global Payments, TSYS, FIS, Fiserv and Equifax are just a few of them. No wonder the experts who study this field now refer to Georgia as Transaction Alley.

The metro Atlanta area’s high concentration of companies engaged in subsectors of fintech: card processing and POS; trade and payment; retail banking solutions; electronic billing and presentment; prepaid services, loyalty and points programs; identify protection, analytics and risk; capital markets; and gateways and alternative payments.

The ranks of these firms range from startups like Groundfloor, Kabbage and BitPay to established players like E-Trade, TaxSlayer.com and LexisNexis.

From startup founders to veteran industry leaders, executives who have decided to base their business operations in Georgia all say the same thing: Georgia’s business climate is the best in the nation, and one of the best in the world, when it comes to supporting fintech.
“Smart regulation and civic partnership between industry and government has benefited the business environment in Georgia,” said Professor Sadheer Chava of Georgia Tech.

The growth of fintech is supported by the Georgia Center of Innovation for Information Technology, which mobilizes a network of state universities, government agencies and businesses to help fintech firms find the resources they need to grow.

Even more help is on the way. On August 26, the Georgia Department of Education and the University System of Georgia (USG) announced a partnership to create a high school career pathway focused on fintech. “The mission of our Career, Technical and Agricultural Education program is to respond nimbly and quickly to workforce needs so students have the best possible opportunities for a successful future,” said State School Superintendent Richard Woods. “This is a perfect example of a partnership that will expand options for students and strengthen the local workforce in our state.”

The new Fintech Pathway has three classes modeled on those in the USG degree program. Students may choose to take these courses, as well as their remaining required fintech courses, through the USG’s dual-enrollment program, meaning students could graduate from high school with a completed fintech degree.
oes your stomach rumble when you think of the Peach State? It would be a reasonable reaction considering nearly half of the country’s top 100 food processing companies have operations in the state.

Many of the companies with headquarters in the state are household names, including Chick-fil-A, Cinnabon, Church’s Chicken, Fieldale Farms, Great American Cookies, Krystal, Moe’s Southwest Grill, Waffle House and The HoneyBaked Ham Company.

In September, Papa John’s Pizza selected metro Atlanta as the site of its new global headquarters, which is set to open in 2021. The company will bring more than 200 jobs into the city and currently employs 2,500 Georgians.

“Papa John’s already has a major corporate presence in Georgia and metro Atlanta, and we know the many strengths of the region. So, we’re especially excited to be expanding here, as part of our long-term growth plans,” said Papa John’s CEO and President Rob Lynch. “We owe our record momentum over the past nine months to the commitment, dedication and innovation of our team members. Our ability to tap into the diversity and talent of the metro Atlanta area will help us accelerate that growth.”

A diverse range of national companies and with headquarters in the state include Flowers Foods, Fieldale Farms and Olé Mexican Foods. Wrigley, Kraft, Chicken of the Sea, The Hillside Brands Company, Frito-Lay, Starbucks and Kings Hawaiian all manufacture in the Peach State.

The already robust food and beverage sector continues to grow every year. Over the last decade, more than 297 food processing companies opened or expanded operations in Georgia, investing more than $4.8 billion in the state.

**DRINK UP**

With more than 1,100 food and beverage processing facilities located
in Georgia, including some of the world’s most recognized brands, like Coca-Cola, the state has a stronghold in the beverage industry with numerous producers operating within the state, including Buffalo Rock, PepsiCo, Shasta Beverages, Starbucks and more.

Florida-based Bang Energy, a leading manufacturer and seller of energy drinks, is investing $145 million to open its first Southeastern manufacturing and distribution facility in Douglasville. The investment will create 600 new jobs to the community.

“Bang Energy is making a significant investment in Douglas County,” said CEO and chief scientific officer of Bang Energy, Jack Owoc. “Bang Energy is excited to operate in a county and a state that laid out the red carpet for us and who value our brilliant partnership. We’d like to offer special thanks to Georgia Gov. Brian P. Kemp for his personal attention, together with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the Development Authority of Douglas County and others too numerous to mention that have been phenomenally helpful.”

Beyond soft drinks, Georgia is home to multiple breweries like Anheuser-Busch, MillerCoors, and homegrown craft breweries like SweetWater, Terrapin Beer Co, Monday Night Brewing and others.

In January, Anheuser-Busch announced it would expand operations at its facility in Cartersville, generating an $85 million investment and 12 new jobs. Anheuser-Busch’s Cartersville location, which opened in 1993, brews more than 20 of the company’s brands and is the original producer of canned emergency drinking water for disaster relief.

The Cartersville facility was Anheuser-Busch’s first brewery to be certified organic by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to brew and package Michelob ULTRA Pure Gold.

**SERIAL EXPANSION**

Global Fortune 500 food company General Mills is expanding their Cinnamon Toast Crunch production operations in Covington where it has been since 1989. This expansion project will help the company increase capacity and efficiency for producing one of the best-selling cereals in the U.S., Cinnamon Toast Crunch.

“General Mills has a long legacy of making food the world loves, right here in Georgia,” said Roxie Simon, plant manager, General Mills Covington. “Cinnamon Toast Crunch is one of our most beloved brands as the No. 2 cereal in the United States and growing. We are proud to partner with the state to create new jobs, tap into some great local talent, and expand our capacity to make even more of this family favorite in Covington.”

**COMING HOME**

Headquartered in San Marzano, at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, Italy, La Regina di San Marzano will invest $20 million in a new food processing facility in Bacon County, delivering 250 jobs to Alma, Georgia. The canned sauce maker will source carrots, peppers, basil, onions and meats from local farmers. The company’s freshly grown tomatoes will be imported from Italy through the Port of Savannah, where they will then be transported to Alma to be processed into the brand’s world-famous sauces.

“Georgia feels like the perfect place,” said Felice Romano, president of La Regina. “The large agricultural environment in Bacon County is so similar to what we have here in San Marzano. It ensures we have access to vast supplies of all the raw materials we need to pack the sauce, and we believe our business will do wonderfully there. Then, there’s so much room for expansion — literally and figuratively — in Alma, not to mention the close proximity to the third-largest port in the U.S., the Port of Savannah. It gives us both full access to the East Coast and the possibility to get the incoming shipments of our canned tomatoes from Italy. Last, but not least, the wide offer of dedicated workforce and all the consistent and excellent support the State of Georgia has provided us with has been of vital importance to us.”

**TOP GEORGIA FOOD PROCESSING EMPLOYERS**

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Sources: BusinessWire, Gazelle and GDEcD
REPORT: GEORGIA’S LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR IS BOOMING
Georgia’s life sciences sector is “resilient and growing,” according to an April 2019 report from RTI International (RTI) for Georgia Bio, the state’s trade association committed to driving growth in Georgia’s biosciences industry and its many sectors. These include agri-biotech, food and nutrition, bio-based technologies and renewable chemicals, industrial and environmental biotech, medical devices and technologies, pharmaceuticals and consumer health care, diagnostics and research products, testing and research services, and clinical research. From 2007 to 2017, employment in life sciences grew by 14.9%, compared to 7.7% nationally, and 8.7% growth in private employment across all industries in the state, the RTI analysis points out.

The report identified 1,960 unique life sciences establishments that contributed 68,300 jobs and $10 billion to Georgia’s gross domestic product. Accounting for multiplier effects, the industry supports a total of approximately 194,000 jobs and contributes $21.8 billion to Georgia’s GDP. This represents 3.7% of Georgia’s total non-farm employment and 3.7% of Georgia’s 2016 GDP.

“High value jobs, robust research”

The life sciences industry offers Georgians high-value jobs that are commensurate to education and experience. Of the 20 most common occupation types, 42% of jobs require a high school education or equivalent, while 32% require a bachelor’s degree. Of the 10 occupations projected to grow over the next decade, seven require postsecondary education, ranging from technical and associate degrees (4), bachelor’s degrees (2), and doctoral or professional degrees (1).

Thanks to a robust university research system and the presence of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), institutions based in Georgia received $549 million in NIH research funding in 2018. Moreover, annual NIH funding to those institutions has grown by 20% since 2010, more than double the national average of less than 8%.

“Since 2010, the number of federal small business research innovation grants for life sciences startups has doubled in Georgia,” said Russell Allen, former president and CEO of the Georgia Research Alliance. “With the ingenuity of our universities and the strong support from our government and industry we are seeing more life sciences inventions making their way from the lab to the marketplace and, most importantly, into the lives of Georgians.”

by MARK AREND

Photo: Getty Images
Goods movement is built into the Georgia economy. Just look at the buildings themselves.

Among the more than 1,000 major corporate facility investments in Georgia tracked by Site Selection magazine’s Conway Projects Database since 2015, more than 25% have a logistics function. Even with some numerical values unknown for competitive reasons, those 255 projects represent more than $6.4 billion in capital investment and 36,400 new jobs.

That ratio has kept pace in 2020, as logistics teamed with food processing and manufacturing to lead the way among the 87 projects worth $3.7 billion and 10,000 jobs that the Georgia Department of Economic Development tracked during the first quarter of FY2021 that ended September 30. Back track to the pre-pandemic date of March 1, and you’d hardly think a pandemic had occurred: Logistics runs like a timely railroad through seven months’ worth of projects — 176 in all — that are creating 19,345 jobs and bringing $6.48 billion in investment to the state.

The recent spate of projects includes three Amazon fulfillment centers in Gwinnett, Coweta, and Columbia counties. Medical equipment distributor Medline Industries is investing nearly $51 million and creating 150 jobs at a new facility in Bryan County, southwest of Savannah. A next-generation automated grocery fulfillment center from Kroger and Ocado is locating in Clayton County south of Atlanta. But they’re not the only grocery operation circling Greater Atlanta.

In January 2020, German grocery retailer Lidl announced it would invest $100 million and create 270 jobs at a new regional distribution center in Covington, a city located along I-20 in metro Atlanta on the way to Augusta that is increasingly known as much for its film and TV work as its interstate proximity. It’s the company’s fourth U.S. distribution center.

“This centrally located facility will allow us to efficiently deliver outstanding quality products to our customers at the lowest possible prices and expand our network of stores across the region,” said Lidl US Chairman Roman Heini.

Another unique facility is coming to metro Atlanta’s Douglas County from Stitch Fix, which announced in summer 2019 it will create more than 980 jobs and invest $15.5 million in Lithia Springs, southwest of Atlanta.

“We’re looking forward to building our Atlanta team and engaging with the local community, including working with local...
non-profit organizations that support economic empowerment and well-being for women,” said Minesh Shah, vice president of operations at the personal style e-commerce company.

International e-commerce company Radial, Inc., will invest $40 million in a new fulfillment center in Locust Grove, creating 344 full-time job opportunities and more than 1,000 seasonal opportunities in southeast metro Atlanta. The omnichannel commerce specialist’s new fulfillment center in Henry County, part of a national network of 20 facilities, will help support a nationally recognized health and beauty brand.

COLOSSAL MOMENTUM

The Greater Atlanta metro area accounted for more than 100 of the 255 logistics projects (39%) tracked by Site Selection over the past five years. That’s to be expected in a growing 29-county metro area whose population grew by nearly 13% from 2010 to 2018, now stands at 6 million is expected to reach 8.6 million by 2050. But other growing areas have their own momentum. Twenty projects went to the metro Atlanta-adjacent counties of Hall and Jackson, where distribution centers and manufacturing alike are populating nationally prominent small cities Gainesville and Jefferson.

They’re part of a vibrant I-85 corridor that’s gradually filling in all the way to the South Carolina state line at Lake Hartwell en route to Greenville-Spartanburg, and all the way in the other direction toward Montgomery, Alabama. The same goes for radials extending both ways along I-20 and I-75, creating a six-spoke wheel that never stops turning.

But there’s one other stretch crucial to that wheel: the rail and I-16 connections to the Savannah region, where nearly 50 projects have landed in the past five years to only serve that growing region, but take advantage of proximity to the still-booming ports operations of the Georgia Ports Authority.

The growth trend has continued despite the COVID-19 pandemic. In August 2020, “Savannah moved more containers over its docks (441,600 TEUs), more cargo through its rail yards and more trade in and out of its inland terminals than at any other point in its 75-year history,” the GPA announced in September when it welcomed the CMA CGM Brazil, the largest ship to ever call on the U.S. East Coast with a capacity of 15,072 TEUs. The port’s August included a record 49,402 containers (approximately 89,000 TEUs) by rail and a record 3,420 lifts at the Appalachian Regional Port, an intermodal operation in northwest Georgia’s Murray County.

According to the GPA, the Savannah market as of fall 2020 featured 74.4 million sq. ft. of industrial space with another 5 million sq. ft. under construction. The Savannah Harbor Expansion Project, which will deepen the river to 47 feet at low tide, is now 75% complete. And the Mason Mega Rail Terminal, which will double the Port of Savannah’s rail capacity to 2 million TEUs annually, was 50% operational.

“Harbor deepening, rail expansion and new distribution and industrial real estate space added in the past year are all reasons why the center of gravity in American logistics is shifting toward Savannah,” said GPA Board Chairman Will McKnight. All Georgia ports together handled 10% of U.S. containerized exports by weight in 2019 and over 11% of U.S. containerized exports by weight so far in 2020.

The Port of Savannah by itself handled 2.1% of all U.S. exports and 8.4% of all imports in 2019, based on containerized weight.

“The sight of this colossal ship makes perfectly clear the benefits America will gain from the Savannah Harbor deepening,” said Col. Daniel H. Hibner, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District, on the arrival of the CMA CGM Brazil. “The Savannah Harbor Expansion Project, now nearly complete, will boost the economy at a critical time and will have broad impacts for Georgia, South Carolina and throughout the Southeast.”

Created by state legislators in 2019, the Georgia Commission for Freight and Logistics aims to maximize economic impact by minimizing congestion impact. The commission’s mission is to find ways to move freight more efficiently, spur economic growth and job creation and make recommendations for funding infrastructure improvements across the state.

Like the loads at Georgia’s growing portfolio of fulfillment centers, the commission is arriving right on time: The GPA projects that annual traffic at Georgia’s ports will double from 4.5 million containers a year to almost 9 million containers a year by the year 2028. 

— Seth Millican, Executive Director of the Georgia Transportation Alliance

"Georgia Ports Authority projects that annual traffic at our ports will double from 4.5 million containers a year to almost 9 million containers a year by the year 2028."

— Seth Millican, Executive Director of the Georgia Transportation Alliance
A leader in international trade, the Peach State understands the importance of facilitating global sales of Georgia products and the impact it can have on local communities. That’s why Georgia’s International Trade office is trying to make global commerce easy for manufacturers of all sizes across the state. And did we mention it’s free?

A record-breaking year, Georgia exports grew to $41.2 billion in 2019. The 1.5% increase shattered the previous year’s record. This consistent growth has led to 43% export growth over the last decade. The 12th largest exporting state in the nation, Georgia’s exports reach 214 countries and territories around the world.

Georgia’s International Trade division works with more than 2,000 Georgia companies each year to bolster exports and assist companies reaching into new international markets. The division’s Atlanta-based team is supported by international representatives in 12 strategic global markets, including Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Europe, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Peru and the UK. These representatives play a critical role in facilitating international connections that generate economic success. Incidentally, nearly two-thirds of the state’s trade is in markets where the state has a local representative.

In September, the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s (GDEcD) International Trade division unveiled a new tool to provide virtual connections between international buyers and Georgia suppliers. The new Export Georgia, USA Directory provides Georgia businesses with the global connections they need to reach new markets and diversify their international customer base. Currently, more than 60 Georgia businesses are featured on the site with new companies being added regularly as the state recruits more Georgia businesses to register for a listing in the directory.

“Georgia has quickly become the epicenter of global trade in the Southeast,” said Georgia Department of Economic Development Commissioner Pat Wilson. “As we continue to celebrate a record-setting year for trade in 2019 — our trade team is focusing on the future. Not only will this tool help Georgia businesses find new buyers in international markets, but it will also help businesses get back on their feet as they seek out new opportunities to succeed.”

The Export Georgia, USA Directory is a free tool developed for Georgia companies interested in promoting their products or services to international buyers. This free resource allows international buyers to search for Georgia suppliers of products and services and provides a mechanism for the GDEcD International Trade division to facilitate international business matchmaking for Georgia manufacturers and service providers.

“We are thrilled to offer this free marketing opportunity to Georgia companies interested in
expanding their sales worldwide,” said GDEcD Deputy Commissioner for International Trade Mary Waters. “As our economy evolves, this new digital tool serves as a catalyst for Georgia’s small businesses seeking to diversify their global customer base.”

A craft ice cream maker based in Marietta called High Road Craft Brands recently looked to the International Trade team for guidance as they sought to expand the market for their product. Using up-to-date market research and other key insights, the company developed a plan to expand its domestic customer base while catering to a few markets in the Caribbean before growing their global footprint further.

“Their reporting is fantastic and deep,” said chief marketing officer for High Road Craft Ice Cream Nicki Schroeder. “It’s really great for small companies because you feel like you have another arm of your company in this export business, and it’s free. They want you to expand and export your products.”

Small businesses make up nearly 90% of Georgia exporters, and GDEcD’s International Trade team works to help these exporters through customized programs and services to reach new markets.

**SMALL BIZ GOES GLOBAL**

In October, GDEcD was awarded a grant of more than $162,000 from the U.S. Small Business Administration under the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) to bolster export assistance to small businesses. These funds officially launch the International Trade division’s “Go Global Georgia” initiative that aims to help small business exporters develop global markets.

Georgia exporters that meet certain criteria can be reimbursed for various activities, including export training programs, design and translation of print and digital marketing materials, website globalization, international market travel and participation in both in-person and virtual trade shows. Go Global Georgia supports activities that increase companies’ export capacity and ability to connect with global customers around the world. Companies may apply for two approved export activities with a maximum of $6,000 per company at any time during the application year, which runs from Oct. 1, 2020, through Sept. 1, 2021.

“Every dollar counts when you’re a small business seeking to sell to global customers. Our Trade team has always focused on the needs of small business exporters, delivering services that connect our Georgia businesses with key customers, and this grant provides another tool for our companies to stay ahead of the competition,” said Waters. “I appreciate the U.S. Small Business Administration’s partnership in helping our small businesses enhance their export efforts.”

"Photo: Getty Images"
ard-working Georgians take a lot of pride in the products they make and so does the state. That’s why Gov. Brian P. Kemp launched the “Georgia Made” program in February to support the state’s manufacturers.

The “Georgia Made” program supports industries around the state making a wide variety of products — from automotive parts to industrial broilers. Certified “Georgia Made” products carry a certain weight in the manufacturing world. Issued by the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), certification is determined on a product-by-product basis and must have at least 50% of its parts manufactured in the state.

Companies like Kubota, Hitachi Automotive, Kia and many others have products that are proudly “Georgia Made.” In addition to the prestige, companies receive benefits like access to partnerships with logistics, research and education institutions across the state, and marketing and promotional opportunities.

“Being able to label our products as ‘Georgia Made’ instills a sense of pride in our employees,” said Phil Sutton, vice president of Kubota Manufacturing of America. “Lots of people don’t know what Georgia brings to the table and this program gives us a reason and a platform to tell them. Our marketing arm can leverage it to our benefit and to the state’s.”

DON’T SLEEP ON GEORGIA

In July, Purple Innovation, Inc., the comfort technology company known for creating the Purple® Mattress, selected Henry County for their third U.S. manufacturing facility. Purple plans to make a $21 million investment in a 520,000 sq. ft facility, delivering 360 jobs to the area.

“We spent a lot of time searching for the right location for our third manufacturing facility so that we could significantly expand our production capacity and allow us to better serve customers located on the East Coast. We found a great partner in Henry County and Governor Kemp,” said CEO of Purple, Joe Megibow. “It was important to find a community of hard working and talented individuals who could help us bring the factory to life, and our interaction with the community of Henry County has proven that this is the right place to make our investment for Purple’s future.”

Purple sells its products online, through wholesale partners and at Purple showrooms around the country. Purple’s products are designed, manufactured and assembled in the U.S. The company is expanding its manufacturing operations to the East Coast to meet consumer demand.

“We are thrilled that Purple Innovation chose Georgia for their expansion to the East Coast and are excited to be part of the company’s further growth as it delivers innovative comfort solutions to its customers. This decision shows again that we are a national leader in advanced manufacturing and logistics,” said GDEcD Commissioner Pat Wilson. “I want to thank our economic development partners and Henry County for bringing this project to Georgia, creating quality jobs, and fueling the economic growth in our local communities.”
Hot on the heels of Purple’s announcement, Zinus USA, Inc., a rapidly growing e-commerce mattress and furniture company and subsidiary of Zinus Inc., announced it will develop the company’s first North American advanced manufacturing facility in McDonough. The company is investing $108 million and creating 804 jobs in Henry County. The new manufacturing facility is expected to open in the first half of 2021, and will also serve as a U.S. distribution center for the company.

“As we continue to grow into new markets and expand our own vertical integration capabilities, establishing our first-ever production center in the U.S. is a critical step in our evolution as a global business,” said Keith Reynolds, president at Zinus U.S. “Georgia was a natural choice when considering the location for our new facility, and we’re proud to bring new jobs to the hardworking community in Henry County. Not only will this investment ensure we can better serve partners like Walmart, Amazon, Wayfair and Costco, but it will allow us to continue delivering high-value products at affordable prices to our loyal customers for years to come.”

“We spent a lot of time searching for the right location for our third manufacturing facility so that we could significantly expand our production capacity and allow us to better serve customers located on the East Coast. We found a great partner in Henry County and Governor Kemp.”

— Joe Megibow, CEO of Purple
ot on the heels of constructing its Newton Data Center, Facebook is adding three buildings — nearly 1.5 million sq. ft. — to its facility in Social Circle, Georgia. Once completed, this data center will represent an investment of more than $1 billion.

The massive investment by the social media juggernaut is just one of many to be made in Georgia in recent years. In fact, more than 50 leading companies have established major data centers in the state, including Google, AT&T, Hewlett-Packard, UPS, Publix, Synovus and many more.

The metro Atlanta is particularly well-suited location for major tech firms. The city is directly located at the intersection of two of the country’s largest fiber routes, along with major research lines Internet2 and the National LambdaRail. Every major international and North American fiber provider has a core interconnection point in the city.

In 2019, DataBank, a leading provider of enterprise-class data center, connectivity and managed services, announced the opening of its ATL1 data center in Atlanta. The center is located in a new 770,000 sq. ft. mixed-use office complex in the Georgia Institute of Technology’s “Tech Square” with the goal of creating a vibrant tech ecosystem.

DataBank’s ATL1, a 94,000 sq. ft. data center, serves as a High-Performance Computing Center (HPCC) for Georgia Tech and houses the Southern Crossroads Internet2 network node, providing high-speed, high-bandwidth connectivity to research and education sites throughout the region and across the nation.
"The facility was built to meet Georgia Tech’s burgeoning high-performance computing needs, as well as to provide the adjacent Coda community direct access to fiber networks, proprietary datasets and GT’s world-class technical expertise,” said DataBank CEO, Raul Martynek. “This dynamic project is DataBank’s first in the Atlanta market, and we are excited to be part of this growing technology ecosystem.”

STACK Infrastructure announced plans in May to expand its data center campus in Atlanta. The company will construct a new two-story, 12MW facility on a six-acre parcel adjacent to its existing data center in Alpharetta.

“STACK’s expansion strategy continues to be driven by the needs of our clients and this is another example of our commitment to establishing strong footholds with room for growth and campus economics in their most important markets,” said Matt VanderZanden, chief strategy officer of STACK. “STACK is experiencing outsized demand in Atlanta based on the favorable business climate, low overall operating costs and robust infrastructure. The expansion of our campus will enable us to help our clients further anchor their presence in the Southeast.”

BUILT FOR FINTECH

In 2019, Flexential, a leading provider of hybrid IT and data center solutions, expanded its Atlanta colocation facility by 70,000 sq. ft. Atlanta and the surrounding Transaction Alley are the third-largest fintech hub in the U.S. with more than 70% of all credit card transactions now processed through the Atlanta metropolitan area, according to the Atlanta Small Business Network. These data-intensive companies need secure, reliable and scalable means to gain access and transport the data without loss of connectivity. Recognizing the demand for data management and IT strategy solutions this market creates, the new Flexential expansion increases the company’s capacity in Georgia to more than eight megawatts of power and 175,000 sq. ft.

More than 170 fintech firms are headquartered or have a significant presence in Georgia with top 15 generating an annual revenue of more than $114 billion. The industry is a significant driver of economic growth both locally and globally, employing 38,000 people within the state.

“Companies are experiencing a data tsunami, with an increased need to store, process and access data securely, efficiently and strategically.”

— Mike Fuhrman, chief product officer, Flexential
Diverse cities, unique attractions and stunning landscapes combine to create a lifestyle unlike any other.

by SAVANNAH KING
No one takes good, old-fashioned Southern hospitality as seriously as Georgia. Welcoming 111.7 million visitors in 2018, Georgia’s clearly on a lot of minds.

Not only do people want to visit the Peach State, they are also coming back to make it their home. Georgia consistently ranks among the fastest-growing states in the U.S., with a 10-year growth rate of 9.9% — more than 1.5 times that of the U.S. population growth rate. By 2030, the state expects its population to increase by 9.9%. In 2019, the 29-county metro Atlanta area (home to 6 million people) experienced the fourth-largest population increase of all MSAs in the country.

Outside of the state’s robust and diverse economic ecosystem, its natural environment holds just as much variety. A temperate climate with four distinct seasons and six unique land regions, the state’s diverse landscapes give residents and visitors alike plenty to explore and enjoy. From historic port cities along the coast, to quaint mountain getaways in the high country, to the Atlanta metro area and beyond, Georgia’s cities offer something for everyone.

We’ve compiled a list of a few of Georgia’s best qualities but some things — like the one-of-a-kind lifestyle Georgia offers — just have to be seen to be believed.

**DIVERSE LANDSCAPES**
Geographically diverse, Georgia is home to 63 state parks and historic sites. Hikers find plenty of trails to travel across the state — the most popular, of course, being the Appalachian Trail which starts at Springer Mountain. From the Atlantic coast’s sandy shores to the Okefenokee Swamp’s haunting cypress stumps, Georgia is home to many waterways offering a plethora of recreational opportunities including fishing, paddling, rowing, swimming and more. Just outside of Atlanta, Lake Allatoona and Lake Lanier offer abundant fishing and boating opportunities. The Chattahoochee River is home to the world’s longest urban whitewater course which runs along the stretch in downtown Columbus.

**RICH AND STORIED HISTORY**
Historically speaking, Georgia’s roots run deep. Across the state, antebellum mansions and Civil War battlefields mark the state’s
The Top: Newly renamed Truist Park is the home of the Atlanta Braves in Cobb County.

The Bottom: Gibbs Gardens in Ball Ground.

FORMATIVE YEARS, WHILE POPULAR SITES LIKE THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE MORE THAN 30 HISTORIC SITES ON THE FOOTSTEPS OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. TRAIL HIGHLIGHT ITS PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT.

Visitors can learn more about the state’s rich history at its many historic museums including the Atlanta History Center, the Margaret Mitchell House and Museum, the Georgia State Railroad Museum, the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force and more.

SPORTS MECCA

Home to major sporting events like the 1996 Summer Olympic Games, The Masters Tournament at Augusta National Golf Club, NASCAR Cup Series, the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl, and a repeat host of the Final Four and the Super Bowl, Georgia is a mecca for sports fans across the globe. Atlanta boasts several major league professional teams such as the Braves, the Dream of the WNBA, the Hawks, the Falcons and Atlanta United FC. Colleges and universities across the state play a variety of sports, high
school football rules Friday nights, and minor league teams entertain fans in every corner of the state. And no college football fan’s trip to Atlanta is complete without a visit to the College Football Hall of Fame.

**HOME FOR THE ARTS & CULTURE**

With world-class arts facilities, including the Woodruff Arts Center and the High Museum of Art, Georgia is home to a world-class arts scene. From folk art festivals around the state to the state’s $9 billion film industry, creativity thrives in the Peach State.

From date nights with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra or the Georgia Symphony Orchestra in Marietta, to music festivals like Shaky Knees, SweetWater 420 Fest or Savannah Music Festival, music lovers never run out of unique experiences to enjoy.

Other popular museums across the state include the Georgia Museum of Natural History, the Booth Museum, the Telfair Museums and the Tellus Science Museum.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertiser</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barnesville-Lamar Industrial Development Authority</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>westcentralgaworks.com</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb County Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selectcobb.com</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Authority of Augusta</td>
<td>42-43</td>
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<tr>
<td>augustaeda.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Authority Burke County</td>
<td>42-43</td>
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<tr>
<td>selectburke.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Authority of Columbia County</td>
<td>42-43</td>
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<td>developcolumbiacounty.com</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Authority of Dawson County</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dawson.org</td>
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<td>Dublin-Laurens County Development Authority</td>
<td>32-33</td>
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<td>Georgia EMC</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia Ports Authority</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaports.com</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia State University</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
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<td>research.gsu.edu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invest Atlanta</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atloppportunityzones.com</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty County Development Authority</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lcpa.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>mbcia.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Massell Commercial Real Estate</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>MEAG Power</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moultrie Colquitt County Development Authority</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selectmoultrie.com</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership Gwinnett</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Savannah Economic Development Authority</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>seda.org</td>
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<tr>
<td>Savannah Harbor-Interstate 16 Corridor Joint Development Authority</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>savannahjda.com</td>
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<td>Select Fulton County</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>Southeast Georgia Alliance</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>5</td>
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