

**GEORGIA MOUNTAINS  
REGIONAL COMMISSION  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2015 — 2016**



**A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE  
*TOWARDS*  
A VISION OF SERVICE**

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# GEORGIA MOUNTAINS

## 2016 Council Members

### REGIONAL COMMISSION

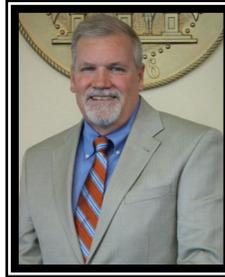


**L.J. HARRISON**

**GMRC COUNCIL 1981-2016**

**THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR MANY YEARS OF  
DEDICATED SERVICE**

**Chairman**



**Dean Scarborough**

**Vice-Chairman**



**W. James Grogan**

**Secretary**



**George Wangemann**

\*Served partial year

**BANKS COUNTY**

- Danny Maxwell – Banks County
- Jerry Payne – City of Homer
- Leslie George – Private Sector

**DAWSON COUNTY**

- Mike Berg – Dawson County
- James Grogan – City of Dawsonville
- Charlie Auvermann – Private Sector

**FORSYTH COUNTY**

- Brian Tam – Forsyth County
- Chuck Welch – City of Cumming
- Robert Long – Private Sector

**FRANKLIN COUNTY**

- David Strickland – Franklin County
- Ralph Owens – City of Lavonia
- Gerald Voyles – Private Sector

**HABERSHAM COUNTY**

- Sonny James – Habersham County
- Audrey Turner – Town of Alto
- Ken Schubring – Private Sector

**HALL COUNTY**

- Dick Mecum – Hall County
- George Wangemann – City of Gainesville
- Deborah Mack – Private Sector

**HART COUNTY**

- Ricky Carter – Hart County
- Tray Hicks - City of Hartwell
- William Chafin – Private Sector

**LUMPKIN COUNTY**

- Chris Dockery – Lumpkin County
- Sam Norton – City of Dahlonega
- J.B. Jones – Private Sector

**RABUN COUNTY**

- Greg James – Rabun County
- Debbie Chisholm – City of Clayton
- Douglas Wayne – Private Sector

**STEPHENS COUNTY**

- Dean Scarborough – Stephens County
- David Austin – City of Toccoa
- L.J. Harrison – Private Sector

**TOWNS COUNTY**

- Bill Kendall – Towns County
- \*Andrea Gibby – City of Young Harris
- \*Joan Crothers – City of Hiawassee
- David Stovall – Private Sector

**UNION COUNTY**

- Lamar Paris – Union County
- Jim Conley – City of Blairsville
- Mitch Griggs – Private Sector

**WHITE COUNTY**

- Travis Turner – White County
- Annie Sutton – City of Cleveland
- Bill Black – Private Sector

**GOVERNOR'S APPOINTMENTS**

- Rex Farmer
- Will Wade

**SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE'S APPOINTMENT**

- Peter Hill

# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



What an honor it is to serve as Chairman of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission. I am blessed to serve with outstanding council members and to be working alongside such a dedicated staff. We all work to provide service to the 13 counties and 38 municipalities, making up the Georgia Mountains Region.

Two words will summarize the past year for our council and staff, *change* and *success*. For the past eleven years, Executive Director Danny Lewis has served and guided the GMRC into becoming a fantastic organization rendering service to this great region. With great foresight, our council prepared the organization for a smooth transition of Danny's retirement with the creation of a temporary Deputy Executive Director Position. The purpose of the position was to bridge the gap of leadership and to make certain we maintain the same level of service to the communities in our region. Mr. Lewis chose Heather Feldman to fill this position. Heather, with the help of our staff, provided a wonderful retirement program held at the

July Council meeting in Blairsville; and in August, a very well attended retirement reception and send off for Danny and his family. We wish him well in his retirement.

As we move forward, let me assure you that the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission staff has not missed a step during this time of change and transition. A high level of leadership, organization, and service continues to this day. You have a well trained staff, dedicated to making a difference in the most beautiful and blessed part of our state.

Success abounds with the projects our staff are working on, as I am just receiving word of three more **National Association of Development Organization awards**. The projects represented by these awards show the wide variety of work with which the GMRC staff is involved. The awards this year are for the City of Toccoa Cemetery Project, the Forsyth County Drug Free Communities Project, and the Transition to Success effort in Workforce Development. Congratulations to all those involved with these projects.

Whatever the needs are in any area of our Georgia Mountains Region, our staff is ready to assist. Be it Planning, Economic Development, Workforce Development, IT assistance, Downtown Development planning and funding, Water and Sewer infrastructure funding, Mapping and aerial photography, or many of the other services that make life better in our counties and cities, we are looking to find an opportunity to be of assistance.

Georgia Mountains Regional Commission has not only a capable and experienced staff, but it is also guided by a dedicated council of community leaders. The GMRC Council represents a wide cross section of the best leaders from the thirteen counties and 51 cities it serves. It is this council's leadership that brings it all together to lead to a continued successful future.

Someone once said, the "secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new." That is what The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission is now about. Spending all energies on serving this region's needs and assisting our cities and counties to make life better for their citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dean Scarborough".

Dean Scarborough, Chairman

# GMRC STAFF



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*Staff photos were taken at The Flowery Branch Depot, Hall County, Georgia*

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## WHAT IS TRANSITION TO YOU?

*Transition is the changing from one person or leader to another.*

The GMRC and our member governments will be experiencing change by December 2016. Some cities and counties will have other leadership. As well, after 12 years, we will transition from one Executive Director to another.

We will even transition vehicles, out with the old and in with the new. One of our buildings will be transitioning to a different location. Our Chaplain will be leaving our Council, yet another change in leadership.

The great news is that we have an excellent Council, elected officials, and staff. Our LEO Board changed due to new requirements within the new WIOA laws, plus the addition of two mayors. We are on the right track for more greatness in our future!!

I want to send a heartfelt thanks to the GMRC Council for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your Executive Director for the past 11+ years. *Together we HAVE made a difference in this region.*

In my 43 years serving in city, county, and regional governmental management – this has absolutely been the pinnacle of my service. This is without a doubt the best place I have ever served, and I enjoyed my time here. As Sheryl and I leave for South Carolina, we do so with mixed feelings. We shall miss our time and friendships made here.

It has been a great “ride”, and I appreciate each of you for allowing me to drive the car. May God bless each of you and your families.

Sincerely,



W. Danny Lewis  
Executive Director  
2005-2016



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development Department ended another successful year with 15 approved grant applications totaling \$6,209,118 in funding for GMRC member governments. The Department also administered \$4,278,501 in federal and state funding during the last fiscal year for previously awarded projects.

As a result of these projects 1,767 jobs will be created for residents and 257 jobs will be retained in the region. In addition, \$421,570,322 in private investment was leveraged for these projects.

## **APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION** **GRANTS APPROVED**

The **City of Hartwell** was awarded **\$150,000** in ARC grant funding for the Railroad Street Farmers Market Project.



The **City of Toccoa** was awarded **\$46,295** in ARC grant funding for sound system improvements to the Schaefer Center.

The **City of Lavonia** was awarded **\$300,000** in Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant funding for the city's I-85 Northern Sewer Trunk Line Project.

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT APPROVED**

**Banks County** received **\$500,000** in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for expansion and renovation of the county Senior Center.



**Pictured L to R:** Nancy Smallwood, *Economic Development Representative*; Meisa Pace, *Grant Administrator*; Patrick Larson, *Economic Development Representative*; and Heather Feldman, *Director of Economic Development*.

## **CDBG — EIP GRANTS APPROVED**

- The City of Cornelia was awarded \$500,000 in Community Development Block Grant – Employment Incentive Program (CDBG-EIP) funding for water improvements to serve Fieldale Farms.
- Stephens County was awarded \$340,000 in CDBG-EIP grant funding for a public rail spur to serve an expanding business.

## **ONEGEORGIA AUTHORITY GRANTS APPROVED**

- The City of Toccoa and Stephens County were jointly awarded OneGeorgia Authority funding in the amount of \$200,000 for sewer improvements.
- The Stephens County Development Authority was awarded \$400,000 in OneGeorgia EDGE Funding to facilitate the development of a business.
- Hart County Industrial Building Authority was awarded \$600,000 in OneGeorgia EDGE funding to facilitate the development of a new manufacturing facility in Gateway II Industrial Park.

## **RECREATIONAL TRAILS GRANT APPROVED**

The City of Dawsonville was awarded \$100,000 in Recreational Trails Grant Funding from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for trail construction at the city's Main Street Park.

# USDA—RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS APPROVED

- The **City of Clarkesville** was awarded **\$99,500** in Rural Business Development Grant funding for the city's downtown redevelopment project.
- The **City of Hartwell** received **\$1,000,000** Rural Economic Development Loan Guarantee (REDLG) funding for development of Oakview Crossing.



## **REBA GRANT APPROVED**

The **Gainesville** and **Hall County** Development Authority received **\$1,750,000** in Regional Economic Business Assistance (REBA) Grant funding to facilitate the development & expansion of Kubota.

### **ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANTS**

The **City of Royston** received **\$33,936** in FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) funding to purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the **Royston** Volunteer Fire Department.

Sandy Cross Volunteer Fire Department (**Franklin County**) received **\$185,885** in FEMA AFG funding for equipment and to purchase Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND**

The **City of Hartwell** and the **Hart County** Community Theatre received a Historic Preservation Fund grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Historic Preservation Division in the amount of **\$3,502** to assist with building improvements. The completion of this project will assist the theater in creating a vibrant downtown.



## **CEDS ANNUAL UPDATE**

GMRC Staff prepared the Annual Update for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The Annual Update identified the region's needs and priorities, which culminated key issues and strategies. The Annual Update includes the Five-Year Work Program of recommended action items to address key issues.



### **NADO INNOVATION AWARD**

GMRC received a National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) 2016 Innovation Award for the Drug Free Communities Project. **Forsyth County** Drug Awareness Council was awarded a **\$125,000** grant for five years from the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, a department within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

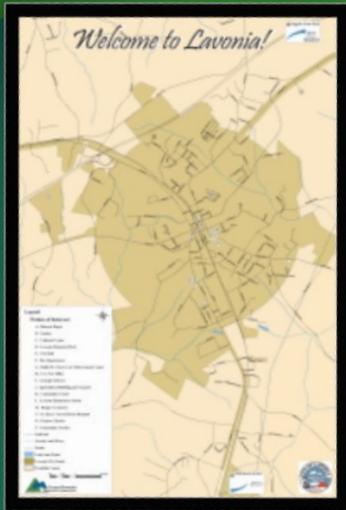


The project is an example of local government in cooperation with non-profit organizations, medical providers, public health officials, law enforcement officials and citizen volunteers working to promote the benefits of healthy lifestyles through educational summits, educational programs, advertisements and public speaking. The awarding of this federal grant is enabling the **Forsyth County** Drug Awareness Council to meet their goals of increasing community collaboration and reducing youth substance abuse to improve the community's quality-of-life.

*Growing Communities By Creating Opportunities...*

# INFORMATION SERVICES

The Information Services Department assists many of our communities with GIS and mapping services. These services can mean anything from conducting a cemetery inventory to creating or updating Zoning maps. We performed many of these services during the last year.



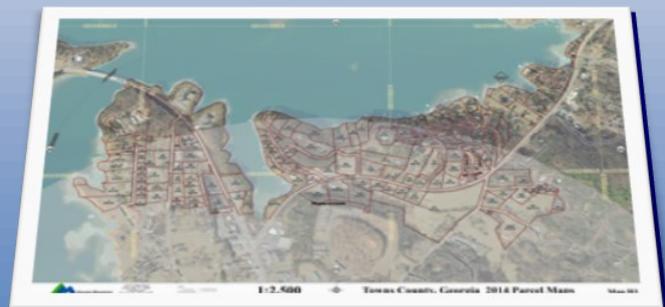
Each year, we are sent requests to assist with Boundary and Annexation Survey updates for the US Census Bureau for several cities located in the GMRC region. We file any annexations or boundary corrections with the Census Bureau so that they have the most accurate information for population counts. These counts affect grant applications and many more municipal projects. This effort will become more important as the time draws near for the Census Count for the **City of Lavonia** Downtown Development Authority, GIS and Planning collaborated on a Points of Interest Map. These maps will be distributed to the Georgia Welcome Center, Lavonia City Hall and the Historic Depot, to hand out to visitors for directions to local parks and tourism sites around the City. 2,500 of these maps were printed by LifeSprings Media, located on the Emmanuel College Campus in **Franklin Springs**.



**Pictured L to R:** Faith Bryan, Information Services Director; Brandon Carlock, GIS Technician.

## PARCEL MAPPING

Another large project was the parcel mapping for **Towns County**. We started by converting the AutoCAD drawings of the 2008 Parcel Maps into ESRI ArcGIS shapefile format. The Tax Assessors office provided parcel sales, split and merge information from 2009 through 2014. We proceeded to update the 2008 data with this information. All of the paper information was georeferenced with the 2015 aerial photography and the E911 Road Centerline data received from the county. The end products received by the county were 11X17 map books and two full sets of 24X36 tax maps. We also loaded ArcReader onto each computer in the tax assessors office with all of the digital data created and used for the project. At the request of the tax assessors office, we uploaded the 2014 Towns County parcel data to Q-Public for internet access.



# CEMETERY INVENTORY PROJECTS



Two cemeteries had extensive inventories conducted on them. Field data collection was much faster using our newly acquired Trimble Geo 7 GPS unit with built in camera and range finder. Our inventory process includes recording information from each headstone about the deceased such as full name, date of birth and death, marriage date, military information or any other affiliations, symbology references, gravesite and headstone condition. We acquire an X,Y coordinate at the head of every burial plot and take photographs of headstones and footstones. Any paper maps are scanned and geo-referenced to existing aerial photography.



Our largest NADO Award cemetery to date is the **City of Toccoa Cemetery**. It was established in 1875 on eight acres and then further developed in 1933 with the establishment of the three formal entrances and the construction of a retaining wall. Today, the cemetery's parcel is 27.4 acres according to the **Stephens County Tax Assessors Office**. Maps dating back to 1928, ledger books and paper records were all that existed for the cemetery. We collected information from 3,415 headstones. Of those burials, there were 9 Clergy, 33 Masons, 24 Woodmen of the World, 1 United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1 Nurse, 6 Physicians, 11 Civil War Veterans, 2 Spanish American War Veterans, 14 WWI Veterans, 78 WWII Veterans, 2 WWI & WWII, 18 Korean War Veterans, and 14 Vietnam War Veterans.



**TOCCOA CEMETERY**

## OAKWOOD CEMETERY



The **Oakwood Cemetery** lies on a 4 acre tract off of Plainview Road and is owned and operated by the City. Maps dating back to 1947 and paper records and deeds were all that existed for the cemetery. Upon completion of the field data collection, information was recorded from 777 headstones. Of those burials, there were 1 Clergy, 4 Masons, 1 Physician, 1 WWI Veteran, 20 WWII Veterans, 2 WWI & WWII, 3 Korean War Veterans and 5 Vietnam War Veterans. These Veterans served in the following branches of service: Army – 10, Marines – 4, Naval Reserves – 2 and Navy – 7.

*Bringing Data To Life...*

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



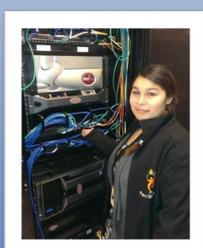
FY 2016 has been a great year for Area 2 GMRCWD initiating the changeovers to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. GMWD keeps an active social media presence through Facebook, notifying individuals of MTU and Overview session schedules, as well as, job fairs, community events and job openings throughout the 13 county Georgia Mountains Region.

Intake received 1,525 individual visits for services to the office during FY 2016. In addition, they also received 486 applications for adult services. 1,451 potential applicants attended overview sessions throughout our 13 county region designed to provide applicants with all the information needed to apply for training assistance through GMRCWD.

## **ADULT AND DISLOCATED TRAINING**

The Adult and Dislocated Department provided services for 589 individuals in FY2016. Training for individuals who were unemployed, underemployed, or in need of specialized skills in the Georgia Mountains Region were assisted through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

The implementation of WIOA provides clear opportunities to integrate work based learning into the public workforce system.



In addition, GMWD has begun working with employers in the area on Apprenticeship programs. In May of 2016, with the support of the Georgia Department of Economic Development Workforce Division, Lanier Technical College and GMWD, IMS Gear Georgia Inc. began a US DOL Registered Apprenticeship Program in Mechatronics.



WIOA also emphasizes quality training that leads to credentials for individuals with barriers and collaboration with partners. Keeping with those goals, GMWD, Goodwill of North Georgia, North Georgia Technical College and Arrendale Transition Center have worked together to provide Welding and Work Place Skills training to 2 cohorts totaling 20 women reentering our communities. All the women involved have received GMAW Welding AWS D1.3 Structural Steel welding certification. Eleven are currently employed in the Georgia Mountains area in a “Growth and Demand” occupation as welders.

## **RAPID RESPONSE/INCUMBENT TRAINING**

In the past year the GMWD Rapid Response program and its area partners have had a great deal of success with “Navitor”, a commercial printing company in **Habersham County** that closed in December 2015; and “Caterpillar”, a foundry located in **Stephens County** that closed in May of 2016. The services provided for the dislocated workers at these two companies included job fairs, resume writing workshops, filing unemployment claims, and job search assistance.

Another growing funding program that is being developed in our region is the “Incumbent Worker Training” (IWT). GMWD has spoken with over 15 companies about this new IWT program. GMWD has successfully performed a total of six (6) IWT programs within this last year in **Stephens, Hall and Franklin** counties. The IWT funding was also utilized for the IMS Gear Apprenticeship program.

## **ON THE JOB TRAINING**

GMWD placed five adults in new careers with four employers through the On-the-Job Training Program (OJT). They were trained in positions as Maintenance Technicians, Purchasing Agents, and Showroom Sales Designers. We met with eleven employers throughout seven counties to discuss how OJT could assist their companies with employment and training needs. These companies ranged from marble and tile fabrication and window treatment production to veterinary services and manufacturing.



The GMWD Youth Services received 143 new applications and served 412 youth during the 2015-2106 year. Through the course of the year, 12 youth received college/technical school credentials, 14 youth received a GED, and 20 youth received high school diplomas. 77 youth received follow up training/services after completing their WIOA program. Notable highlights from the year include:

- 15 youth completed the Summer Work Experience reflecting a 100% completion rate. Over the course of the year, a total of 44 youth participated in a work experience or paid internship program.
- Youth Staff held 70 workshops throughout the 13 county region, with a little over 1,120 youth participating. The workshops were based around the Workforce Development Youth Department “Mapping Your Future” and included training in resume building, character building, future planning, work skills, life skills, dressing for success, interviewing skills, “what’s next”, and other skills workshops. These workshops were held in **Banks, Habersham, Hall, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Union, and White** Counties.
- 26 youth participated in the Credit Recovery Assistance Program. This program assists students attending “non-traditional” schools in completing high school credits to receive their diploma.
- Youth Staff continue the Transition to Success program at the **Hall County** Regional Detention Center. This program services incarcerated youth who have dropped out of high school, and assists them in completing a GED and learning work skills and life skills to work toward a successful life upon transitioning from the center back into the community.
- The Youth Department is also a partner with the Project Search program in **Hall County**. This program enables selected youth with disabilities an opportunity to gain work skills and knowledge through hands on training through internships. This program is housed at the Northeast Georgia Medical Center, who sponsors many of the internship rotations. The partners of this program are the **Hall County** Board of Education, Northeast Georgia Medical Center, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Georgia Mountains Workforce Development.

## **MOBILE TRAINING UNITS**



From July 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2016 approximately 1,974 people visited the Mobile Training Units for individualized services. Over 4,200 different actions were performed on board the Units. This includes 1,029 on-line job searches, 276 online job applications placed, 632 resumes developed/critiqued, 377 career assessment surveys taken, and 944 people receiving information on the WIOA program and the services provided by Georgia Mountains Workforce Development.

## **YOUTH SERVICES**

The GMRC Workforce Development Youth Department received a 2016 NADO Innovation Award for the Transition to Success program. In coordination with Lanier Technical College and the Regional Youth Detention Center of **Hall County**, the Transition to Success Program was developed to assist incarcerated high school drop outs in completing a GED course. The program was designed to show youth/young adults they can be successful, and can have opportunities for a better life. There have been 15 youth to complete a GED course, and two who pursued post-secondary education.



*Building A World-Class Workforce...*

# PLANNING

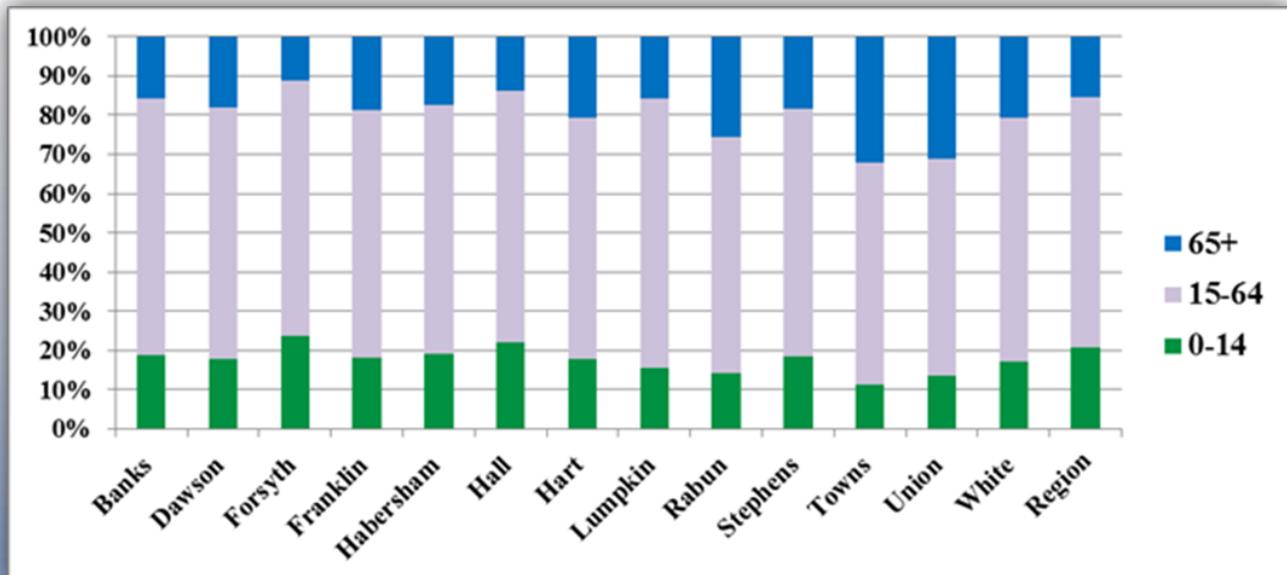
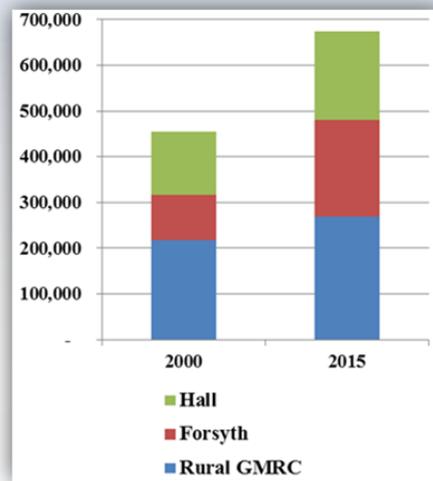


**Pictured L to R:** Caleb Davidson, *Regional Planner*; Joe Rothwell, *Regional Planner*; and Adam Hazell, *Planning Director*.

Average wage levels and income are still an issue among some communities as the region shifts to a more commercial and service based economy. Retail and minimal skill positions have flourished in the post-recession recovery until more goods manufacturing is brought to the area, yet the Georgia Mountains Region has seen key employment nodes grow and succeed, suggesting stronger employment opportunities.

The Georgia Mountains Region continues to grow and evolve. The metropolitan counties are even larger population centers for the region, while only one county has seen population decline (approx. 600 persons), in the past five years. The demographics of the region remain healthy, with most communities featuring a strong workforce population base, while our mountain counties continue to attract retirees in a region attractive for recreational living.

## Total Population



**Population by Age Group, 2014**

# LOCAL FIRE SERVICES ASSESSMENTS

Med 1 – Station 1 – 57 Pine Tree Way			
2015	Kenworth T-270		
Mileage Pump Hours	Pump – GPM	Water Carry In Gallons	Proposed Replacement
4,560 225.3	N/A	N/A	2020 or 200,000 miles



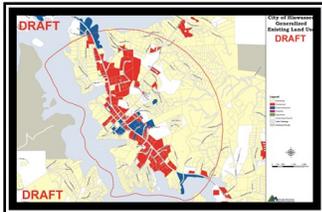
The GMRC is continuing with this initiative to provide long-range plans for local fire services to help counties plan budgets, personnel policies, and replacement schedules for major equipment and facilities. These reports identify projected replacement dates for major equipment and facilities; as well as, thresholds for when more personnel or stations should be considered and plans for improving local ISO ratings. The GMRC has completed three of these assessments thus far, and is working to produce two more with each new year.

## REGIONAL REVIEWS

For the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the GMRC conducts regional review projects requiring state compliance, including local comprehensive plans, Developments of Regional Impact (DRI), environmental and cultural impact assessments (Section 106), and development along the Chattahoochee River corridor (Metropolitan River Protection Act – (MRPA)).

Review Type	Total
Local Plans	8
DRIs	4
MRPA	4
State Intergovernmental (A-95)	5
Natural Resource (Sec. 106)	16

## LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING



As both a state authorized agency and an extension of our member governments, the GMRC Planning Department works to assist our communities in developing, maintaining, and implementing their required Comprehensive Plans. During FY16, the GMRC worked on five plan updates for seven communities.

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT

**319 GRANT PROJECT**  
 Towns Creek/  
 Testatee Creek  
 Lumpkin &  
 White Counties  
 Soque River  
 Habersham  
 County



In addition to working with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), to provide staff support to the regional water planning councils for the Coosa-North Georgia and Savannah-Upper Ogeechee river basins, the GMRC assisted with the development and/or implementation of two different Watershed Management Plans (WMPs), required by DNR to identify funding priorities for mitigation projects. Both projects were initiated during FY16 and will continue into FY17.

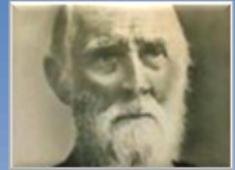
*Helping Our Communities To Reach New Heights...*

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION



The **City of Dawsonville**, in an effort to preserve their built environment, is evaluating various options to protect their historic resources. This has included research for an expansion of their local downtown historic district to include: 1940's era homes along GA 9, and update their historic resource survey (which was last completed in 1991), to include more than 100 historic resources throughout the city from the 1880's to 1970's. The city is also finalizing the process of becoming a Certified Local Government (CLG) so that they may be eligible for future historic preservation grants. The city currently has enacted a historic preservation ordinance, adopted design guidelines for their local historic district, and appointed a Historic Preservation Commission to issue Certificate of Appropriateness for actions based in the district.

Rufus Lafayette Moss, Sr. (1825 – 1912), a prominent businessman in Athens was a driving force behind **Tallulah Falls'** early rise as a tourist and resort destination. He built his summer home, Pine Terrace, here in 1879 to enjoy the area. As director of the Northeastern Railroad, he joined with local citizens to establish a railroad extension in 1882. Tourists were drawn to view the scenic wonders of the wild river and gorge's 1,000 foot chasm. The first large Victorian-style hotel, the Cliff House, was built in 1882 by Moss at the edge of the gorge. By 1900, more than a dozen hotels dotted the area; but, a fire in 1921 destroyed much of the town, ending **Tallulah Falls'** heyday as a resort town.



## TALLULAH FALLS HISTORIC SITE

The GMRC has worked in support of the **Town of Tallulah Falls** to secure a Historic Resource marker in front of the venerable Pine Terrace. Built in 1882 by the town's founder Rufus L. Moss, Sr., his summer home, was the first large Victorian building in the area.

## DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

Revitalizing older, urban areas remains a primary component of the region's goals for tourism and economic development. The GMRC is working to aid our cities with developing or updating formal redevelopment plans for their historic cores, combining elements of design, infrastructure planning and marketing to help communities advance their visions for lively and commercial thriving downtowns! To date the GMRC has completed projects for 5 communities, and continues to work across the region, providing each with a conceptual development strategy and formal action plan that can assist with grant applications, project coordination and promotions for business recruitment and social events.



# FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The RC's total net position exceeded its liabilities by \$2,805,256 for the fiscal year reported. There was an increase in the RC's General Fund Balance of \$204,644.

As of June 30, 2016, the RC's governmental funds reported combined ending fund balances of \$1,752,499, an increase of \$204,644 from the prior year. Of this amount, \$1,649,814 (unassigned fund balance), may be used to meet the RC's on going obligations to the member local governments and creditors. The RC continues servicing the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) which consists of seventeen (17) active loans. The RLF program's net position exceeds \$1.7 million, which increased by \$38,235 in fiscal year 2016.



The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission Revolving Loan Fund (GMRC RLF), is a program that works in partnership with the Economic Development Administration (EDA), that allows GMRC to assist Region 2 in creating and retaining jobs in our market. This

allows the RLF Program to help expand the Region's economy, as a local economic development initiative. The GMRC can make loans to companies for purposes that include: acquisition and improvement of real estate, the purchase of machinery and equipment, working capital and inventory. Terms and conditions vary with each application and must adhere to the approved plan design. Loans range from \$15,000 to \$150,000 with repayment terms ranging from 2 to 20 years.



**Pictured L to R:** Peggy Lovell, Executive Assistant; and Marissa Smith, Administrative Secretary.



**Pictured L to R:** Barbara Moseley, Financial Analyst; Nona Turk, Billing Specialist; Becky Sievers, Finance Director; Cheryl Smith, Financial Assistant; and Andrea Newsom, HR Specialist/RLF Representative.

Funding is available to businesses of all sizes and varieties. The GMRC RLF works toward strengthening entrepreneurial firms, as well as small, home-based or new businesses. Borrowers are eligible for financing only when credit is not otherwise available. Since inception, the program has loaned out a total of \$5 million to 54 businesses throughout the Georgia Mountains Region. Those investments have translated to over 552 jobs being retained or created.

In FY 2016, the GMRC received numerous inquiries into the RLF Program. Of those inquiries, five applications were submitted and reviewed by the staff. Upon the Executive Director's approval, the applications were then submitted to the Revolving Loan Fund Committee, a committee comprised of up to nine individuals from the Georgia Mountains Region who represent financial institutions, the business community, and/or private sector. The committee approved one application. All loan decisions are made by the GMRC Loan Committee. The GMRLF Program was able to support community growth in an industry promoting local food development. In FY 2016, the GMRC RLF Program loaned \$150,000.00 in the GMRC Region.

*Keeping The Region Balanced...*



***Sonny James***  
**Elected Official of the Year**



***Patrick Larson***  
**Employee of the Year**



***Heather Feldman***  
**Chairman's Award**



***Debra Mack***  
**Appointed Official of the Year**

***Bill Chafin***  
**Council Member of the Year**



**Danny Lewis**  
**GMRC Executive Director**  
**2005-2016**



Great leadership is the cornerstone of success. Under Danny's leadership and support from the council, he led the charge on several large initiatives directly impacting the RC. We changed names from RDC to RC, and brought back major programs to the RC, (RLF and Workforce Development).

He helped lead the charge on major regional initiatives such as HB277 – TIA, Budget Cuts, sequestration just to name a few. His leadership ability was also recognized by several state and federal organizations.

He served as President of GARC for three years, and served as DDAA President in 2013. He was also actively involved in the DDAA board for several years. Danny served as the Executive Director for the GMRC from 2005 -2016. The GMRC would like to wish Danny the best of luck in all of his future endeavors.

Handwritten signatures of staff members including: Andrea, Joe, Doree, Mindy, Ebony, Diane, Larica, Dawn, Dan, Adam, Heather, Barbara, Adam, Peggy, Melissa, Nancy, Danielle, George, Diana, Gloria, Wanda, Stephanie, Keith, Keith, Wanda, Patricia, Marissa, Whiz, Milli, Cheryl, Nona, and others.

**THANK YOU DANNY,**  
**YOUR SERVICE HAS TRULY**  
**MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THIS REGION!!!**

# YEAR IN REVIEW





**Georgia Mountains Regional Commission**  
**P.O. Box 1720**  
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**Meisa Pace, *Editor***

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