FILED
2023 Aug-09 PM 02:29
U.S. DISTRICT COURT
N.D. OF ALABAMA

5-YEAR CEDS UPDATE FOR
BALDWIN, ESCAMBIA, AND
MOBILE COUNTIES

REPORT BY
SOUTH ALABAMA REGIONAL
PLANNING COMMISSION

110 BEAUREGARD STREET, SUITE 207
MOBILE, ALABAMA 36633
SARPC.ORG

2022

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

5-YEAR UPDATE
2022-2027

South Alabama
Regional Planning
Commission

sarpc

September 2022

EXHIBIT
M

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021-2022

CHAIRMAN
MAYOR SANDY STIMPSON
CITY OF MOBILE

VICE-CHAIRMAN
MAYOR CHARLES MURPHY
CITY OF ROBERTSDALE

SECRETARY-TREASURER
MAYOR JIM STAFF
CITY OF ATMORE

HONORABLE JACKIE ZEIGLER
ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF
EDUCATION DISTRICT 1

HONORABLE JERRY CARL
CONGRESSMAN

BALDWIN COUNTY

COMMISSIONER BILLIE JO UNDERWOOD
BALDWIN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

MAYOR ROBIN LEJEUNE
CITY OF DAPHNE

MAYOR SHERRY SULLIVAN
CITY OF FAIRHOPE

MAYOR RALPH HELLMICH
CITY OF FOLEY

MR. STANLEY RAYE (LEE) LAWSON JR
PRESIDENT & CEO BALDWIN COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

DR.PHYLISS P. FRENCH, ED.D
STATE DEPT OF EDUCATION

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

COMMISSIONER RAYMOND WIGGINS
ESCAMBIA COUNTY COMMISSION

MAYOR TERRY CLARK
CITY OF EAST BREWTON

MR. DAVID ADAMS
EMA DIRECTOR

MR. JESS NICHOLAS
ESCAMBIA COUNTY INDUSTRIAL
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

WESTLY L. WOODRUFF, CPP
PRESIDENT,CEO MUSKOGEE TECHNOLOGY

MOBILE COUNTY

COMMISSIONER MERCERIA LUDGOOD
PRESIDENT, MOBILE COUNTY COMMISSION

MAYOR JIMMIE GARDNER
CITY OF PRICHARD

MAYOR HOWARD RUBENSTEIN
CITY OF SARALAND

MAYOR MARK BARLOW
CITY OF SATSUMA

MR. DAVID RODGERS
VICE-PRESIDENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MR. JOHN MURPHY, JR., PE
VICE PRESIDENT, NEEL- SCHAFFER, INC

DR. RAOUL RICHARDSON
SENIOR V.P. RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT
BAHETH RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LAD LTD.
USA TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH PARK

MR. ROB MIDDLETON
MIDDLETON CONSTRUCTION

MR. JOHN C. DRISCOLL
CEO/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ALABAMA STATE PORT AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) is a designated Economic Development District (EDD) through the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) and includes Baldwin, Escambia, and Mobile Counties, along with 29 municipalities. As the Region's EDD, SARPC is responsible for developing and maintaining a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) through a continuous planning process. Our CEDS must be updated at least every five years in order to qualify for EDA funding and is required for EDD designation. New EDA guidelines require that the CEDS incorporate economic resiliency as an influence on our strategic planning.

Good economic development happens when good economic development planning occurs. A strong CEDS means a strong Region. This 5-year update to the Region's CEDS takes an asset-based approach, which, in addition to identifying and analyzing SWOT responses in our Region, seeks to develop existing strengths into economic opportunities for our Region.

Our Region is currently experiencing growth at an exponential rate. Each year as we recruit and develop more industries, we continue to prove our Region is a strong, global economic competitor.

With our vast amounts of land available for development coupled with all the amenities our Region has to offer, it is my hope that we continue to recruit businesses to our Region, growing into the Southeast's economic epicenter.

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission is your partner in the development of our Region and will strive to do all we can to make sure our Region is successful.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SOUTH ALABAMA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE

MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

1 INTRODUCTION

2 SUMMARY BACKGROUND

3 SWOT ANALYSIS, 2017-2022

4 EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

5 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

6 ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

APPENDICES

A IMPLEMENTATION

B REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

C FUNDING SOURCES & PARTNERS

CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE

This 5-year update to the CEDS was developed by a CEDS Strategy Committee, which consists of the members of SARPC's Board of Directors as well as stakeholders representing various economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, tourism, entrepreneurs, education, workforce development, utilities, and local business owners throughout the Region.

The CEDS Strategy Committee includes representatives from the three counties within the SARPC Region and is comprised of both elected officials and representatives from the public and private business and education sector.

The purpose of the committee is to prepare input and information on the future direction of the Region and to offer guidance on potential future initiatives of SARPC.

Many thanks to SARPC's CEDS Strategy Committee for their time and talents in helping make this CEDS as effective and strong as it can be to build our Region to it's fullest capacity

CEDS CONTENT

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) defines the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as a regionally driven economic development planning process and document for regions to identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan of action to spur economic growth in their regions. Per EDA requirements, the CEDS must contain the following required sections:

- Summary Background: A summary background of the economic conditions of the Region
- SWOT Analysis: An in-depth analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- Strategic Direction/Action Plan: The strategic direction and action plan should build on findings from the SWOT analysis and incorporate elements from other regional plans
- Evaluation Framework: Performance measures used to evaluate the organization's implementation of the CEDS and impact on the regional economy

U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

MISSION

Continue to aggressively recruit growth to the Region. Utilize the unique assets each county offers to attract targeted development. Build a skilled and trained workforce. Serve the Region as an effective, contributing partner in economic development. Brand the Region as the Southeast's most economically diverse and competitive market.

VISION

"To promote long-term economic resiliency through economic growth and diversification by utilizing the Region's existing built and natural assets in efforts to provide competitive wages that will create a strong and prepared workforce."

GOALS

1. Improve and increase infrastructure to provide sufficient capacities to accommodate population growth & traffic circulation
2. Decrease underemployment by increasing wages to capture & retain workforce
3. Advance the Region's economy & invest in downtown development & community assets
4. Build a skilled & trained workforce to fill the needs our industries require
5. Protect and foster the utilization of our natural assets
6. Build a unified identity & brand for the Region

WHAT IS A CEDS?

GOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STARTS WITH GOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING.

A CEDS IS A STRATEGY-DRIVEN PLAN FOR REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. IT'S A COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS THAT INCORPORATES A BROAD ARRAY OF PERSPECTIVES - - IT BRINGS TOGETHER FIRMS, INSTITUTIONS, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND, POSITION AND LEVERAGE REGIONAL ASSETS TO ENHANCE ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS SO THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS CAN SUCCEED. ▪ CEDS IS THE FIRST STEP IN BUILDING A REGION'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY; HELPS DETERMINE WHAT IS CRITICAL FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS.

1

INTRODUCTION

An overview of the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC)

1 Introduction

The Regional Councils

There are twelve Regional Councils within the State Alabama. The individual Regional Councils are referred to by a number of different names, such as regional commission, regional planning commission, regional planning and development commission, or regional council of governments. The generic term "Regional Council" is used to refer to all twelve.

Authorized by the legislature in 1935, the various Regional Councils were formed at different times over the years, in different forms with different service areas.

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC) serves three counties in south Alabama. These counties are Baldwin, Escambia and Mobile counties. SARPC is designated as Region 8 and for the purposes of this plan, will hereafter be referred to as "the Region". SARPC along with the other regional councils serve as a resource for local governments.

SARPC serves as the Economic Development District (EDD) for Region 8 and is required to prepare a regularly updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Region. A "regional" CEDS acts as a guide for economic development for SARPC's multi-county region and is used to delineate public and private goals for economic development and unify them into a single "road map" of strategies.

The strategies are devised based on an analysis of the regional economy, the identified goals and priorities, and the actions required to achieve those goals and priorities. An effective CEDS should be the result of continuous planning and the participation of a diverse group of public and private interests.

Each Regional CEDS contains information regarding significant regional economic clusters. Each document differs in the degree of emphasis placed upon the importance of regional clusters as well as in the methodology employed to identify clusters.

SOUTH ALABAMA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION.

The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission is one of 12 Regional Planning Commissions within the State of Alabama as provided for in Act 1126 of the 1969 Alabama Legislature. The Commission was first established in 1964 as the Mobile County Regional Planning Commission, and was renamed the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission in 1968 when the focus was expanded to include Baldwin and Escambia counties. SARPC works with federal, state and local entities through the provision of programs and services in community development, transportation planning, employment and economic development, grant administration and senior and social services.

In addition to being the designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for South Alabama and providing the administration of the Mobile Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Urbanized Area of Mobile County, SARPC provides programs and services in community planning, employment and staffing services, economic and workforce development, grant administration, senior and social services, and transportation planning. SARPC staff serves the Region as a resource for communication, coordination, advocacy, policy-making and technical assistance to member governments, elected officials, non-profits, and public/private-sector leaders throughout the Region.

SARPC'S PLANNING AREA

SARPC's jurisdiction consists of the three counties previously mentioned and includes 29 incorporated municipalities. The Region consists of a land area that is approximately 3,700 square miles in size, with an additional 543,360 acres of water, and is bordered by the states of Mississippi and Florida, and the Gulf of Mexico. Most of Mobile County is considered to be urban, while the northern parts of Baldwin, and most of Escambia Counties are largely rural.

Our Region is the gateway to America's rails, roads, rivers and runways, giving us a huge advantage over other Regions. The new additions and expansions to the Region are creating thousands of new jobs, primarily in manufacturing and production, and drawing more and more people to the area.

SARPC's Region has experienced tremendous growth over the last few years with the addition of numerous companies such as Novelis, Imperial Dade, and ALDI making their new homes in Baldwin County and Provalus and Coastal Grower expanding their operations to Escambia County. All of this growth, along with the improvements and expansions currently underway at the Port of Mobile and other existing industries in the Region, are making the Region more attractive to developers, giving us the artillery needed to recruit many more new industries to support and compliment what is already in place.

The City of Mobile is home Alabama's only deep water seaport on the Mobile River. Additionally, Mobile has two major interstate connectors, five Class 1 railroads and two airports, all of which contribute to the Region's desirability as a location for manufacturing and industry.

Along with the relocation of the Regional Airport to the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, both Baldwin and Mobile Counties have added new logistics facilities to their economic arsenals with the addition of the I-10/Gulf Coast Logistics Center in Loxley that is the first Class-A industrial facility constructed in Baldwin County and the enormous South Alabama Logistics Park, which is Alabama's largest largest industrial park, offering over 6 million square feet of available space for warehouse, distribution and manufacturing operations that rely on deep-water seaport terminals for their import/export activities.

ALABAMA

SARPC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

2

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

A summary of the existing economic conditions of the Region

2 Summary Background

The CEDS will guide SARPC's work in the Region over the next five years. In efforts to develop an effective plan, the CEDS Strategy Committee sought to gain an understanding of the Region's current condition across numerous variables. Using an assets-based approach, one of the first tasks was to identify the existing strategic assets that can be better utilized to develop economic prosperity in our Region's communities, as well as the challenges we must conquer in order to fully utilize our assets to their greatest potential. This section of the CEDS is an inventory of what the Region currently encompasses and what we've accomplished in recent years.

ECONOMIC ASSETS

- Manufacturing Clusters
- Shipbuilding Industry
- Community Downtowns
- Tourism Industry
- Agriculture & Aquaculture
- Aviation & Aerospace
- Transportation & Warehousing
- Peanut Processing
- Maritime Industry
- Oil & Gas Production
- Seafood Processing
- Retail Trade
- Entertainment
- Healthcare
- Construction
- Education

NATURAL ASSETS

- Gulf of Mexico
- Mobile Bay
- Gulf Beaches
- Mobile-Tensaw River Delta
- Sand Dunes
- Wetlands & Watersheds
- Maritime Forests
- Intertidal Salt Marshes
- Oyster Reefs & Fisheries
- Floodplains
- Nature & Wildlife Reserves

BUILT ASSETS

- Port of Mobile
- Interstates 10 & 65
- Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley
- Austal
- Daphne Innovation and Science Complex (DISC)
- Industrial Parks
- South Alabama Mega Site
- Alabama Cruise Terminal
- Airbus
- The Wharf
- Railroads
- Sports Complexes
- OWA
- Educational Institutions
- Hospitals

SERVICE ASSETS

- Hospitals & Healthcare Facilities
- Community Colleges & Universities
- Workforce Development
- Boards of Education
- Aging & Youth Services
- Chambers of Commerce

POPULATION HIGHLIGHTS

SARPC REGION

POPULATION GROWTH (REGIONAL)

2000	2010	2020
578,698	633,576	669,041

Source: U.S. Censu:

EDUCATION

10%
No High School Diploma

33%
High School Graduate

29%
Some College

28%
Bachelor's/Grad/Prof Degree

SELECTED STATISTICS

693,434
Population

40.6
Median Age

276,280
Households

$46,376
Median Disposable Income

POVERTY

39,390

33,101

AT RISK POPULATION

68,943
Households With Disability

132,987
Population 65+

14,672
Households Without Vehicle

Source: ESRI Community Analyst (Data Vintage = 2022, 2027)

EMPLOYMENT

58.2%
White Collar

25.0%
Blue Collar

16.7%
Services

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS

4.3%
Unemployment Rate

$55,097
Median Household Income

$32,291
Per Capita Income

$122,419
Median Net Worth

SARPC REGION POPULATION

Gains & Losses

2010-2020

0 25 50 100 Miles

2010 POPULATION

38319

182265

412992

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

2020 POPULATION

36775

218289

413977

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

POPULATION CHANGE

-1544 (4% Loss)

+985 (.2% Gain)

+36024 (Nearly 20% Gain)

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

POPULATION SNAPSHOT: SARPC REGION BY COUNTY

420,950	162,544	2.54	37,388	14,046	2.49	233,561	95,015	2.44
POPULATION AND BUSINESSES			POPULATION AND BUSINESSES			POPULATION AND BUSINESSES		
429,289	13,818	180,872	35,091	1,232	12,997	220,297	8,715	91,084

Demographic Tapestry

Esri Tapestry Segmentation provides a detailed description of America's residential which areas are divided into distinct segments based on their socioeconomic and demographic composition.

Tapestry is a market segmentation system built from using a large array of attributes of demographic and socioeconomic variables to identify numerous unique consumer markets throughout the United States. The following segments reflect demographic key findings in each of SARPC's three counties to better leverage established consumer markets, as well as the emergence of new markets due to population growth, demographic and socioeconomic change, and transforming consumer behavior.

10A LifeMode Group: Rustic Outposts
Southern Satellites

TAPESTRY SEGMENTATION
esri.com/tapestry

WHO ARE WE?

Southern Satellites is the second largest market found in rural settlements but within metropolitan areas located primarily in the South. This market is typically slightly older, settled married-couple families, who own their homes. Two-thirds of the homes are single-family structures; almost a third are mobile homes. Median household income and home value are below average. Workers are employed in a variety of industries, such as manufacturing, health care, retail trade, and construction, with higher proportions in mining and agriculture than the US. Residents enjoy country living, preferring outdoor activities and DIY home projects.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- About 78% of households are owned.
- Married couples with no children are the dominant household type, with a number of multigenerational households (Index 112).
- Most are single-family homes (67%), with a number of mobile homes (Index 509).
- Most housing units were built in 1970 or later.
- Most households own one or two vehicles, but owning more than three vehicles is common (Index 144).

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Education: almost 40% have a high school diploma only (Index 140); 45% have college education (Index 73).
- Labor force participation rate is 59.1%, slightly lower than the US.
- These consumers are more concerned about cost rather than quality or brand loyalty.
- They tend to be somewhat late in adapting to technology.
- They obtain a disproportionate amount of their information from TV, compared to other media.

10E LifeMode Group: Rustic Outposts
Rural Bypasses

TAPESTRY SEGMENTATION
esri.com/tapestry

WHO ARE WE?

Open space, undeveloped land, and farmland characterize *Rural Bypasses*. These families live within small towns along country back roads and enjoy the open air in these sparsely populated neighborhoods. Their country lifestyle focuses on the outdoors, gardening, hunting, and fishing. They are more likely to own a satellite dish than a home computer. Although most households do have a connection to the internet, use is very limited. Those who are not yet retired work in blue-collar jobs in the agriculture or manufacturing industries.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- An older market, with more married couples without children and single households, the average household size is slightly lower at 2.55.
- Most residents own single-family homes or mobile homes (Index 504).
- Most housing was built from 1970 to 1989; vacancy rates are higher due to seasonal housing.
- Residents live in very rural areas, almost entirely in the South.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Almost 25% have not finished high school; 11% have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Labor force participation is low at 47% (Index 76).
- Income is primarily derived from wages and supplemented with Social Security and Supplemental Security Incomes.
- Religion and faith are central in their lives.
- They rely on television to stay informed.

TAPESTRY SEGMENTATION

Baldwin County Tapestry

Southern Satellites

Dominant Tapestry Segment

43.3
Median Age

KEY FACTS

233,561
Total Population

$221,373
Median Home Value

2.2%
2010-2021 Pop Growth Rate

8,715
Businesses

220,297
Daytime Population

$33,898
Per Capita Income

2.4
Avg Household Size

$57,427
Median Household Income

KEY SPENDING FACTS

This infographic contains data provided by Esri, Esri and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Esri and Data Axle. The vintage of the data is 2021, 2026.

© 2022 Esri

Spending facts are average annual dollars per household

Escambia County Tapestry

Rural Bypasses

Dominant Tapestry Segment

41.1
Median Age

KEY FACTS

37,388
Total Population

$111,158
Median Home Value

1,232
Businesses

35,091
Daytime Population

-0.2%
2010-2021 Pop Growth Rate

$20,164
Per Capita Income

2.5
Avg Household Size

$37,816
Median Household Income

KEY SPENDING FACTS

This infographic contains data provided by Esri, Esri and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Esri and Data Axle. The vintage of the data is 2021, 2026.

© 2022 Esri

Spending facts are average annual dollars per household

Mobile County Tapestry

Southern Satellites

Dominant Tapestry Segment

38.9
Median Age

KEY FACTS

420,950
Total Population

$153,248
Median Home Value

0.2%
2010-2021 Pop Growth Rate

13,818
Businesses

429,289
Daytime Population

$25,688
Per Capita Income

2.5
Avg Household Size

$49,969

KEY SPENDING FACTS

esri®

This infographic contains data provided by Esri, Esri and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Esri and Data Axle. The vintage of the data is 2021, 2026.

© 2022 Esri

Spending facts are average annual dollars per household

ECONOMIC ASSETS IN THE REGION

ECONOMIC ASSETS

- Manufacturing Clusters
- Shipbuilding Industry
- Community Downtowns
- Tourism Industry
- Agriculture & Aquaculture
- Aviation & Aerospace
- Transportation & Warehousing
- Peanut Processing
- Maritime Industry
- Oil & Gas Production
- Seafood Processing
- Retail Trade
- Entertainment
- Healthcare
- Construction
- Education

Economic assets are resources and mechanisms of economic value that sustain production and generate growth. They include economic clusters, infrastructure assets, inventories, institutions, raw materials, production, processing, and activities that generate economic development and wealth. When leveraged properly, they support and develop external linkages, production networks, synergies, and partnerships.

WHY ARE ECONOMIC CLUSTERS IMPORTANT FOR THE REGION'S ECONOMY?

Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field that are present in a region. They are the main economic drivers of a region that increase the productivity with which companies can compete. Essentially, clusters are the foundational building blocks of modern economies that provide numerous functions that create and sustain healthy and growing economies.

PROFILE THE REGION'S ECONOMY

DRIVE REGION'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

INSTIGATE NEW POLICIES & FRAMEWORKS

ATTRACT NEW INDUSTRIES & INVESTMENTS TO THE REGION

TOURISM & HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Tourism has long been and continues to be the predominant economic driver for Baldwin County, which has set records despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism is no longer a seasonal economy. It has grown into a year-round economy that brings in thousands of people and dollars every month throughout the year with all of the entertainment and sporting events scheduled annually.

The County leads the State with an estimated 51,000 people employed in the tourism industry in 2020, resulting in more than $1.5 billion in travel-related wages.

According to the latest Alabama Tourism Department economic impact study, during the COVID-depressed economy of 2020 Baldwin and Mobile counties combined generated 46% of the state's total tourism expenditures ($6.1 billion) and almost 42% of the state's total travel related employment in 2020. Baldwin County alone welcomed 5.9 million visitors who spent $4.8 billion dollars, again leading the state.

In 2021, the tourism industry in Alabama grew an impressive 47% over the year prior. Visitor's expenditures increased by $7 billion, from $13 billion in 2020 to $20 billion in 2021. The tourism industry in Alabama also regained all the jobs it lost in 2020 and led the state to a full labor market recovery in 2021. The rebound in tourism was a major catalyst for propelling the Alabama state economy into its post-COVID recovery. With more than 227,000 jobs and $6.8 billion in payroll, the Alabama tourism industry has cemented its importance to the overall health of Alabama's economy, with our Region being a huge contributor to it.

GULF SHORES & ORANGE BEACH TOURISM
Alabama's White-Sand Beaches

FOLEY SPORTS TOURISM COMPLEX ALABAMA

Tourism attractions also continue to grow. The Park at OWA, for example, is continuing to expand, investing $70 million in the addition of a water park. The Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Sports & Events rebranded in 2021 to attract major leisure events. They recently purchased over 100 acres to accommodate their growing population in the cities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach due to demands of two city school systems for the need to help alleviate sports tourism play from the local sports complexes and school facilities. Foley as well has seen exponential growth and demand in their sports and event tourism sector, with continued demand for sporting accommodations, which contributes greatly to their year-round tourism-based economy. With sports and events showing no sign of slowing down, along with our temperate climate, every season generates significant economic impacts.

South Alabama tourism had a record year in 2022. The news isn't all good however. Local business leaders said hiring problems since the pandemic, combined with the area's rapid growth and the limited number of available workforce is resulting in negative feedback from visitors. Concern is rising over the long-term impacts of the workforce shortage impacting south Baldwin County.

Gateway Initiatives reports there is currently a shortage of 8,000 to 10,000 workers, and at least 4,200 employees are needed to staff new businesses, and others yet to open. Many of the people moving to area are either older, working remotely, or not entering the hospitality industry. The added populations are creating the same demands on the businesses that the tourist populations normally do. Many local businesses report sales just as high in the winter and spring months as they do in the summer months.

Local leaders are scrambling to solve this problem. The seasonal Snow-Bird population, along with year-round visitors coming to the area for sporting events and other entertainment activities are creating demands for more workers to accommodate all the visitors. A $200 million housing solution for seasonal workers is on the table. A workforce training campus that would provide much-needed housing for up to 2,000 workers is in the works. The workforce campus would provide affordable housing, public transportation, childcare services, and job training. Local leaders are hopeful that grant funds will be made available to fund the much needed campus.

KEY ECONOMIC FACTS

- Travelers are estimated to have spent $19.6 billion in Alabama in 2021, an increase of 47% from 2020
- Based on the primary and secondary data, it is estimated that more than 28.2 million people visited the State of Alabama during 2021.
- In 2021, $1.1 billion of state and local tax revenues were generated by travel and tourism activities.
- An estimated 227,334 jobs - 11.1% of non-agricultural employment in Alabama - were directly or indirectly attributable to the travel and tourism industry.
- The total impact of the travel and tourism industry on Alabama's earnings in 2021 is estimated to be $6.7 billion.
- Every $128,231 of travel-related expenditures creates one direct job in Alabama.
- For every $1 in Alabama's travel-related expenditures, the state retains a total of $0.34.
- The most visited counties in the state were Baldwin, Jefferson, Madison, Mobile and Montgomery, accounting for 69.6% of the total number of visitors to the state.

ECO-TOURISM & OUTDOOR ECONOMIES

Americans are passionate about and loyal to their outdoor pursuits. The continued growth of the outdoor recreation economy is inarguable evidence of its contribution to the nation's social and financial growth.

Ecotourism is a huge contributor to the Region's economy. The inventory our Region "naturally" possesses makes us a top competitor and gives us an economic advantage over other ecotourism markets. The diversity and availability of these resources are limitless. Local leaders and investors have discovered how to capitalize on this sector of the economy, knowing that growing the outdoor economy is an essential part of an effective economic development strategy. Our close proximity to hundreds of waterways, along with our mild climate, makes our Region a premier location for the ecotourism industry.

1 Public lands and waters are the outdoor industry's basic infrastructure, and without them the industry cannot survive. Preserving access is imperative to enhancing the industry's economic and social impact. Access ensures everyone's ability to get outside where jobs, health and communities grow.

2 Studies demonstrate that, in addition to economic prosperity, outdoor recreation delivers personal and social benefits on which healthy, happy communities thrive. Investment in outdoor recreation can help reduce health care costs, improve educational outcomes, and reduce crime.

3 Outdoor recreation is among our nation's largest economic sectors. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Americans spend $887 billion annually in the outdoor recreation economy, which supports 7.6 million American jobs, and generates $125 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue.

MANUFACTURING CLUSTERS

SHIPBUILDING

Mobile shipbuilder Austal USA, provider of aluminum ships for the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard, recently added a second line to make steel vessels. Austal, which has built aluminum hulled ships for about 20 years, opened its $100 million steel line expansion in April of this year. Austal currently employees approximately 2,700 employees and is among Mobile County's largest industrial employers.

Steel to supply the new line is provided from the SSAB plant in Axis, just upriver from Mobile. In addition to the new expansion, Austal USA has recently been awarded a $128 million contract to design and build an auxiliary dry dock for the U.S. Navy. The project will be the second steel project performed on the Mobile company's new steel panel line.

AVIATION & AEROSPACE

Airbus has recently expanded to support a 50% increase production of the popular A320 model. Reuters reports the proposed increase in production would boost output from about 50 A320-family planes a month now to 65 a month by the middle of 2023 and 75 a month in 2025. This increase will lead to a second A320-family assembly line, increasing the Airbus presence in arch-rival Boeing's backyard. Other big news this year from Airbus, which has been 10 years in the making, was the recent expansion and partnership with Lockheed Martin. Airbus will manufacture the LMXT strategic tanker aircraft in Mobile. With all the expansion, the company is increasing its capacity with the building of a new Final Assembly Line (FAL), expected to break ground in Q1 2023 and include the hiring of 1,000 new employees.

Steel & Aluminum

Steel and aluminum manufacturing are growing sectors in the Region's economy. The companies who manufacture these products provide hundreds of jobs to the Region's workforce and have the capacity to produce millions of tons of steel and aluminum annually. Carbon steel manufacturer AM/NS Calvert has the capability to supply over 5.2 million metric tons of advanced high strength steel to the NAFTA auto and energy industries and employs approximately 1,600 people. Novelis' facility in Bay Minette, Alabama, will have an initial 600 kilotonnes of finished aluminum goods capacity per year focused on the beverage container market with flexibility for automotive and specialty production as well.

AGRICULTURE & AQUACULTURE IN THE REGION'S ECONOMY

Statewide, agriculture and forestry are two of Alabama's top industries.

Single-crop farming is the industry's backbone

One out of every 4.6 jobs in the state is related to agriculture, and the industry contributes approximately $70.4 billion to Alabama's annual economy.

Alabama's top commodities include poultry, cattle and calves, greenhouse and nursery, cotton, and soybeans.

- According to state survey data collected by the National Agricultural Statistics Service in 2018, the value of production for each of the five crops were:

- $307.12 million for cotton
- $159.9 million for corn
- $226.1 million for hay
- $118.42 million for peanuts
- $123.37 million for soybeans

Quick Facts

- Cotton, corn, hay, peanuts, and soybeans are Alabama's top agricultural cash crops
- 40,592 farms in operations
- 28% of the state's land area
- No. 2 in U.S. freshwater fish sales
- No. 3 in U.S. poultry production
- No. 3 in U.S. peanut production
- 1/3 of farms are run by women
- Individual/families operate 91% of farms in Alabama

AGRICULTURE & AQUACULTURE

SARPC REGION'S

AGRICULTURE AND AQUACULTURE, MAPPED

Per County

MOBILE COUNTY

BALDWIN COUNTY

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

AGRICULTURAL CATEGORIES IN THE REGION

THE MAP SHOWS HOW OVER 2 MILLION ACRES OF LAND AREAS IN THE REGION ARE USED AGRICULTURALLY.

WHILE THE MAJORITY OF THE REGION IS COVERED IN FORESTED LANDS, COTTON, CORN, AND PEANUTS ARE THE PRIMARY CROPS GROWN IN ALL 3 COUNTIES.

SARPC Agricultural Categories

0 5 10 20 Miles

N W E S

- Aquaculture
- Corn
- Cotton
- Developed/High Intensity
- Developed/Low Intensity
- Developed/Med Intensity
- Developed/Open Space
- Evergreen Forest
- Fallow/Idle Cropland
- Grassland/Pasture
- Herbaceous Wetlands
- Mixed Forest
- Open Water
- Other Hay/Non Alfalfa
- Peanuts
- Pecans
- Shrubland
- Sod/Grass Seed
- Soybeans
- Woody Wetlands

INDUSTRY EXPANSION & DIVERSIFICATION

In 2020, Coastal Growers LLC began construction in Atmore on a 400,000 square foot state-of-the-are peanut shelling and storage facility, which will create approximately 150 or more high paying jobs in Escambia County, turning the area into a hub for peanut shelling in southwest Alabama.

The company is owned by a cooperative of farmers, most of them residing in Alabama. They are investing $87 million in the peanut shelling and storage facility on more than 60 acres in the Atmore Industrial Park.

The facility will anchor the Industrial Park in Atmore will become a vital resource for peanut farmers in our Region and beyond by allowing them to capture more profit from their own crops and giving them more control over their own operations. Since the facility is owned by the farmers that use it, they will keep the profits earned themselves. That's good for both the farmers and the immediate area, because the money will stay local and keep turning over locally.

The shelling operations at the plant will attract other businesses in this sector, spurring development in infrastructure and other areas. It will have a positive effect on the Port of Mobile as well.

The new rail infrastructure currently being constructed in the Park will enable the peanuts to be transloaded to the Port where they will be shipped out to markets all over the world.

The facility will hire more than 150-plus full-time workers at a starting wage of $17 per hour. In addition, there will be temporary positions added during peak shelling times.

Peanuts grown in our Region are among the highest quality available, yet until this expansion occurred, the County had no infrastructure to support this type of industry.

INDUSTRY EXPANSION & DIVERSIFICATION

OYSTER FARMING

Historically speaking, Alabama happens to be the largest processor of oysters in the United States. Nowadays, Alabama is at the forefront of the homegrown oyster market thanks to a group of dedicated farmers.

Economic Opportunity

Compared to the traditional tonging method of oyster harvesting in Alabama, farmed oysters present a unique opportunity to capitalize on a growing market without facing a high degree of risk.

Farm-raised oysters are still a relatively new commodity in our Region. In fact, just as recently as 2009, there wasn't a single oyster farm in Alabama. Now, thanks to an increasing demand for a premium product, there are 20 Alabama oyster farms currently in operation that generate a value of over $2 million dollars annually. Seafood restaurants and oyster bars throughout the state and beyond are featuring these boutique oysters on their menus, and food enthusiasts at every level are enjoy the surplus of local product.

Environmental Conservation

Oyster farming is good for the ecosystems of Coastal Alabama.

Oysters are considered to be a "keystone species" for our waterways because they help to improve the water quality in our bays by feeding on excess phytoplankton. Additionally, the presence of additional on-bottom oyster farms creates new artificial reefs, which are beneficial to a number of aquatic species.

LOCATION OF OYSTER FARMS IN THE REGION

INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS IN THE REGION

BUILT ASSETS

The Region's strategic location on the central Gulf Coast and extensive multi-modal transportation options ensure the Region is highly capable of transporting freight in and out of the Region to ports all over the world. Major rail, ship, air, and highway transportation systems all converge into our Region to connect our businesses with the nation and the world.

In addition to being home to the country's 9th largest deep water port, 11th largest by volume, the Region has direct and easy access to both I-10 and I-65 Interstates, over 15,000 miles of inland waterways, five Class 1 railroads and two airports.

After decades of planning and transportation studies, the Region will soon be home to the new I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project. This massive infrastructure investment will open up the Region to more economic opportunities.

The ability to move goods and people from place to place is integral to successful economic development, but infrastructure goes further than just transportation. Other infrastructure needs for effective economic development include water, sewer, electricity and telecommunications and/or broadband.

Several of the Region's main economic and infrastructure assets are discussed in this CEDS. The Region is fortunate to have these valuable resources which serve as the main economic drivers and contributors to our regional economy. More and more industries are locating to our Region everyday and we must be prepared to accommodate their needs.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPOVEMENTS & FUNDING

The U.S. Department of Transportation recently awarded $100 million to two of the Region's transportation authorities to construct multi-modal transportation assets in our Region. The Mobile Airport Authority (MAA) and the Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) jointly competed for the opportunity to use the grant to facilitate capital infrastructure improvements at the Port of Mobile and at the Mobile Downtown Airport (BFM). MAA will use its $62 million portion of the grant and other funds to construct a new international airport terminal at the BFM, which will create expanded air freight capacity, and that will spur continued economic growth and success on the Alabama Gulf coast. ASPA will invest its $38 million in an interterminal connector bridge at the container intermodal complex along with site development and civil infrastructure in preparation of the construction of distribution centers. These assets are located in the Mobile Harbor where a $367 million channel deepening and widening program is currently underway to deepen the channel to 50 feet, which will increase container capacity by 50 percent. This project is expected to by complete by 2025.

The competitive grant was authorized under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, which was made possible in large part by the hard work bold vision of Senator Richard Shelby, who has served the State for over 50 years, and currently serves as vice chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. His leadership and unparalleled investment in our Region over the years ensures the growth and success of our Region will continue for generations to come. Shelby announced that the grant package includes more than $1 billion in funding for various projects throughout South Alabama, including investments that will benefit not only the port and airport, but also the Army Corps of Engineers, the shipbuilding industry, the U.S. Coast Guard, area fisheries, and University of South Alabama. Our Region is grateful for his years of diligent service to our area and the great State of Alabama.

AIR INFRASTRUCTURE

The Region is home to numerous municipal airports spanning across all three counties as well as one regional airport and two international airports.

MOBILE COUNTY

The Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, Mobile International Airport (BFM) is the Gulf Coast's newest airport terminal, conveniently located off I-10. The airport is a great gateway to the global market as well as the thriving economy across the entire Region.

A feasibility study was conducted in 2018 and it was determined that it was both feasible and critical for the Mobile Airport Authority to consider moving commercial air passenger service from the Mobile Regional Airport in west Mobile to the Mobile Downtown Airport in order to re-capture passenger traffic which has been lost to Pensacola Regional. Regaining Mobile's share of the regional market improves levels of passenger service, drives a more competitive pricing structure, increases convenience and lowers fares. Approximately 55% of the Mobile market is lost to both Pensacola and New Orleans airports and the feasibility study indicated Mobile could recapture this market by moving its location to the downtown area, where much infrastructure and service is already in place.

The Mobile Regional Airport (MOB) located in west Mobile provides non-stop flights to four major hubs, including Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, and Charlotte. It is anticipated that once passenger flight operations are completely moved to the Mobile Aeroplex, all other aviation activity, besides commercial air passenger traffic, would continue at MOB, including the U.S. Coast Guard's use of facilities.

BALDWIN COUNTY

Baldwin County has four airports. In addition to the municipal airports in Bay Minette and Foley, the County is home to H.L. "Sonny" Callahan airport in Fairhope and the Jack Edwards Airport in Gulf Shores, which has recently been re-named to the Gulf Shores International Airport. Located just two miles north of the beaches in Gulf Shores, the airport has primarily served private charters and corporate jets for business and leisure travelers. But that is quickly changing. Studies show that almost all visitors to the Region's beaches arrive by vehicle. Of the 7 million people who visited the beaches in 2018 and 2019, 92% arrived by car or truck during the peak summer travel months.

MOBILE AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Gulf Shores airport officials are pursuing commercial fights to assist city officials in alleviating congested beachbound roadways, especially Alabama State Route 59. New improvements to the International Airport project will include a new traffic control tower and a new, two-gate airport terminal. The overall project is estimated to cost a total of $24 million, offering commercial air service by mid to late 2023. Gulf Shores International Airport is currently the state's second busiest airport by number of takeoffs and landings, and will soon be even busier once the new improvements are complete.1 Business Alabama

Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley

Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley is Mobile's expanding aerospace industry hub. It is home to Airbus U.S. Manufacturing Facility, Airbus Engineering, SAFRAN, Continental Motors, VT MAE, MAAS Aviation, Aerostar and many other global companies.

Mobile area aviation and aerospace companies employ an estimated 3,500 engineers, processors, mechanics, welders and other skilled workers, forming an ever-growing labor market.

Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, is the Region's new transportation and industrial epicenter of the Central Gulf Coast. As a mixed-use industrial complex, the facility offers unmatched logistical advantages, combining rail, road and water along with a state-of-the-art general aviation airport, featuring two runways that can accommodate any aircraft in the world. Both Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley and Mobile Regional Airport are owned and operated by Mobile Airport Authority. The Authority proudly partners with other community leaders making a positive impact on local and regional economic development. The Authority plans to build the new complex debt-free, which will enable them to be an aggressive competitor with neighboring markets.

Mobile Aeroplex
at Brookley

PORT OF MOBILE

The Port of Mobile is vital to the economic growth for the Region, the Gulf Coast and the entire state of Alabama. It is one of the State's main economic engines providing direct and indirect employment of approximately 162,000 residents statewide, with 40,000 jobs placed in Mobile, Baldwin, and Escambia counties. Trade creates jobs, wealth, and prosperity for our Region and State. It has been the fastest-growing port in the last five years.

The Port of Mobile annually handles approximately 58 million tons of international and domestic cargo for exporters and importers delivering $26.8 billion in economic value to the state each year. It currently serves all 67 Alabama counties, exporting products such as lumber, wood pulp, poultry and components for the state's automotive plants, and importing a wide variety of retail products.

The Port of Mobile is continuing to expand in order to accommodate existing supply chains and generate even further economic growth and job creation for the State. Once the channel is fully widened to 50 feet, the port will increase its container capacity by 50 percent, making it able to handle the largest container and other ships permitted through the Panama Canal. With the infrastructure in place to handle the demand for maximum quantities of cargo the port will continue to be the hub of immense growth for the state's economy.

The container terminal, which opened in 2008, is one of the newer, more modern, and more efficient facilities in the country, with its ability to move cargo faster than other ports. Because of this, along with the recent infrastructure improvements, supply chains are rearranging, with more cargo passing through Mobile. Rail traffic from the port was up 125% in August of this year compared with 2021, with July 2022 being the busiest month for containerized cargo in the history of the terminal.

58 MILLION TONS OF CARGO

ACCESS TO 5 CLASS I RAILROADS

- CSX
- CANADIAN NATIONAL
- ALABAMA GULF COAST RAILROAD - BNSF
- NORFOLK SOUTHERN
- KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN

TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

The Region has experienced tremendous growth over the last few years. Baldwin County has remained the fastest growing county in Alabama since 2010 and is not slowing down yet. While growth in our Region was identified in the SWOT as a strength, it was equally identified as a threat due to the high demand on infrastructure and resources. Even with our most aggressive efforts, it's difficult for the Region to keep up with need for new infrastructure when growth is occurring as quickly as it us in our area. New roads and other modes of transportation are being added to our inventory everyday however, more improvements are critically needed to provide enough roadways to supply all the cars. Existing roads and traffic routes are at capacity and traffic issues are at an all time high in almost every municipality in the Region. Expansions at the Port, new and expanding industrial parks in all three counties, along with improvements made at area airports are bring more people and freight into the Region now more than ever.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Traveling throughout our Region via the Bayway and/or Causeway on any given day is challenging to say the least, not to mention during peak tourist season. This is no mystery due to the fact that the existing tunnel system and Bayway were designed for 35,000 vehicles a day back in the 1970s. Peak traffic days today however are well over 100,000 vehicles. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that an alternate route is desperately needed to handle the increased traffic demand.

The I-10 Mobile River Bridge and Bayway Project is the obvious solution to our traffic problems. It will most definitely have a substantial impact on the economies of both Mobile and Baldwin Counties, both good and bad. The bridge is essential to our Region's future growth by connecting workers to jobs and businesses to new customers. However, the tolls that will be required to build and use the bridge will impact the local workforce significantly. The real question and ongoing concern is how to provide a new route across the Mobile Bay without costing local commuters and taxpayers any money. While the final plans did not eliminate a toll for locals, ALDOT has stated they will continue to work with the MPOs to seek flat-rate tolling for frequent business and personal travel across the Bayway. Under the current plans, motorists with an ALGO Pass will be assessed a $2.50 toll for a one-way trip over the new infrastructure. A $40 monthly discount is also available. For those without an ALGO Pass, a one-way trip over the new infrastructure will cost $5.50. Motorists also have an option of taking a free route off I-10, through the Wallace Tunnel and along the Spanish Fort Causeway.

The project, as proposed, includes the construction of a new 215-foot-tall Mobile River Bridge, and a new 7.5-mile Bayway between downtown Mobile and Daphne, and the demolition of the existing Bayway, which will be replaced with an elevated structure that is will be able to withstand powerful storm surges from tropical weather.

The Region's two metropolitan planning organizations, the Mobile MPO, and Eastern Shore MPO, both voted this year to add the project back into their Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP), which is critical because projects not including in the plans cannot receive federal funding. The votes occurred slightly less than three years after the Eastern Shore MPO voted to remove the previous I-10 project from its plan due to public outrage over tolls. The revised project is no longer organized through a public-private arrangement, and the tolls are lower than the 2019 plan.

The project as a whole is two separate projects and requires action from both the Mobile MPO and the Eastern Shore MPO. ALDOT has agreed the project to be developed from the framework suggested by both MPOs, requiring it to be one, complete, comprehensive project. It's estimated to cost $2.7 billion dollars and take five years to complete construction (2023-2028). ALDOT hopes to receive $250 million in state funding and more than $2 billion in federal grants and loans. Officials are hopeful that a $500 million federal Mega grant is awarded for the project by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The financing for the new project relies heavily on bonding which would be repaid through toll revenues. Financing includes $1.2 billion through bonding and another $1.1 billion through federal loans under the Transportation Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act (TIFIA). The project will get at least $250 million in direct state funding and $125 million from a federal Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant that was awarded for the project in 2019. ALDOT anticipates the federal agency announcing Mega grant award recipients before the end of the year.

ALDOT officials explained the project's next big milestone is to place the project on the state's Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), which is likely to occur soon. Next the state will oversee the registering of companies to submit "joint venture proposals" for the design and construction of the overall project. From there, additional traffic and revenue modeling will take place, and an existing environmental impact study on the project will be "re-evaluated." ALDOT anticipates breaking ground in late 2023.

Project details will include the following key parameters:

- A six-lane, cable-stayed bridge over the Mobile River, rising to provide 215 feet of clearance to accommodate shipping
- New interchanges in Baldwin and Mobile Counties
- A toll — $2.50 for cars and up to $18 for trucks; less for frequent commuters
- A free, no-toll options to cross Mobile Bay, including free use of the Causeway, the Africatown Bridge, and the Wallace and Bankhead tunnels
- <u>All tolls will end when debt is paid</u>
- All new infrastructure will be owned by the state and this project will not include any private concessionaire.

Photo source: al.com

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Other infrastructure needs for effective economic development include water, sewer, electricity and telecommunications/broadband.

• **Water Utility Providers** - There are 45 water systems in the Region: 18 in Baldwin County, 12 in Escambia County, and 15 in Mobile County.

• **Sewer and Wastewater Facilities** - There are numerous sewer and wastewater plants throughout the Region.

• **Electricity** - Alabama Power Company provides electricity to the Region either directly, or through one of several power distributors, such as Baldwin Electric Cooperative, Riviera Utilities, and Southern Pine Electric Cooperative.

• **Natural Gas** - Due to the abundance of natural gas in the Gulf of Mexico, natural gas is a popular utility in the Region, but new pipelines are making natural gas more readily available in other markets.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS/BROADBAND

Many private entities currently offer broadband service in the Region, and there is also a statewide effort to expand broadband coverage to underserved areas. The global Pandemic revealed the critical need for remote access to internet services. We learned it's not enough to have broadband access, you have to have high-speed broadband access to effectively function in today's world, and that's what we're lacking in rural Alabama.Providing broadband availability continues to be a challenge in many parts of our Region, particularly the rural areas and most of Escambia County, and even in many heavily populated areas such as south Baldwin County.

The Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund was created by the legislature in 2018 to assist broadband providers in extending services to households, businesses and community anchors in areas of the state without adequate service. In 2021, the Fund awarded 36 grants that totaled $17 million to multiple broadband providers to provide broadband access to residents in primarily rural, underserved communities. Our Region received only two of these grants that provided broadband to approximately 600 households in the northern parts of Baldwin and Escambia Counties as well as parts of south Mobile County. Much more fiber is needed. The biggest obstacle to meet this challenge is the geographical size of our Region. But in addition to the Fund, Governor Ivy signed in to law the Connect Alabama Act of 2021, both of which have already started to help the Region. Reliable internet access has never been more important. The pandemic showed that many jobs can be done from home, but that's only true if you can get good internet where you live. Recruiting industry and workers to a region without the infrastructure in place for high-speed internet is also difficult.

INDUSTRIAL PARKS

There are approximately 22 primary industrial parks located throughout SARPC's tri-county Region. Recent additions and expansions have added vast amounts of warehouse and distribution space to Mobile and Baldwin Counties.

The South Alabama Logistics Park, once fully developed, will provide 12 million square feet of warehouse spacing in west mobile industrial warehouse and distribution space for potential manufacturers. It will be the state's largest industrial park once completed. The Region needs a project of this size because of the projected growth of Brookley Aeroplex and the Port of Mobile.

The development of the park will lead to more than a thousand jobs and exceed $350 million in economic value, putting our Region on the map as a major distribution hub.

The projects follow other logistics and distribution hub projects that are currently underway in the Region. Baldwin County has had major expansions as well with the addition of grocery retailer ALDI who recently began construction of a $100 million distribution center and regional headquarters in Loxley as part of a project that will create 200 jobs at the 564,000-square-foot facility.

Additionally, Imperial Dade, a leading independently owned and operated distributor of food service packaging and janitorial supplies, opened a new state-of-the-art logistics hub in Baldwin County.

The facility includes a 221,000 square-foot warehouse and office space on 29 acres located in Loxley and will support the company's expanding customer base and continued growth along the Gulf Coast. Imperial Dade's new facility brings more than $20 million in total investment to Baldwin County, with plans to create 55 additional jobs.

The new logistics hub, developed and owned by I-10 Gulf Coast Logistics Center LLC, will be the first Class-A industrial facility constructed in Baldwin County. The location provides easy access to the entire Gulf Coast market, including the nearby Port of Mobile. The center is also located just south of the new 564,000-square-foot ALDI regional headquarters and distribution center.

Escambia County has seen industrial park expansions as well in Atmore where Coastal Growers recently invested $87 million on their state of the art peanut shelling and storage facility. The company is a grower-owned LLC peanut shelling plant owned by local farm families in the southeast and provides over 100 local jobs to Escambia County.

INDUSTRIAL PARKS & OPPORTUNITY ZONES

The map below shows the location of the Region's industrial parks as well as their proximity to Qualified Opportunity Zones and the number of working age populations in the area in which the park is located.

As the map indicates, only two existing industrial parks are taking advantage of the deferred tax incentives offered to developers who locate and develop within a Qualified Opportunity Zone.

SOUTH ALABAMA MEGA SITE

Novelis, the leading sustainable aluminum solutions provider and world leader in aluminum rolling and recycling, is currently building their new manufacturing facility at the South Alabama Mega Site in Baldwin County. The project brings a total investment of $2.5 billion to the Region. Novelis is expected to create approximately 1,000 high-wage, high-skill jobs with its new low-carbon recycling and rolling plant at the 3,000-acre site and is projecting an average annual salary of $65,000 for its employees.

Novelis will partner with CSX Railroad to transport their high-quality aluminum products across North America. The plant will be the first fully integrated aluminum mill built in the United States in 40 years.

Additionally, Novelis plans to develop an Advanced Manufacturing and Leadership Training Center in Daphne, where best-in-class training will be provided to industry leaders. The leadership center will be located at the Daphne Innovation + Science Complex(DISC), a 75-acre master planned Class A office and research space focusing on technology, professional offices, and corporate offices. The training candidates receive at DISC will help bolster Baldwin County to the forefront of innovation in workforce training and leadership in the metals industry and throughout SARPC's tri-county Region.

NATURAL ASSETS

NATURAL ASSETS

Our Region is home to a myriad of natural resources. Located in the southwest corner of Alabama, centered around Mobile Bay, the Region boasts a temperate climate with hot and humid summers and mild winters. Receiving more annual rainfall than twice the national average, the warm temperatures and high rainfall make for a humid environment, with much of the Region designated as a subtropical climate zone. However, while the climate is similar among the three counties, the landscape changes dramatically. Traveling north from the Gulf of Mexico, the terrain transforms from beaches and marshland to river delta and forests as flatter coastal areas morph into gentle rolling hills.

The fact that the only two coastal counties in the state are located within the Region leads to unique environmental opportunities and issues. A body of water as large as Mobile Bay, which includes one of the biggest estuary systems in the country, plays a major role in the health of the environment.

Water pollution is a major concern, both from upstream sources and from incoming ship traffic. Sources outside the Region can also drastically affect us, as seen by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. How we utilize our natural resources will have a direct impact on our economy. We have to effectively find a balance between development and environmental protection to ensure both coexists without negatively impacting the other.

As expected, natural disasters are a severe threat to the Region. Hurricanes and tropical storms, with their high winds, storm surge, and residual flooding can wreak havoc on the area, but tornadoes and flash flooding are also looming threats. The map below shows the land and water area of our region by county.

MOBILE BAY ESTUARY & MOBILE TENSAW DELTA

The Mobile Bay Estuary includes waters within Baldwin and Mobile counties and Mobile Bay, where the fresh water from five Alabama rivers mix with the salt water of the Gulf of Mexico to produce rich brackish waters. It supports both fresh and saltwater species and serves as nursery habitat for many commercially and recreationally important fish and shellfish. It is considered environmentally and economically important because of its exceptional biodiversity and productivity. This estuary is greatly affected by the upstream waters draining the expansive Mobile Bay Watershed.

The Mobile-Tensaw River Delta is the largest river delta and wetland in Alabama. It encompasses approximately 260,000 acres and is the second largest delta in the country. It provides a wide variety of habitats and marine ecosystems which include flood plains, cypress-gum swamps, tidal brackish water marshes, bottomland forests and submersed grass beds. As one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in both Alabama and the United States, it is home to a large number of threatened or endangered species, 126 species of fish, 46 mammals, 69 reptiles, 30 amphibians, and at least 300 species of bird, including more than 110 which nest in the Delta. The Delta's considerable biodiversity has led to it being described as an "American Amazon" by naturalist E. O. Wilson.

NATURAL ASSETS

Our Region is truly unique and fortunate to encompass such an abounding amount of natural assets that provide a multitude of functions and benefits that support an immense number of species.

South Alabama is literally teeming with natural resources which are a huge contributing factor to the economy. The possibilities are endless when it comes to ecotourism opportunities throughout the Region. We can't just take and use these resources without limits. We have to protect and enforce high standards in environmental protection practices to ensure they are not harmed and depleted. A healthy environment will ensure a healthy economy.

While these rich and diverse assets can be used to grow the ecotourism sector of our Region's economy, we must be cognizant of their vulnerabilities and find a proper balance that benefits both the economy and the environment in order to ensure they remain healthy and uncompromised while our Region continues to grow at an exponential rate, as indicated in the SWOT analysis.

Coastal Alabama supports a surplus of critical habitats that sustain a rich species diversity that extends throughout the Region and along the gulf coast. Some of these habitats, include but are not limited to:

- beaches and dunes
- submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV)
- intertidal marshes & flats
- freshwater wetlands
- oyster reefs
- maritime forests
- pine savannas
- long leaf pine forests
- rivers, streams, and their riparian buffers.

Land and Water Area of the Region

(IN SQUARE MILES)

Territory	Land Area	Water Area	Total Area
Baldwin County	1,596	432	2,028
Escambia County	947	6	953
Mobile County	1,233	411	1,644
REGIONAL TOTAL	**3,776**	**849**	**4,625**

Source: SARPC

Almost all of the Alabama shoreline has been affected by some type of human activity, typically due to development pressures. These actions include infilling of wetlands, construction of bulkheads along shorelines to serve as protective barriers to wave erosion, reconstruction of the Gulf beaches, and, primarily, engineering and dredging passes for ship channels. These manmade threats, along with natural disasters and storms are a primary cause of Alabama's beach erosion. Beach re-nourishment, which involves adding large amounts of good-quality sand to beaches to widen them, is a proven process that can be used to rebuild beaches damaged in previous decades. It is a solution for long-term management and protection of our shorelines.

photo source: darryl vest/shutterstock

BEACHES & COASTLINES

South Alabama's coastline is one of the state's greatest economic and environmental assets.

The tourism industry in south Baldwin County provides more than 50,000 jobs and generates more than $2 billion in revenue annually, with beaches being the keystone of that industry. Additionally, they provide habitats for hundreds of plant and wildlife species.

Our Region encompasses approximately 60 miles of pristine white quartz sand beaches and extends nine miles into the Gulf of Mexico. The tidal shoreline that borders all of the coastal bays, rivers, and bayous in Mobile and Baldwin counties extends another 600 miles. Gulf State Park alone encompasses 6,150 acres of beaches, dunes, marshes, freshwater ponds, and forest. Our beaches are used each year by nesting sea turtles where between 2010-2020, an estimated 70,786 hatchlings emerged from the sand and entered the Gulf. Our beaches are also used as stopover habitats for migratory birds who congregate in habitats around the shore where they rest and forage before and after their long flight across the Gulf of Mexico.

encyclopediaofalabama.org

NATURAL ASSETS PROTECTION

NATURE RESERVES & WILDLIFE PRESERVES

Nature and wildlife preserves/refuges are protected areas of importance for wildlife, flora, fauna, or features of geological or other special interest, which are reserved and managed for purposes of conservation and to provide special opportunities for study or research.

The following is a short list of just many of the organizations that preserve and maintain these protected lands which provide critical habitats. They work with government and other agencies to ensure a balance between human land uses and conservation.

Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)is comprised of 9,317 acres and contains upland and bottomland hardwood forests, salt and freshwater marshes, submerged aquatic vegetation and unique bog habitats. It provides habitat for many fish species as well as almost 350 species of birds. The Reserve conducts research, monitoring, education, and outreach to protect its own estuary and others nationwide. It is made up of more than 6,000 acres of tidal and forested wetlands within an estuary that receives freshwater from both the Fish and Magnolia Rivers.

Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge encompasses some of Alabama's last remaining undisturbed coastal barrier habitat. It contains 7,000 acres of coastal lands, ranging from constantly changing beach dunes to rolling pine-oak woodlands, provides a haven for more than 370 species of migratory birds, nesting sea turtles and the endangered Alabama beach mouse. The Refuge was established by Congress in 1980 for the protection of neotropical migratory songbird habitat and threatened and endangered species and provides an important stopover and staging habitat for neotropical migratory songbirds during the fall and spring migration along the Alabama coastline.

Graham Creek Nature Preserve in Foley is almost 500 acres of natural habitats including pine savannas, bottomland wetlands, mixed forests and tidal marshes and provides protection for rare plant and animal species. The preserve also offers a canoe/kayak launch, hiking trails and bird watching.

Photo source: outdooralabama.com

NATURAL ASSETS MAP

The map provides the names and geographic locations of just a small sample of our Region's Natural Assets. Many of these assets are capitalizing on ecotourism opportunities that are naturally generated by the resources themselves. Through proper planning and stewardship practices, many more naturally occurring areas in our Region can develop additional ecotourism activities that fuel the economy while creating awareness to the importance of the natural resource.

[1] Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary
[2] Fowl River Access Point
[3] Bayou La Batre Access Point
[4] Fish River Access Point
[5] Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
[6] Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge
[7] Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve
[8] Indian Shell Mound Park
[9] Conecuh National Forest
[10] Conecuh River
[11] Mobile-Tensaw River Delta
[12] Mobile River
[13] Tensaw River
[14] Mobile Bay Estuary

MOBILE BAY

Mobile Bay's average depth is only about 10 feet, which is among the shallowest for a bay of its size. It is approximately 32 miles long from the Mobile-Tensaw Delta to its mouth, 23 miles across at its widest point. A combination of wind and tide delivers salty Gulf waters from the south into the Bay that mix with varying amounts of freshwater from the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, creating a marine ecosystem that contains a multitude of species that use the Bay for a variety of reasons such as habitat, nurseries, migration routes, breeding areas, food and shelter.

FRESHWATER WETLANDS

Freshwater wetlands are bottomland to upland areas with a natural supply of water, either from flooding rivers or streams, groundwater seeps, or depressions perched above shallow groundwater, ensuring wet conditions for at least a part, if not all, of the year. These vegetated habitats serve to slow and store floodwater, recharge groundwater supplies, and enhance water quality by trapping excess sediments, nutrients, and other pollutants.

Wetlands, whether freshwater or salt marsh, provide a host of valuable ecosystem services, including providing complex habitats that support a diversity of species, filtration of nutrients and pollutants, shoreline and sediment stabilization, and protection of upland areas from flooding and wave energy.

Highly functioning wetlands not only support highly diverse biological communities but provide nature-based solutions to stormwater management and flooding controls. So why are they among the most highly stressed and . historically altered habitats in coastal Alabama? One word-**DEVELPOMENT.**

South Alabama is growing at an exponential rate, and if this growth does not include protective development regulations for these critical habitats, there will not be any habitats left to protect and only flooded communities will remain.

Most of the municipalities in SARPC's region have adopted effective development regulations prohibiting the fill of wetlands, limiting development near sand dunes, and other measures such as requiring low-impact development standards, or nature-based, green infrastructure practices be used in place of traditional standards. Progressive building codes, proper subdivision planning and restrictive zoning codes all work together in protecting the Region's natural resources as well as property values and the safety of our residents. But these standards must be enforced before any positive impacts can be made that will benefit the environment and residents alike. Many of our communities are implementing these practices and seeing results. If we do our part, nature will reciprocate and the results will benefit all.

WATERSHEDS

Watershed protection is one of the most important factors in proper planning practices. With all the growth our Region is currently experiencing, we must properly plan and develop property in a manner that protects our environment, particularly our water.

A watershed is defined as the area of land that collects water and drains to one particular stream or water body. Each stream has its own watershed. Topography is the key element determining this area of land. The boundary of a watershed is defined by the highest elevations that surround the stream.

Developments occurring upstream can have a detrimental impact on waterways downstream if proper watershed planning is not regulated in the development process. The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (NEP) has diligently worked in recent years to complete a Watershed Management Plan (WMP) project, which includes twelve separate plans throughout the Region that prescribes development and implementation of comprehensive watershed management plans (WMPs) for all 12-digit HUC watersheds in coastal Alabama to ensure ecosystem restoration and protection. Proper watershed protection measures can produce a plethora of environmental benefits including: Clean water; improved agricultural practices; responsible development; resilient shorelines; protection for critical habitats; cultural preservation; sustainable tourism; increased public access to waterfronts.

The Mobile Bay Watershed is the sixth-largest drainage basin by area, encompassing over 43,600 square miles, with the fourth largest freshwater flow volume in the United States, draining most of the State of Alabama and portions of Mississippi, Georgia, and even Tennessee. Large watersheds draining to major rivers can be divided into many smaller sub-watersheds that drain to tributaries of the 5 rivers that make up the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta.

The Mobile Bay estuary is the coastal transition zone between the Mobile Bay Watershed and the Gulf of Mexico. The Mobile Bay and Mobile-Tensaw Delta are subject to an unusually large number of major uses with international implications, including the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, the Port of Alabama, commercial fisheries, industry, tourism and recreation, and coastal development.

SERVICE ASSETS

SERVICE ASSETS

A thriving and successful region provides an adequate and sufficient number of businesses and facilities in the service industry to accommodate all of its residents.

Some of the most important services assets a region can offer in order to function effectively are schools, healthcare facilities, business support services, and aging services.

Our Region provides a healthy amount of each of these services and facilities, which provides a tremendous attraction to the area for both recruiting businesses to the area and drawing new residents to our communities.

We are fortunate to have some of the best, award-winning schools and quality hospitals in the state. Our Region is home to the only Trauma 1 hospital in the entire Gulf Coast region. Families will locate to our Region in large part because of the success rate of our schools. Families need homes and their need for housing increases the number of rooftops in our area. Developers will want to locate here due in large part to the number of rooftops and available workforce.

Quality of education will determine the success of our workforce, thereby impacting the economic prosperity of our Region. Therefore, school districts in our Region are actively working to increase education quality and graduation rates. Many of our elementary schools meet College and Career Readiness Standards by providing Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, & Math (STEAM) activities. Area high schools provide aviation programs and signature academies that offer internships, hands-on training, and more as they prepare students for college and career. By high school, most of our students can take advantage of flexible education opportunities, such as dual enrollment options and free public virtual schools.

According to the 2020 US Census, the following number of people hold service occupation jobs within the service industry sector in our Region:

BALDWIN COUNTY: 17,053
ESCAMBIA COUNTY: 3,134
MOBILE COUNTY: 30,473

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

Our Region is home to numerous workforce development agencies that effectively train and develop a quality workforce that is prepared and qualified to fill the positions, equipping applicants with the skills and education needed to succeed.

Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT)

Considered one of the best manufacturing training programs in the United States. Almost all major Mobile manufacturers have taken advantage of the services offered by (AIDT). With more than 35 years of experience, AIDT has a proven method of recruiting, screening, and training for company startups and expanding workforces. This program is available to all Alabama companies with significant hiring needs. It is provided free of charge and custom-tailored to individual company needs.

Regional Workforce Council

The State of Alabama is divided in to seven regional workforce councils. The three counties in the SARPC Region are included in the Southwest Alabama Works region, which also includes Choctaw, Clark, Conecuh, Monroe, Washington, and Wilcox counties.

Alabama Works

Alabama Works is a state agency and provides resources for employers, and various types of job seekers, such as students, older workers, veterans, and unemployed persons. The training resources available through Alabama Works are provided through the following organizations who administer a variety of programs and grants to help enhance Alabama's workforce; offer a wide variety of services that include job placement and training assistance; and provide extensive training for businesses and industries. They are as follow:

- **AIDT**
- **Alabama Community College System**
- **Alabama Technology Network**
- **Alabama Department of Commerce**

SOUTHWEST ALABAMA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (SAWDC)

SAWDC is an employer-established and employer-led non-profit organization whose mission is to develop strategic partnerships which attract, educate and train students and workers to better meet employer needs and foster economic growth in a global marketplace. It is recognized as one of thirty-two nationally designated National Fund for Workforce Solutions sites.

With a vision to create a fully comprehensive, integrated workforce development system, SAWDC has established four high quality workforce partnerships - a sound strategy modeled by the National Fund for helping individuals obtain and advance in good careers while at the same time ensuring that employers have high-quality skills that are needed to compete in today's dynamic economy.

The Region continues to strengthen its connection to aerospace with the location of Airbus's U.S. final assembly line in Mobile, which has resulted in continued growth in the industry. With an abundance of accommodating facilities, capable personnel and nationally recognized training programs, aerospace and aviation companies that land in Baldwin County truly see their businesses take off.

Training opportunities in aerospace and aviation are now available at The Academy at the Fairhope Airport, the Aviation College, and Flight Works Alabama, along with AIDT's Aviation Training center. With numerous training assets, aviation has become a critical piece of our Region's economy and will continue to be a target for future growth for many years to come.

EDUCATION

BALDWIN COUNTY SCHOOLS- QUICK FACTS

- 41 schools
- (1) virtual elementary/ middle
- (1) virtual high school
- (1) alternative school
- (1) aviation program
- (2) technical centers
- Fastest growing school system in Alabama
- Award-winning After-School Program
- 31,000 students
- Largest employer in Baldwin County
- Top paid teachers

Coming Soon:

- A state-of-the-art technical high school called Baldwin Preparatory Academy opening August 2024
- $300 million in school construction projects to be completed by 2024

Academics:

- $91 million in total scholarships offered in 2022
- Featuring high-performing academic schools
- International Baccalaureate Program offered at Fairhope High School and Daphne High School
- Advanced placement in all high schools
- STEAM/ STEM certified schools
- A Scholastic Lighthouse District
- Awarded the Department of Education Blue Ribbon School distinction
- Leader in Me Leadership Program featured

BALDWIN COUNTY COLLEGES-HIGHER EDUCATION

- Coastal Alabama Community College
- Coastal Alabama Community College – Bay Minette Campus
- Columbia Southern University
- Faulkner State Community College
- Genesis Career College – Cookeville – Daphne Campus
- United States sports Academy

Baldwin County Education – Private Schools

- Alabama Gulf Coast Christian Academy
- Bayside Academy
- Calvary Christian Learning Center
- Central Christian School
- Christ the King School
- Eastern Shore Early Childhood
- Faith Christian Academy
- Good Shepard Lutheran School
- Marietta Johnson School of Organic Education
- Open Door Baptist Church and Open Door Christian School & Day Care
- St. Benedict School
- St. Patrick School
- Victory Christian Academy

Baldwin County schools have a total school enrollment in Kindergarten to 12th Grade of 75%.

32% of the population has a Bachelor's Degree or higher.
Education Attainment (Population 25 Years and Older) in Baldwin County:

High School or equivalent degree - 27.2%
Some college, no degree - 22.2%
Associate's degree - 9.2%
Bachelor's degree - 20.2%
Graduate or professional degree - 11.7%

The County saw a population increase of over 65% over the last 20 years with a total 2021 population of 233,665. The city of Loxley alone grew over 127%. Population projections reveal the County is expected to reach a population of almost 300,000 residents within the next ten years. These numbers put tremendous pressure on the school system to provide enough facilities and teachers to accommodate the students.

Baldwin County Schools are in the process of opening a comprehensive career technical high school in the central part of the district, offering technical programs, required core classes and college courses under one roof. The new high school will be open to students from all Baldwin County high schools. In addition, Auburn University's Educational Complex in Gulf Shores includes a School of Aviation that delivers aviation learning for K-12 students and hosts unmanned aircraft systems courses.

Coastal Alabama Community College will soon be offering a new aviation technology certificate program.

Mobile County Public Schools

BY THE NUMBERS

14 National Blue Ribbon Schools

Elementary Schools:
Mary B. Austin
Anna Booth
Calcedeaver
Council
Dodge
Eichold-Mertz
George Hall
Old Shell Road
Spencer-Westlawn

Middle Schools:
Clark-Shaw
Phillips Preparatory

High Schools:
Davidson
Murphy
Vigor

4 Terrel H. Bell Award-Winning Principals

Michelle Dubose Adams (Eichold-Mertz)
Hattie Alexander (Council)
Dianne Reynolds (Spencer-Westlawn)
Lisa Williams (Anna Booth)

*The Blue Ribbon is the highest award given to public and private schools by the U.S. Department of Education. Among Blue Ribbon Schools, about 10 principals are selected annually for the Terrell H. Bell Award.

53,237 students

90 schools

$675M annual budget

$11,268 per-pupil expenditure

$35.6M monthly payroll

#1 largest employer in Mobile County

B District score on the 2019 Alabama Department of Education Report Card.

$113M college scholarships earned by the Class of 2020

9,628 career credentials earned 2019-20

88% four-year on-time graduation rate

72 Alabama First Class Pre-K Classrooms

1,296 First Class Pre-K Students

*The National Institute for Early Education Research has ranked Alabama's First Class Pre-K as the highest quality state-funded program in the nation.

603 Bus Routes; 7.7 Million Miles Annually

48K Lunches Served Daily

8 New Schools Built or Opened Since 2013

LEARNING TODAY. LEADING TOMORROW.

Mobile County PUBLIC SCHOOLS

12 Signature Academies

Any student can apply for enrollment in any Signature Academy, based on interest. The academies offer internships, hands-on learning and more as they prepare students for college and career. Our Signature Academies are:

Advanced Careers and AP (Advanced Placement) Capstone at Baker High

Pre-Med, Medical and Health Careers at Blount High

Coastal Studies at Bryant High

Advanced Manufacturing at Citronelle High

Engineering (EPIC) at Davidson High

Law, Arts and Health Services at LeFlore High

Biomedical Sciences at Mary G. Montgomery High

University Center at Murphy High

Aviation and Aerospace at B.C. Rain High

Industry and Engineering at Theodore High

Information Technology at Vigor High

Maritime, Engineering and Entrepreneurship at Williamson High

In addition to the public school system, Mobile County offers three city school systems and a wide variety of private school options as well as a multitude of higher education possibilities.

Education – City School Systems

Chickasaw City Schools
Saraland City Schools
Satsuma City Schools

Education – Charter Schools

ACCEL Day and Evening Academy

Education – Private Schools

UMS-Wright Preparatory School
St. Paul's Episcopal School

Education – Private Schools cont'd

St. Mary's Catholic School
St. Luke's Episcopal School
Renaissance School of the Eastern Shore
Mobile Christian
McGill-Toolen Catholic High School
Little Flower Catholic Schools
Cottage Hill Christian Academy
Archdiocese of Mobile
Alabama School of Mathematics and Science
Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies

Mobile County is home to some of the finest colleges in the country. The University of South Alabama's 1,200-acre campus has been transformed over the past decade with new facilities and resources for teaching, housing and recreation, health sciences, the arts, engineering, computer science and athletics.

Total enrollment as of 2020 was 14,224.
It was revealed through the SWOT analysis that South saw a major decline in enrollment during the pandemic.

Education – College

- University of Mobile
- University of South Alabama
- Spring Hill College
- Remington College
- MTI Business Solutions
- Fortis College
- Faulkner University
- Coastal Alabama Community College
- Bishop State Community College
- Alabama Aviation Center of Mobile

24.4% of residents hold a Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Mobile County.
Education Attainment (Population 25 Years and Older):

High School or equivalent degree - 33.5%
Some college, no degree - 20.7%
Associate's degree - 8.6%
Bachelor's degree - 16.2%
Graduate or professional degree - 8.2%

ESCAMBIA COUNTY SCHOOLS

Education – Public Schools

12 Schools in the Escambia County School System

Education – Private Schools

Atmore Christian School
Escambia Academy (EA Cougars)
Temple Christian Academy

Education – College

Coastal Alabama Community College – Brewton Campus
Reid State Technical College
Escambia Career Readiness Center

Escambia County Educational Attainment

12.5% hold a Bachelor's Degree or Higher in Escambia County
High School or equivalent degree - 43.0%
Some college, no degree - 17.3%
Associate's degree - 7.5%
Bachelor's degree - 8.8%
Graduate or professional degree - 3.7%

HEALTHCARE

As the economic growth of the Region expands, the standard of living goes up, thereby increasing the ability to purchase and receive a higher level of health care. Conversely, the improved health of the population contributes to enlarging the output of the economy.

The greatest challenge facing the health care industry nationwide is meeting the needs of an aging population, and our Region is no exception. The aging of the Baby Boomer generation is a national trend that has many implications. It's projected that by the year 2030, one in five Americans will be over age 65, comprising 20% of the population.

The map indicates the location of the hospitals in our Region as well as the facilities that provide a heliport.

Major Hospitals

- ATMORE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
- BAYPOINTE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
- D. W. MCMILLAN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
- EASTPOINTE HOSPITAL
- INFIRMARY LTAC HOSPITAL
- MOBILE INFIRMARY MEDICAL CENTER
- NORTH BALDWIN INFIRMARY
- PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL
- SOUTH BALDWIN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
- SPRINGHILL MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
- THOMAS HOSPITAL
- USA HEALTH CHILDREN'S & WOMEN'S HOSPITAL
- USA HEALTH UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Sources:
**Hospital Locations Courtesy of ArcGIS Online from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) Homeland Security Infrastructure Program (HSIP) Team (2022).*
**Hospital Heliport Locations Courtesy of USGS Transportation Dataset for the State of Alabama.*

KEY FACTS ABOUT REGIONAL HEALTHCARE

ESCAMBIA COUNTY

- There are 77 physicians per 100,000 population in Escambia County.

- There are 2 Hospitals in Escambia County, Alabama, serving a population of 37,621 people in an area of 945 square miles. There is 1 Hospital per 18,810 people, and 1 Hospital per 472 square miles.

- Hospitals in Escambia County provide emergency care in response to injuries and sudden or severe illness, laboratory and other diagnostic services, scheduled surgeries, labor and delivery services, inpatient treatment, and recovery services.

BALDWIN COUNTY

- USA Health is building a health center at the intersection of Alabama 181 and Alabama 104. The campus will be home to a 25,000 square foot ambulatory surgery center that will house state of the art surgical suites.

- There are 173 physicians per 100,000 population in Baldwin County.

- There are 6 Hospitals in Baldwin County, Alabama, serving a population of 203,360 people in an area of 1,590 square miles. There is 1 Hospital per 33,893 people, and 1 Hospital per 264 square miles.

- In Alabama, Baldwin County is ranked 47th of 67 counties in Hospitals per capita, and 18th of 67 counties in Hospitals per square mile.

MOBILE COUNTY

- Mobile County has six medical transport agencies, including two aero-medical services (Baptist Hospital Life Flight and Gulf Coast).

- There are 209 physicians per 100,000 population in Mobile County. The US average is 210 per 100,000 people.

- There are 13 Hospitals in Mobile County, Alabama, serving a population of 414,328 people in an area of 1,230 square miles. There is 1 Hospital per 31,871 people, and 1 Hospital per 94 square miles.

- Infirmary Health System alone provides a total of 681 beds.

- USA Hospital is the only Level I Trauma Center on the Gulf Coast

BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As our Region continues to recover from the pandemic, two things become poignantly clear: the workplace will never be the same, and holding on to old ways of doing things will be at the expense of our future.

According to Forbes, while the workforce navigates hybrid work, workplace wellness and other pandemic-related issues, the world of entrepreneurship is also shifting. Over the past two years, millions of Americans launched businesses, and Bloomberg reports that the U.S. Census received almost 40% more business applications last year when compared to 2019.
People learned quickly during the pandemic how to make money to survive. They are finding creative ways to earn a living without relying on a company. Post-Covid, entrepreneurs are seeing huge opportunities for social impact, and funders are looking to join forces and help propel real change.

Covid taught us that connections matter and that we need social interactions. People need and want to connect with others to deepen the meaning in their own lives and the world around them. Connecting in more meaningful ways will have the ability to improve communities. The social entrepreneurs who see this desire to connect as the incredible opportunity that it is are the ones who will succeed.

One of the barriers to entry for entrepreneurs is access to funding, and that's even more true for social entrepreneurs. This is where an entrepreneurship support organization (ESO), particularly ones catered to help social entrepreneurs, can be massively important.

HATCH FAIRHOPE

The University of Alabama, the City of Fairhope and the Baldwin Community and Economic Development Foundation have partnered to create Hatch, a business resource hub for technology-based entrepreneurs in Baldwin County. Hatch provides Baldwin County's new and existing startups with a place to learn and grow. This partnership is fostering local entrepreneurial culture, developing an entrepreneurial resource ecosystem, and linking the resources of The University of Alabama to emerging tech companies in Baldwin County. Hatch is funded by the City of Fairhope, Coastal Alabama Community College, and the Baldwin Community and Economic Development Foundation and will be housed in Downtown Fairhope in space provided by BBVA Compass.

SARPC's REVOLVING LOAN FUND

SAPRC is doing their part in supporting local entrepreneurship too. The South Alabama Regional Planning Commission Revolving Loan Fund is a locally controlled source of capital used to finance small business start-up and expansion whose projects will create permanent jobs. By combining RLF and bank financing the borrower can realize an effective rate well below market rates.

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

A chamber of commerce is an organization of business owners and entrepreneurs who promote the interests of their local business community. Chambers of commerce provide access to valuable resources, discounts, and relationships that help businesses save money and market their products.

Joining a chamber of commerce can help you build your professional network and market your business. When you join your local chamber of commerce, your business will be listed in the chamber's online directory, and your business could be highlighted in other chamber publications.

AGING SERVICES

Population trends will affect our workforce. Our regional population growth is expected to continue to grow over the next ten years. At the same time, our population is aging. Due to advances in healthcare, Americans are living longer and more active lives. Due to the rise in inflation and unexpected shifts in the national economy, many older Americans are re-training for new careers and going back to work instead of retiring, or finding volunteer opportunities in their communities.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING (AAA)

SARPC is home to the Region's the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and manages many programs to help our local aging population. For more than thirty-five years the AAA has assessed the needs of older persons in the three-county region in South Alabama; distributed funds for the provision of services to older adults; helped agencies and local governments plan services for older persons; and provided information about available resources to older adults and their caregivers. Staff of the Area Agency on Aging are available to assist seniors, persons with disabilities, and their families in coordinating resources and services that support an active healthy lifestyle and maintain independence as long as possible.

In addition to Older American Act services, the AAA provides programs for older adults and people with disabilities that are funded by Medicaid such as the in-home services provided through Medicaid Waivers; and the Aging and Disability Resource Center. Visit their website at: https://agingsouthalabama.org.

Additionally, the AAA just completed their 5-year plan which can be found at: https://agingsouthalabama.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/Area_Plan_FY%2022-25-Full-Plan.pdf.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & SENIOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

SARPC's Economic Development Department offers and manages a senior employment program for our senior community. The Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) is administered by the Department of Employment and Economic Development under the auspices of the State of Alabama Department of Senior Services. The program is designed to assist low income mature job seekers and their communities by providing part-time community service work and training. Men and women 55 years of age or older who have limited income may become a SCSEP participant, revitalizing their job skills while supporting local non-profit and governmental agencies.

BABY BOOMER POPULATION

The US Census reports an estimated 73 million Americans are part of the Baby Boomer generation.

The number of people age 65 and older in the United States has grown rapidly over most of the 20th century, from 3.1 million in 1900 to 35 million in 2000.

In 2018, there were 52 million people age 65 and older. Their share of the population grew as well, from 12.4% in 2000 to 16.0% in 2018.

But aging boomers are not the only reason the nation's population is getting older overall. Longer lives in part due to better health care and record low birth rates among young women are also major factors.

The total fertility rate of U.S. women is now 1.7 children per woman, below the 2.1 children needed to replace the population.
Life expectancy at age 65 went from 11.9 years (1900-1902) to 19.1 years in 2010, according to An Aging World, a Census Bureau report co-authored by Wan He.

Older adults are projected to outnumber children under age 18 for the first time in U.S. history by 2034, according to Census Bureau projections.

The concern is the increasing need for caregiver and health services for people over age 65, many of whom use services whose funding depends on decisions made based on census data.

SARPC Regional County Population Aged 65 and Over 2000-2010 and Projections 2020-2040

2018 series

	Census 2000	Census 2010	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Change 2010-2040 Number	Change 2010-2040 Percent
Baldwin	21,703	30,568	47,034	56,876	66,159	72,875	78,769	48,201	157.7
Escambia	5,236	5,812	6,802	7,324	7,529	7,404	7,405	1,593	27.4
Mobile	47,919	53,321	68,695	78,836	86,072	88,252	88,908	35,587	66.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama, April 2018.

3

SWOT ANALYSIS

Analysis of the Region's strength's, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

3 SWOT Analysis

SWOT ANALYSIS

The main focus of the CEDS is to develop a strategic plan for the Region that can be used for capacity building for economic development. A strong CEDS means a strong Region that can better position assets so the public and private sectors succeed. The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis is an integral planning tool used in strategic planning that provides the framework needed to evaluate the Region's competitive position by assessing the internal and external factors, as well as resilient factors. The SWOT analysis is designed to identify the Region's strengths and weaknesses to help analyze what is currently working, and to devise a successful strategy for the future.

SARPC surveyed the CEDS Strategy Committee utilizing an online survey tool to confirm their input on the SWOT. The survey asked a series of questions employing the Asset-Based Approach. These questions inquired about the current assets and issues, and the advantages and negative impacts looking forward to the next 5- 10 years.

In creating the CEDS, a dual approach was utilized to answer the questions "Where are we now?" and "Where do we want to be in 5 years?"
To help answer these questions, the traditional SWOT analysis and the Asset-Based Approach were used. The Asset-Based Approach focuses on positive assets to create momentum for moving forward. Based upon demographic and socioeconomic data, trends, and other information relevant to the regional economy presented in the "Summary Background", the CEDS Strategy Committee moved forward with identifying the internal and external factors that define our Region.

SWOT RESULTS

STRENGTHS

- Competitive
- Quality of Life
- Available Land
- Location/Lifestyle
- Tourism
- Schools
- Large Industrial Base
- Jobs
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Access to Coast
- Economic Diversity
- Agriculture/Aquaculture
- Growing Population *
- Housing Costs

STRENGTHS

WEAKNESSES

- Declining Infrastructure
- Lack of Infrastructure
- Lack of Workforce
- Income Disparity
- Declining Population
- Underemployment
- Safety/Crime Rates
- Transportation Systems
- Childcare Availability
- Healthcare

WEAKNESSES

THREATS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Utilize Natural Assets
- Downtown Development
- Hybrid Work
- Community Facilities
- Workforce Training
- Industry Expansion & Diversification
- Focus on Infrastructure-Broadband & Roads
- Utilize Nature-Based Infrastructure
- Higher Education
- Improve Graduation Rates

OPPORTUNITIES

THREATS

- Lack of Workforce
- High Employee Turnover
- Rapid Population Growth *
- Affordable Housing
- Public Education
- Low Wages
- Insurance Costs

*The SWOT revealed that while 57% of survey participants listed the Region's GROWING POPULATION as a STRENGTH, 90% view RAPID POPULATION GROWTH as a negative factor in our Region due to the demands the rapid increase places on existing infrastructure and new developments. Comments received targeted Baldwin County, stating the County is at risk of losing its charm, and the population is growing too fast for proper development to keep up. Other negative factors listed were lack of workforce, public education, crime, hurricanes, and lack of planning.

SURVEY RESULTS

The following results from the SWOT Analysis indicate how each survey participant identifies each item of interest in the Region as either a strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat.

STRENGTHS are our Region's competitive advantages. Survey participants indicated through the SWOT that our Region has more strengths than weaknesses, threats, or opportunities. In addition to the graphic above, some of our greatest strengths are: industry supply chains and clusters, extensive port, rails, road, and air assets, specialized workforce skills, higher education levels, and collaborations & partnerships among stakeholders.

TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE OUR STRENGTHS.....SURVEY SAYS.....

Competitive VAST DIVERSIFIED leadership connected

COASTAL STABLE-RESILIENT OPPORTUNITIES producing DISTRIBUTION

SURVEY RESULTS

The following results from the SWOT Analysis indicate how each survey participant rates the level of importance of each topic in the Region as either a factor that needs addressing the most and which are of less concern.

Please rate the level of importance you attribute to the following factors in our Region. Which factors need addressing the most, and which are of less concern?

LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE.....SURVEY SAYS.....

Healthcare

INFRASTRUCTURE

QUALITY OF LIFE

equity

BROADBAND

job training

TRAFFIC

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

4

EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Performance measures and impact of the CEDS on the Region's economy

4 Evaluation & Assessment Framework

HOW DO WE MEASURE CAPACITY BUILDING AND PROSPERITY IN OUR REGION?

This section of the CEDS is used to gauge the progress of the successful implementation of the CEDS throughout our Region and to quantify the outcomes of CEDS activities. It is an important element in the ongoing economic planning process achieved in this CEDS.

The CEDS looks at specific performance measures which are used in evaluating the progress of implementing the CEDS and the impact it has had on the Region's economy as well as measuring how successful the CEDS has been in achieving the mission, vision, and goals outlined in the CEDS. In this section, we will ask two main questions:

HOW ARE WE DOING
&
WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER

While job creation and retention is a huge indicator of a healthy economy, it is just one performance measure to look at. To effectively measure the overall condition of our Region's economy, we look at the following factors:

SARPC REGION"S

TOP EXPORTS

Offering some of the lowest property taxes and cost of living rates, as well as having the most diverse economy in the state, makes the SARPC Region one of the most attractive business climates in the county. There isn't much that we don't make in our Region, with each one of our counties specializing in their own unique products. Our industries make steel, aluminum, airplanes, ships; our agriculture produces some of the finest peanuts in the county, and thanks to our beautiful beaches, we our one of the top tourist destinations in the country. The Region is fortunate to have access to an extensive multi-modal transportation system that includes two major Interstates, five Class 1 railroads, two airports, and direct access to inland and intracoastal waterways that offer access to over 15,000 miles of inland waterways. Additionally, the Region offers excellent healthcare options that include top-ranked hospitals and the only Trauma 1 Center along the Gulf Coast, award-winning schools, colleges and universities. With a Regional labor shed of over 540,000 people, the Region is set apart as one of the Gulf Coast's top locations to live, raise a family or grow a business.

ECONOMIC CLUSTERS

ECONOMIC CLUSTERS

What are economic clusters?

Economic clusters are essentially local and regional concentrations of similar and related industries within a region. They contain assemblages of production and exchange goods, services, talent, and technology, while supporting and promoting the region. They consist of companies, suppliers and service providers, as well as government agencies and other institutions that provide education, information, research and technical support to a regional economy. They strengthen the existing economic environment while attracting new investment, industry, and innovation, as well as a strong workforce to a region.

A cluster is much more than businesses from similar sectors working alongside each other in an industrial park.

Successful economic clusters benefit from a strong, economic environment that supports the needs of businesses and their workforces.

At their core, clusters are about talent. As talent has increasingly become the dominant determinant in where business decide to locate and grow, the available workforce and talent from a cluster of related industries becomes a powerful tool in recruiting other companies in that industry as well as those adjacent.

Clusters exist in all types of economies and are more prevalent in locations that achieve better performance relative to their overall stage of development. They play a fundamental role in driving regional economic competitiveness by encouraging higher rates of job growth, wage growth, new business formation, and innovation in the regions they are located in.

It is useful to view economies through the lens of clusters rather than specific types of companies, industries, or sectors because clusters capture the important linkages and potential spillovers of technology, skills, and information that cut across firms and industries. Viewing a group of companies and institutions as a cluster highlights opportunities for coordination and mutual improvement.

REGIONAL INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

The Region has a thriving portfolio of existing economic clusters from Aerospace to Advanced Manufacturing and from Entrepreneurship to Electronics. The economic environment among the three counties in SARPC's Region is vastly diverse, and the different economies within each county offer unique opportunities to the Region.

One of the most attractive attributes of the Region is the economic diversity we currently offer and have the potential to exponentially expand and capitalize upon. Each of our three counties is home to their own distinctive specialties that sets them apart from one another.

Baldwin County TARGET INDUSTRIES

Advanced Manufacturing

Collins Aerospace in Foley is the County's largest manufacturing employer, with 1,100 employees. Segers Aero Corp. in Fairhope expanded with a new test cell facility and capital investment topping $4 million.

White Collar

Baldwin County is a leader in workforce recruitment. According to Baldwin EDA, in 2020, 1 in every 10 Baldwin County residents held a graduate degree. Since 2010, the Region has seen growth in its residents with college and professional degrees. Baldwin County ranked in the TOP 50 MSAs in the United States for new job growth and ranked #1 in the state for Incoming Business Investment for three straight years and Forbes named Baldwin County one of the best small places for business and careers.

Baldwin County was Alabama's fastest growing county from 2010 to 2020, with 4 of the top 10 fastest growing cities in the state in recent years.

84% growth in Baldwin County's Transportation and Warehousing sector jobs since 2010.

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

142% growth in Baldwin County's Transportation and Warehousing sector total wages since 2010

TARGET INDUSTRIES

Aerospace & Aviation

Baldwin County has a healthy, growing aerospace community. Collins Aerospace, Segers Aero Corp., Quincy Compressor, and Vulcan, Inc. make up some of the largest advanced manufacturing companies in the County. Its close proximity to Mobile County, with Airbus and other aerospace companies, ensures further growth in this industry. Additionally, the County has the $2.7 million Academy at the Fairhope Airport, in partnership with the Fairhope Airport Authority, Baldwin County schools and the two-year college system to teach aviation, industrial maintenance and welding to high school and adult students. Gulf Shores city schools also have aviation programs.

Distribution/Logistics

Because of its location, available land and warehouse space, two major interstates, port access and rail service, distribution and warehousing industries thrive in Baldwin County. The Port of Mobile is the 11th largest seaport in the U.S., by volume, and is also one of the only places in the U.S. where 5 Class-1 railroads converge, providing any industry in our Region the opportunity to ship product all over the world.

Source: Baldwin EDA

Baldwin County
TOP INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

Aldi U.S. has recently established its regional headquarters and distribution center in Baldwin County. The upcoming 564,000-square-foot facility will bring approximately $100 million in capital investment and create 200 jobs for Loxley and Baldwin County. Additionally, ACE Hardware Support Center is one of Baldwin County's largest distribution employers producing over 300 jobs.

Employment by Industry Sector – Baldwin County (2020 Q4)

INDUSTRY	# OF EMPLOYEES
RETAIL TRADE	13,734
ACCOMMODATION & FOOD SERVICES	12,571
HEALTH CARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	9,675
CONSTRUCTION	5,771
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	5,716
ADMINISTRATION & SUPPORT; WASTE MANAGEMENT & REMEDIATION SERVICES	4,487
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	4,173
OTHER SERVICES (EXCEPT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	4,085
MANUFACTURING	4,006
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, & TECHNICAL SERVICES	2,943
REAL ESTATE; RENTAL; LEASING	2,475
TRANSPORTATION & WAREHOUSING	2,390
FINANCE & INSURANCE	2,194
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, & RECREATION	2,127
WHOLESALE TRADE	1,995
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING, & HUNTING	1,173
UTILITIES	853
INFORMATION	512
MANAGEMENT OF COMPANIES & ENTERPRISES	286
MINING, QUARRYING; OIL & GAS EXTRACTION	79
TOTAL-ALL INDUSTRIES	**81,248**

Source: Baldwin EDA/ JobsEQ

Escambia County
TOP INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

Manufacturing and forestry/timber industries have long been Escambia County's primary established cluster, but the County is diversifying with the recent addition of Provalus IT and peanut shelling and processing.

Est. 2021
COASTAL GROWERS
Responsibly Sourced
Peanuts

Source: Coastal Growers

Escambia County has diversified their economy with the addition of the IT industry. IT Company Provalus has named Brewton, Alabama their new home for their headquarter location.

The recent addition of peanut shelling to Escambia County's industry has benefitted over 100 local peanut farmers.

The County is also investing in rail and transload expansions, funded by the EDA and DRA, which will enable more freight to be shipped throughout the country via connections with the Port of Mobile.

Mobile County
TOP INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

AVIATION/AEROSPACE

Mobile County is home to Airbus U.S. Manufacturing Facility, Airbus Engineering, SAFRAN, Continental Motors, VT MAE, MAAS Aviation, Aerostar and many other global companies located at Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley. This industry employs 3,500 professionals.

CHEMICALS & MANUFACTURING

There are 26 chemical companies in Mobile County. This industry has grown along a 60-mile corridor. Major companies include Evonik Industries and Olin Corp.

HEALTHCARE

According to the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, 12% of Mobile's workforce is employed in the healthcare sector. This sector employs 850 physicians and 160 dentists and is home to the only Cancer research Center along the Upper Gulf Coast.

LARGEST & FOREIGN BASED COMPANIES

There are 50 foreign-based companies representing more than 20 countries, some of which include Austal USA, Airbus Americas Engineering, SSAB Americas and Mitsubishi Polysilicon. Together, these companies employ over 13,000 of our Region's workforce.

Industry recruiting in the Region is grouped into seven generic categories

#1 AEROSPACE
#2 CHEMICALS & MANUFACTURING
#3 HEALTHCARE
#4 MARITIME
#5 LOGISTICS & TRANSPORTATION
#6 OIL & GAS
#7 TECHNOLOGY

Source: Mobile Chamber of Commerce

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

What's an Opportunity Zone

Opportunity Zones are are defined as "economically-distressed communities where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. They are an economic development tool that allows investments in distressed areas in the United States. Their purpose is to spur economic growth and job creation in low-income communities while providing tax benefits to investors. When Taxpayers develop in Opportunity Zones, they can temporarily defer taxes on eligible gains when they invest in a Qualified Opportunity Fund

Why Invest in Opportunity Zones

Developers can support economic development in targeted areas where jobs are needed the most while benefitting from tax deferments. Opportunity Zones are key investment ready locations. When developers chose to develop in Qualified Opportunity Zones, they can temporarily defer taxes on eligible gains when they invest in a Qualified Opportunity Fund.

Where are Qualified Opportunity Zones

Low-income communities and certain neighboring areas, defined by population census tracts, can qualify as Opportunity Zones. States nominate communities for the designation, and the U.S. Department of the Treasury certifies that nomination.
There are 21 census tracts in our Region that are designated as Qualified Opportunity Zones.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Opportunity Zones (OZ)throughout the U.S. promise to drive billions—even trillions—of dollars in long-term investment into low-income urban and rural census tracts across the country. One of the main focus' of this CEDS is to capture and promote the economic and community advantages of an OZ. Our Region currently encompasses approximately 403,840 acres of land designated as an OZ with the potential to provide many more acres of designed lands due to the vast amount of property available for growth and development. Having the ability to offer these key investment-ready locations throughout our counties is a huge factor in promoting the economic attractiveness to our Region. See map on the previous page for the current locations of the OZs in our Region.

They are a powerful tool used to direct capital to places where access has been closed off, and promote economic development that benefits residents, businesses and institutions rooted in those communities. Investors reap a tax savings that, ideally, can be employed for further community investment.

The goal of the Opportunity Zones initiative is to achieve a double bottom line: fueling inclusive local economies in communities that benefit the people who live and work there; to forge projects that will enable the people who live and work in Opportunity Zones to thrive, and providing a solid return to investors.

The Opportunity Zones incentive promotes shared prosperity and requires the right kind of management, community engagement, partnership-building and oversight to establish projects in OZs that provide long-lasting benefits to residents and local businesspeople as well as to investors.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

ADECA
Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

The areas eligible for submission as Opportunity Zones are low income census tracts with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent and a median family income of less than 80 percent of the statewide or area median income. Census tracts are statistical subdivisions of a county established by the U.S. Census Bureau. Each tract averages between 1,200 and 8,000 in population and the nominated tracts vary in size from 199 acres to 235,352 acres.

Congress empowered governors to nominate Opportunity Zones in their states by using up to 25 percent of their low-income community census tracts. In Alabama, 629 of the state's 1,181 census tracts qualified as low-income community tracts. The Governor's Office, with the help of ADECA, identified and selected the 158 Opportunity Zones from the qualifying tracts. There is at least one Opportunity Zone in each of the state's 67 counties.

The Governor's Office and ADECA used an objective methodology that involved input from a variety of resources to determine areas where the program could be most effective. Methods used in the selection process included a county-by-county examination of previous designations as advantage sites or industrial sites, a review of aerial imagery for development activities by ADECA's Geographical Information Systems Unit and data and research compiled by federal, state and local organizations.

Opportunity Alabama (or OPAL) is a nonprofit initiative dedicated to connecting investors with investable assets in Alabama's Opportunity Zones. By using a data-driven approach, we bring investors, opportunities, communities and key institutional supporters together for the purpose of generating real returns while improving economic vitality and quality of life in low-income and underrepresented communities across Alabama. More information about Opportunity Zones in Alabama is available at OpportunityAlabama.com.

UNDEREMPLOYMENT

When evaluating unemployment and the number of jobs a region provides, it is as equally important to look at the underemployment occurring within the Region's labor force.

JobsEQ® defines underemployment by adopting the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's methodology: *Underemployed people are those who have acquired at least a bachelor's degree but are working in an occupation where it is not typically required.*

The only occupations indicated in our Region's underemployment figures are "non-college" jobs. A job is classified as a college job if 50 percent or more of the people working in that job indicate that at least a bachelor's degree is necessary to perform the job; otherwise, the job is classified as a non-college job.

Underemployment Key Takeaways

- Baldwin County has the second-highest underemployment percentage in the State (46.2 percent), just lower than Shelby County (46.8 percent).
- Mobile County has a 34.4 percent underemployment rate.
- Escambia County has a 26 percent underemployment rate.
- SARPC's Region contains 30,309 employees who are underemployed by place of work.
- SARPC's Region contains 1,972 Manufacturing employees who are underemployed by place of work.
- The Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (CTE Cluster) has an unemployment rate of 8.6 percent.

BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

A brownfield is defined as land that has been previously developed for industrial or commercial use that has possibly been compromised by contamination.

Brownfields are typically compromised by a hazardous substance, contaminant, or pollutant. Although land that is compromised is often looked at as non-usable, brownfields can be redeveloped and reused if properly assessed. Proper assessment will reveal if the site is contaminated or just perceived to be so due to its appearance.

Remediation of a brownfield can rekindle a local community's economy, lead to job creation, and expand the tax base. Many federal and state programs are able to provide developers with programs that will be beneficial to them for the redevelopment of a brownfield.

Brownfield projects preserve undeveloped land and restore previously developed land to a pre-contamination state which is vital to many communities for economic growth.

Brownfield Site Locations Throughout Region & Within Certified Opportunity Zones

As indicated on the map, unlike the locations of most of the Region's industrial parks, the majority of brownfield sites are located within the Region's Qualified Opportunity Zones, helping make brownfield redevelopment even more attractive and feasible to developers.

KEY

Brownfield Sites

1- ATMORE INDUSTRIAL PARK SITE 1A
2- ATMORE INDUSTRIAL PARK SITE 1B
3- ATMORE INDUSTRIAL PARK SITE 1C
4- ATMORE, CITY OF - RIVERCANE 1 PROPERTY
5- ATMORE, CITY OF - RIVERCANE 2 PROPERTY
6- ATMORE, CITY OF - RIVERCANE 3 PROPERTY
7- ATMORE, CITY OF - RIVERCANE 4 PROPERTY
8- ATMORE, CITY OF - RIVERCANE 5 PROPERTY
9- MIKE SIMPSON FERTILIZER CO.
10- AIRPORT PARCEL
11- ASSEMBLY OF GOD PROPERTY
12- BALLARD PROPERTY
13- BAY FIRE PRODUCTS
14- BAY MINETTE LAND COMPANY
15- CLEMENT PROPERTY
16- DEMPSEY LOT 1
17- DEMPSEY LOT 2
18- DEMPSEY LOT 3
19- FISHERMANS SERVICE AND SALES
20- HINOTE SERVICE STATION
21- KELLY'S PAWN SHOP
22- RAM TRADING CO.
23- SOUTHERN ALUMINUM
24- BREWTON, CITY OF - GLEATON CLEANERS SITE
25- CITRONELLE RAILROAD TURNTABLE
26- TEXAS CITY REFINERY
27- JACKSON THEATRE
28- HISTORIC FOLEY BAKERY
29- 1606 MIDWAY PROPERTY
30- 522 MOBILE STREET
31- 653 ST. LOUIS PROPERTY
32- 913 OPAL PROPERTY
33- AAA WAREHOUSING (601B)
34- ALBERT P. BREWER DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER
35- BROOKLEY FIELD (FORMERLY)
36- BUILDING 1 BROOKLEY AEROPLEX
37- BUILDING 14 BROOKLEY AEROPLEX
38- BUILDING 2 BROOKLEY AEROPLEX
39- CITY OF MOBILE FORMER POLICE FIRING RANGE
40- DIXIE BAG COMPANY
41- FORMER CAR QUEST
42- FORMER SOFTSHINE AUTO WASH
43- HICKORY STREET LANDFILL
44- JOSEPHINE ALLEN HOUSING COMPLEX
45- KEEP MOBILE BEAUTIFUL RECYCLING CENTER
46- MERRITT OIL COMPANY INC
47- MOBILE AREA WATER & SEWER SYSTEM-ZIEBACH WWTP
48- MOBILE GAS WORKS
49- OLD AMERICAN RED CROSS
50- OLD CITY HALL NORTH
51- ST. STEPHENS PROPERTY
52- YARBOROUGH MACHINE & IRON WORKS
53- DEAN BROTHERS FORMER WRECKING SITE
54- FORMER LOFLINS AND VACANT PROPERTY
55- VACANT PARCEL 043; WEST TURNER ROAD
56- VACANT PARCEL 1.01; WEST TURNER ROAD
57- VACANT PARCEL 184; WEST TURNER ROAD

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In efforts to revitalize the Region's historic downtowns in the Region to attract a people, restaurants, retail, and professional offices, along with creating a renewed a sense of community and quality of place, several of the municipalities within the Region have participated in and adopted the practices of the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) program and the Mainstreet program. This partnership focuses on communities with a population of 2,000 to 18,000 and provides them with technical assistance through a three phase approach. This assistance is geared towards helping communities create developments that will ensure success in the long run. For communities to be granted this assistance, they will go through an application process and be selected based on the level of commitment to the ACE program. Phase one of the approach is assessment, two is leadership development and strategic planning, three is implementation and comprehensive planning. Upon completion of these three phases communities will graduate and are designated an Alabama Community of Excellence. Communities that graduate are honored at the Alabama League of Municipalities annual convention.

Main street- This nonprofit organization strives to assist communities by encouraging community engagement and strategies that will produce new jobs, fabricate new investment, attract visitors, and activate growth. Cities can benefit from this organization's four-point approach which includes a proven model that has shown impressive revitalization results from a variety of states. Organization, which allows cities to get everyone on the same page and working towards the same goal. Promotion that will create a positive image and spark community pride and investor confidence. Last but not least, this organization will use design to help create a safe and inviting environment for residents and visitors. Cities that decide to adopt Main Street are giving themselves a great opportunity to strengthen their current economic assets, while also diversifying their economic base.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

The map below indicates the municipalities within the Region who are currently participating in the ACE program and Mainstreet program, or both. In addition to these efforts, many communities are working hard to revitalize their downtowns in efforts to attract and retain residents and visitors alike, while providing the attractions and venues that are most sought after by the working age population.

A vibrant and busy downtown area is one of the most effective community development tools in drawing people to the community. Studies show that a successful downtown offers a wide variety of facilities and services, some of which include: restaurants, retail, entertainment venues, parks, places of worship, civic buildings, lodging, and professional/personal service establishments.
To capture and retain a young and upcoming workforce, becoming a high tech Region will be key. According to the Pew Research Center, anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (age 26-41) is considered a Millennial, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of a new generation. These generations rely heavily on technology and it's a huge driving force behind where this population decides to locate.

A Young Professionals Network was recently launched in 2022, which is helping to attract and retain young professionals in the Mobile area and fulfilling workforce needs. The Regional Workforce Council has been established as well to address specific industry needs

5

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Region's Vision, Goals, and Objectives

5 Strategic Direction

MISSION.....

SARPC's mission and the mission for this CEDS is for the Region to continue to aggressively recruit growth to the Region. Utilize the unique assets each county offers to attract targeted development. Build a skilled and trained workforce. Serve the Region as an effective, contributing partner in economic development .Brand the Region as the Southeast's most economically diverse and competitive market.

VISION.....

What priorities do we as a Region want to achieve in the next five years.
What priorities should we be focusing on?

The Strategic Direction and Action Plan was developed through an internal and external analysis of the SWOT and the Asset Based Approach. Additionally, the CEDS Strategy Committee was presented the above question via an online survey to help determine the vision for our Region.

GOALS.....

Goals are broad outcomes or general intentions that build upon the desired vision for the Region.

Objectives are quantitative, directional statements that support the vision.

Strategies define the means to achieve the goals and objectives.

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. IMPROVE AND INCREASE INFRASTRUCTURE TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT CAPACITIES TO ACCOMMODATE POPULATION GROWTH & TRAFFIC CIRCULATION

2. DECREASE UNDEREMPLOYMENT BY INCREASING WAGES TO CAPTURE & RETAIN WORKFORCE

3. ADVANCE THE REGION'S ECONOMY & INVEST IN DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY ASSETS

4. BUILD A SKILLED & TRAINED WORKFORCE TO FILL THE NEEDS OUR INDUSTRIES REQUIRE

5. PROTECT & FOSTER THE UTILIZATION OF OUR NATURAL ASSETS

6. BUILD A UNIFIED IDENTITY & BRAND FOR THE REGION

STRATEGIC GOALS

OBJECTIVES

- DEVELOPING STRONG WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS; COLLABORATE WITH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
- FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE REGION'S EMPLOYERS TO ASSESS AND OFFER ALTERNATIVES TO FILL THEIR WORKFORCE NEEDS
- CONNECT WITH KEY EDUCATION AND TRAINING PARTNERS SUCH AS LOCAL UNIVERSITIES, LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES, CAREER CENTERS, MOBILE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM AND ITS SIGNATURE ACADEMIES TO INCREASE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH EMPLOYERS.
- CONTINUE INVESTIGATING THE FEASIBILITY OF NEW CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS, INTERNSHIPS, APPRENTICESHIPS AND EMPLOYER-RELATED SCHOLARSHIPS WITH PARTNERS.
- RECRUITING YOUNG, SMART TALENT TO THE AREA
- BUILD AND SUPPLY STATE OF THE ART TECHNOLOGY
- SUPPORTING DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER QUALITY-OF-LIFE ASSETS FOR THE COMMUNITY.
- ESTABLISH A CONSISTENT BRAND AND IDENTITY
- MAKE THE REGION A HUB AND POWERHOUSE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOMENT
- INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS LIKE TRANSPORTATION ARTERIES, PARKS, HOUSING, PUBLIC SAFETY AND EDUCATION
- IMPROVE MOBILE'S "QUALITY OF PLACE" FOR BUSINESS GROWTH AND INVESTMENT
- INCREASE THE POPULATION IN MOBILE

STRATEGIES

- Build a bridge over the Mobile River on I-10
- Support the development of diverse, reliable and cost effective energy sources and systems to meet the Region's economic and environmental goals
- Seek state and/or federal funding for utility improvements and expansion
- Develop and maintain suitable telecommunications infrastructure to bring high-speed internet service to the underserved areas of the Region
- Expand options for high school students to become industry certified while still in high school
- Integrate education, training and workforce development
- Offer more quality job options vs. quantity of jobs to capture quality and loyal employees to decrease underemployment and job turnover rates
- Seek funding for downtown development
- Support businesses and programs that support downtown revitalization
- Encourage responsible development practices that are environmentally friendly
- Create awareness and promote environmental responsibility in the community
- Work with local governments to update their development regulations to include low impact standards
- Support the continued development of the eco-tourism industry through forest recreation, fish and wildlife, and scenic and heritage-based strategies
- Support and seek opportunities for value-added manufacturing that utilizes commodities originating within the Region
- Seek federal funds to identify contaminated sites available for brownfield redevelopment

6

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

Planning for and implementing economic resilience in the Region

6 Economic Resiliency

"Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity"
EDA

WHAT IS ECONOMIC RESILIENCY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

According to the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), "History has shown that a region's success is inherently linked to its economic resilience - in other words, its ability to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any shocks to its businesses and overall economy, whether those stem from natural hazards, climate change, or shifting economic or market conditions."

In order of our Regional economy to achieve resiliency in the face of adversity, we must fully understand the risks that we face, then develop strategies to mitigate those risks. A focus on economic resilience will enable our Region to better withstand shocks, or quite possibly prevent them altogether.

MEASURING RESILIENCE

Resilience is a process, not an end-state. Our Region must employ tools to measure the effectiveness of resilience initiatives across physical, economic, and social dimensions.
Rigorous procedures for data collection and analysis must be implemented to understand and mitigate our vulnerability to economic shocks.

PLANNING FOR & IMPLEMENTING RESILIENCE

A resilient economy can anticipate hazards and threats to people and what they value; understand vulnerabilities and hazards to mitigate and reduce their impact; organize itself through the stages of an emergency, reconstruction, and community betterment; and respond to events as they happen by mobilizing resources and coordinating events.

Both Hurricanes Sally and Zeta revealed the vulnerabilities in our Region as well as the need for proper disaster preparedness and recovery planning. Sudden and unexpected, the impact of these events crippled major parts of our regional economy.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

In the midst of destruction, it is hard to see a disaster as an opportunity. But it can be exactly that — an opportunity to build back better. Too often in the rebuilding process, communities look backwards to try to replicate what they lost instead of looking forward to how they can rebuild more sustainably.

ECONOMIC VS. PHYSICAL SHOCKS

STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING REGIONS AND COMMUNITIES IN THE WAKE OF DISASTER NOT ONLY MEAN REDUCING FUTURE RISK, BUT CAN MEAN ENHANCING QUALITY OF PLACE BY GUIDING SMART DEVELOPMENT, PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES, DIVERSIFYING THE ECONOMY, CREATING ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS, AND FOSTERING ECONOMIC GROWTH.

When examining the types of shocks that a community needs to plan for, most can be categorized in one of two ways, economic shocks and physical shocks. Economic shocks are those which are caused primarily by economic forces such as the closing of a major factory that results in great loss in employment, a national recession, or a change in regulations that affect importing and exporting.

Physical shocks are those which cause harm to either built or natural environment, or both, such as a hurricane, or a man-made disaster such as an oil spill. Our Region is vulnerable to both. Obviously physical shocks are economic in nature as well, so the issue is not just repairing the physical damage, but repairing the economic damage caused by destroyed property and loss of income and businesses.

Whether the shock comes as an economic shock or a physical shock, it is important that all aspects of the community be resilient: people, the built environment, and industries

HAZARD MITIGATION

Economic resiliency is important for both economic shocks and physical shocks, but hazard mitigation is a tool that is mainly focused on physical shocks. Hazard mitigation planning is often focused primarily on natural disasters in which we usually have some advance warning, but hazard mitigation should also focus on physical shocks that come with no warning. Each community in SARPC's Region has created a community action plan that is part of the our Region's Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, which outlines how to prepare for and react to hazards and the resources available in the event of a disaster. Links to our Region's hazard mitigation plan can be found on the Alabama Emergency Management Agency's website, https://ema.alabama.gov/county-mitigation-plan.

COMBATING ECONOMIC AND PHYSICAL SHOCKS

Create Resilient People

• Education
In order to have a resilient workforce, training and education should support local industry and should be adaptable and flexible enough to change as new industries emerge, or as existing industries grow and evolve over time

• Communication
The Region should strive for effective and transparent communication, whether it's about jobs and training opportunities, or advance warning for storms and disaster preparedness

• Quality of Life & Place
Healthy and happy people tend to be more adaptable and resilient in times of hardship and an excellent quality of life and place can make an area marketable and appealing to new industry

• Safety
Providing a safe environment, either on a daily basis through good building and infrastructure, or during a time of physical crisis, such as the availability of shelters and efficient evacuation routes during a storm

Create Resilient Environment

• Structures
Improving and implementing strong building and flood prevention codes that result in improved construction standards create a built environment that is less vulnerable to natural disasters, and will sustain the test of time

• Infrastructure
Install new and up to date infrastructure that is stronger and more resilient, that can withstand a natural disaster. Utilize natural (green) infrastructure, and/or nature-based solutions to minimize flooding, erosion, and stormwater runoff issues.

• Land suitability
Building on land that is most suitable for development reduces vulnerability to natural disasters

• Site Redevelopment
Redevelopment of an existing or underutilized site is often more efficient and cost effective than developing a new site

Create Resilient Industry

• Diversity
Industry in the Region should be diverse in nature

• Adaptability
Industries need to be adaptable to the current market and the workforce should be adaptable to meet those changing needs

Flood Zone Locations Within Each County

The following maps, created using FEMA-designated flood zones, show the geographic location of flood zones in each of the three counties in SARPC's Region (2021).

FEMA Flood Zone Designations

Definitions of FEMA Flood Zone Designations

Flood zones are geographic areas that the FEMA has defined according to varying levels of flood risk. These zones are depicted on a community's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) or Flood Hazard Boundary Map. Each zone reflects the severity or type of flooding in the area.

Moderate to Low Risk Areas

In communities that participate in the NFIP, flood insurance is available to all property owners and renters in these zones:

ZONE	DESCRIPTION
B and X (shaded)	Area of moderate flood hazard, usually the area between the limits of the 100-year and 500-year floods. B Zones are also used to designate base floodplains of lesser hazards, such as areas protected by levees from 100-year flood, or shallow flooding areas with average depths of less than one foot or drainage areas less than 1 square mile.
C and X (unshaded)	Area of minimal flood hazard, usually depicted on FIRMs as above the 500-year flood level. Zone C may have ponding and local drainage problems that don't warrant a detailed study or designation as base floodplain. Zone X is the area determined to be outside the 500-year flood and protected by levee from 100-year flood.

High Risk Areas

In communities that participate in the NFIP, mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements apply to all of these zones:

ZONE	DESCRIPTION
A	Areas with a 1% annual chance of flooding and a 26% chance of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage. Because detailed analyses are not performed for such areas; no depths or base flood elevations are shown within these zones.
AE	The base floodplain where base flood elevations are provided. AE Zones are now used on new format FIRMs instead of A1-A30 Zones.
A1-30	These are known as numbered A Zones (e.g., A7 or A14). This is the base floodplain where the FIRM shows a BFE (old format).
AH	Areas with a 1% annual chance of shallow flooding, usually in the form of a pond, with an average depth ranging from 1 to 3 feet. These areas have a 26% chance of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage. Base flood elevations derived from detailed analyses are shown at selected intervals within these zones.
AO	River or stream flood hazard areas, and areas with a 1% or greater chance of shallow flooding each year, usually in the form of sheet flow, with an average depth ranging from 1 to 3 feet. These areas have a 26% chance of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage. Average flood depths derived from detailed analyses are shown within these zones.
AR	Areas with a temporarily increased flood risk due to the building or restoration of a flood control system (such as a levee or a dam). Mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements will apply, but rates will not exceed the rates for unnumbered A zones if the structure is built or restored in compliance with Zone AR floodplain management regulations.
A99	Areas with a 1% annual chance of flooding that will be protected by a Federal flood control system where construction has reached specified legal requirements. No depths or base flood elevations are shown within these zones.

High Risk - Coastal Areas

In communities that participate in the NFIP, mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements apply to all of these zones.

ZONE	DESCRIPTION
V	Coastal areas with a 1% or greater chance of flooding and an additional hazard associated with storm waves. These areas have a 26% chance of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage. No base flood elevations are shown within these zones.
VE, V1 - 30	Coastal areas with a 1% or greater chance of flooding and an additional hazard associated with storm waves. These areas have a 26% chance of flooding over the life of a 30-year mortgage. Base flood elevations derived from detailed analyses are shown at selected intervals within these zones.

STORM SURGE

Flood zone designation is determined in part by the threat of storm surge. The following storm surge maps show the different levels of flood water inundation at a Category 1-5 Hurricane

NFIP & CRS

Good development begins with proper planning. Municipalities who are members of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) can offer residents the option to purchase flood insurance as a protection against flood losses in exchange for the creation and adoption of community floodplain management regulations that reduce future flood damages. Every county and municipality within SARPC's Region is a member of the NFIP and has adopted a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, which permits development in flood zones provided additional flood protection standards are included during construction to minimize flood damage to structures and ensure proper protection from flood hazards are achieved.

THE COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM (CRS) AND THE NFIP

The goal of this program is to encourage a comprehensive approach to floodplain management, reduce flood damage to insurable properties, and strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the NFIP.

This is a voluntary program that awards communities exceeding the minimum requirements. Applicants must participate in the NFIP for at least one year and have full compliance with NFIP regulations. Only four municipalities within the Region currently participate in the CRS program.

NATURAL DISASTERS

HURRICANE SALLY HIT OUR SHORES ON SEPTEMBER 16, 2020.

THE EPIC CATAGORY 2 HURRICANE SLAMMED INTO THE REGION, MAKING LANDFALL IN GULF SHORES.

THE SLOW-MOVING STORM HOVERED OVER THE COUNTY FOR MORE THAN 6 HOURS, REAKING HAVOC ON BALDWIN COUNTY & CAUSING $7.3 BILLION DOLLARS IN DAMAGES.

PRIOR TO SALLY, ALABAMA HAD NOT BEEN HIT BY A HURRICANE SINCE 2004. IRONICALLY, HURRICANE IVAN HIT OUR COAST ON THE SAME DAY, IN THE SAME PLACE, 16 YEARS AGO.

One of the standout statistics from Sally was the amount of rainfall the storm dumped along the Gulf Coast. Orange Beach received the most, an incredible 30 inches.

In addition to uprooting over 200,000 trees in Baldwin County, Sally also did extensive damage to the pecan crop in the County and the timber industry. The Alabama Forestry Commission estimated that 2,440 acres were damaged and more than 79,000 tons of timber were destroyed as a result of the storm.

Almost every resident in Baldwin County suffered some type of damage as as a result of Hurricane Sally.

Dauphin Island and South Mobile County were the first to feel the impacts with storm surge flooding inundating the communities.

Sustained winds reached 105 miles per hour, but Fort Morgan felt the brunt of it, with wind speeds reaching as high as 121 mph.

Gulf Shores, Orange Beach, and Fairhope received the most damages in the Region from Sally.

HURRICANE EVACUATION ROUTES IN THE REGION

The Alabama Emergency Management Agency website, www.ema.alabama.gov, and www.ready.gov offers information about planning for and responding to many different types of disasters. In our Region, hurricane preparedness is one of the most important disasters to prepare for, and fortunately, one with the most forewarning. The map shows the major hurricane evacuation routes in our Region. In the event of an emergency, shelters are provided throughout our Region and along evacuation routes throughout the state to provide safe housing for evacuees.

PANDEMIC-2020

Most of the survey participants in the CEDS Strategy Committee stated their organization was impacted in some way by the global pandemic of 2020.

43%yes-Impatced / 29% No Impacts

Most of the impacts felt were targeted at:

Business and workforce retention (71%) &
New business attraction and development (43%)

Additionally, the majority of participants concurred that our Region faired well and has fully recovered from the pandemic.

43% Fully Recovered / 14% Somewhat Recovered / 14% Not Recovered

---

In summary, the overall consensus of survey participants was:

- The lasting effects of the pandemic were supply chain issues and people's unwillingness to return to work.
- Our Region however, has a strong manufacturing backbone, which has helped us to not be as negatively impacted as other regions, giving us the ability to recover faster.
- Some businesses reported their sales did not slow much, with some even growing. Others reported customer demand has never been higher.

Below is a summary planning report of the impacts the pandemic had on our Region.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) IMPACT PLANNING REPORT

3 Counties 2

POPULATION NO HEALTH INSURANCE (ACS)

693,434	2.46	276,280	40.6	$55,097	$197,217	137	93%
Population	Avg Size Household	Households	Median Age	Median Household Income	Median Home Value	Housing Affordability	Internet at Home

POPULATION AND BUSINESSES

685,027	24,382	278,842
Daytime Population	Total Businesses	Total Employees

POVERTY

39,390	33,101
Households Below the Poverty Level	Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP

AT RISK POPULATION

68,943	132,987	14,672
Households With Disability	Population 65+	Households Without Vehicle

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE (ACS)

KEY INDICATORS: IMPACT PLANNING

3 Counties 2

693,434	2.46	276,280	40.6	$55,097	$197,217	137	93%
Population	Avg Size Household	Households	Median Age	Median Household Income	Median Home Value	Housing Affordability	Internet at Home

LANGUAGE (ACS)	Age 5-17	18-64	Age 65+	Total
English Only	105,616	378,799	115,406	599,821
Spanish	3,310	9,652	1,352	14,314
Spanish & English Well	3,129	7,472	1,223	11,824
Spanish & English Not Well	181	1,769	129	2,079
Indo-European	964	3,740	924	5,628
Indo-European & English Well	928	3,462	[illegible]	[illegible]
Indo-Euro & English Not Well	36	85	36	156
Asian-Pacific Island	1,007	4,387	760	6,154
Asian-Pacific Isl & English Well	981	3,279	555	4,815
Asian-Pacific Isl & English Not Well	26	998	197	1,221
Other Language	246	1,519	87	1,852
Other Language & English Well	234	1,367	87	1,688
Other Lang. & English Not Well	12	152	0	164

POPULATION AND POVERTY STATUS (ACS)	Total
Population for whom Poverty Status is Determined	655,652
Income to Poverty Ratio <0.50	46,066
Income to Poverty Ratio 0.50-0.99	54,386
Income to Poverty Ratio 1.00-1.24	31,978
Income to Poverty Ratio 1.25-1.49	33,704
Income to Poverty Ratio 1.50-1.84	46,560
Income to Poverty Ratio 1.85-1.99	19,442
Income to Poverty Ratio 2.00+	423,516

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT (ACS)

POPULATION BY AGE

POVERTY LEVELS (ACS)	Below	Above	Total
Total	39,390	215,145	254,535
Married Couple Families	5,384	117,164	122,548
Other Families w/Male Householder	1,611	8,093	9,704
Other Families w/Female Householder	11,272	23,115	34,387
Nonfamilies w/Male Householder	7,225	32,240	39,465
Nonfamilies w/Female Householder	13,898	34,533	48,431

SENIOR POPULATION

NO HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE	(ACS) %	Total
Population <19	1.0%	6,411
Population Age 19-34	4.4%	29,100
Population Age 35-64	5.2%	34,213
Population Age 65+	0.1%	586

The 120-mile coastline of the Region's Coastline Warning Area (CWA) has historically been impacted and will continue to be impacted by tropical storms and hurricanes which will continue to disrupt the local economy due to either residents being displaced due to evacuations, businesses closing either temporarily or permanently, jobs and incomes being lost. Planning and being more for disasters will make our Region more resilient and will substantially alleviate these negative economic impacts by supplying the Region with continued facilities and services for the duration of the disaster, which in turn will capture and retain industries to the Region that are not as vulnerable to storms effects as many others currently are.

APPENDIX A

IMPLEMENTATION

A APPENDIX Implementation

Goal 1: IMPROVE AND INCREASE INFRASTRUCTURE		
Objective	**Strategy/Activity**	**Measurement**
Develop public-private partnerships that improve, expand and maintain adequate infrastructure that is current with the latest technological advancements and capable of meeting existing and future needs	• Build a bridge over the Mobile River on I-10 • Support the development of diverse, reliable and cost effective energy sources and systems to meet the region's economic and environmental goals	• Bridge construction progress • Number of diverse, cost effective energy sources and systems in place
Provide adequate and safe water and sewer facilities and broadband to service existing and future needs for homes, businesses and industry	• Seek state and/or federal funding for utility improvements and expansion • Develop and maintain suitable telecommunications infrastructure to bring high-speed internet service to the underserved areas of the region	• Amount of money received • Areas of new broadband service
Utilize nature-based and/or green infrastructure methods to minimize flooding, erosion, and stormwater runoff issues.	• Amend development regulations to require new developments to integrate green infrastructure, otherwise known as Low-Impact Development (LID) techniques	• Improved flooding controls • Decreased amounts of sedimentation entering waterways • Slower velocity rates of stormwater runoff
Improve existing infrastructure to accommodate new industry	• Repair and/or replace damaged and outdated infrastructure • Provide more housing stock and lower insurance costs • Highway expansion and road and bridge maintenance to supply capacities	• Safer roads and bridges • More broadband availability • Increased inventory to accommodate supply chain routes to move product through Region to national markets
Goal 2: DECREASE UNDEREMPLOYMENT		
Objective	**Strategy/Activity**	**Measurement**
Improve Mobile's quality of place for business growth and investment	• Offer more quality job options vs. quantity of jobs to capture quality and loyal employees to decrease underemployment • Integrate education, training and workforce development	• Amount of turnover • Number of jobs

Decrease income disparity levels to offer a more equal pay scale	• Increase pay scales at blue collar jobs and tourism industry	• Less turn-over in staff • Loyal employees • Increased levels of productivity
Work with public education leaders to increase graduation rates and education levels	• Offer more programs to assist students with needs • Offer more advising and counseling services • Collaborate with parents more to ensure parent involvement • Offer more after school programs for high-schoolers that provide activities and education	• A more educated population is created • More options to find skilled and educated workers • More successful students and higher graduation rates • Decreased levels of poverty • Decreased levels of crime
Goal 3: ADVANCE THE REGION'S ECONOMY/INVEST IN DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT		
Objective	**Strategy/Activity**	**Measurement**
Create an environment that fosters economic diversification and growth in the Region	• Support development and expansion of research and development parks • Support the development of existing and new business incubators and accelerators throughout the region • Seek funding for downtown development and support businesses and programs that support downtown revitalization.	• Number of new parks • Number of new businesses • Downtown growth
Continue to be competitive in the global economy by proactively developing and marketing our technological, environmental, educational, and human and natural resources	• Increase the number of regional businesses engaged in selling goods and services internationally and the diversification of the markets they serve • Provide educational opportunities to regional businesses interested in international trade on the	• Amount of import and export gross national product • Increased trade

	advantages of exporting their goods and services	
Strengthen and expand economic cooperation and collaboration regionally and beyond the regions borders	• Continue to attract new buisnesses and industries to the region • **Foreign Direct Investment missions** • **Domestic and international trade shows for business attraction**	• Number of new and expanding industries
Provide tri-county transportation routes to move people through the Region	• Work with funders to provide more public transportation options, especially after tolls are enforced to travel between counties	• More people visiting and investing into downtowns • Increased sales • Less cars and pollution • Decreased traffic
Make the Region a hub and powerhouse for economic development Create new economic assets from previous developments	• Increase the population in Mobile • Seek federal funds to identify contaminated sites availble for brownfield redevelopment • Encourage new developments in Opportuntiy zones	• Population numbers • Number of brownfield sites being used • More new businesses locating to opportunity zones
Create vibrant downtowns to attract and retain working aged populations	• Decrease crime levels to create a safer environment • Install more technology to accommodate GenZ needs • Provide more events and establishments that draw younger people to the downtowns • Capitalize and build upon community assets and ameneties • Offer familiarization tours for site developers and talent attraction	• Increased downtown activitiy • More technology integrated into businesses • Safer downtown areas • More socialization opportunties to create a sense of place

Support entrepreneurship -- Innovation Portal hub	• Provide incentives and offer benefits to encourage entrepreneurship	• More new local businesses are created • Increased wealth to Region
Goal 4: BUILD A SKILLED & TRAINED WORKFORCE		
Objective	**Strategy/Activity**	**Measurement**
Recruit young smart talent to the area	• Expand options for high school and college students to become industry certified while still in school • Include parent participation more to capture more students to career programs and intership opportunties	• Employee age and number of new trainings • More students enrolled in career training and internship programs
Create more available workforce to meet the high demand for trained workers	• Capture high school students through career training electives and counseling services • Provide more internship opportunties for students • Provide working opportunities for the retired population to fill employment gaps	• More educated and trained workforce avaiable for work
Provide infrastructure to accommodate workforce	• Build a workforce training campus in needed areas to attract and train workforce to fill tourism industry jobs • Build affordable housing to supply quality living options at lower costs	• Tourism industry sees increased availability in workforce • Tourism entities can supply needed workers to fill positions to meet the incresased demands
Offer new and needed employment services to capture more workforce	• Offer hybrid work settings and schedules • Provide at-work childcare options • Offer more options to modify traditional work routines to incentivize Generation Z populations to enter the workforce • Work with local Chambers to prepare for tomorrow's workforce	• Increased number of avialable workers to fill positions • Happerier employees who can work while providing for child's needs • Increased productivity levels • More people working and remaining in the Region

	• Work with local leadership to plan for tomorrow's workforce	
Provide more workforce training and education options	• Create more job training and education programs and infrustructure • Offer more home-based education and work options • Offer more mental health and advising programs to high-schoolers and college students • Offer programs that promote socialization	• Better trained and skilled workforce ready to meet the demand for workers • Increased production levels
Goal 5: PROTECT AND FOSTER THE UTILIZATION OF NATURAL ASSETS		
Objective	Strategy/Activity	Measurement
Build upon the uniqueness of the Region's natural resources to leverage sustainable and diverse enterprise opportunities	• Support the continued development of the eco-tourism through forest recreation, fish and wild life, and scenic and heritage based strategies • Support and seek opportunities for value-added manufacturing that utilizes commodities originating within the region • Market and capitalize on cultural assets	• Tourism numbers • Number of added value products
Create more ecotourism businesses to capitalize on the outdoor recreation economy	• Recruit more ecotourism to the area to utilize our natural assets while creating awareness and education to the pubic to ensure environmental protection	• Increased number of ecotourism businesses • Increased awareness of environmental assets and protection efforts • Public gains more knowledge about protecting natural assets and becomes better stewards of the environment

Implementation

Goal 6: BUILD A UNIFIED IDENTITY & BRAND FOR THE REGION		
Objective	**Strategy/Activity**	**Measurement**
Establish a consistent brand and identity	• Support and seek oppurtunites for value-added manufacturing that utilizes commodities within the Region	• Business growth
Increase collaborations between local leaders and government officials to support economy and build up Region	• Create new programs and partnerships that encourage unified projects between counties • Create a unified identity for the Region • Prioritize building a name and brand for the Region by highlighting our most attractive assets • Market Region's assets	• Region becomes more identifiable to outside markets and people • Region draws more people to area • Increased amounts of tourism and relocation • Increased interest in Region
Build resiliency and diversity to create a name and identity for the Region that represents both	• Work with local Chambers and leadership to plan and develop a strategy	• A new brad is create that is attrative to new populations and markets

APPENDIX B

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

B APPENDIX References & Acknowledgements

Map Sources

1. **The Regional Councils, Page 1.** *US Census TIGER/line shapefiles (2022); Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC). https://alarc.org/the-councils/*
2. **SARPC Planning Commission and Planning Area, Pages 2-3.** *US Census (2020) City, County, and State Shapefiles. https://data.census.gov/*
3. **SARPC Region Population, Page 8. Population Change Maps:** *US Census and American Community Survey (ACS). Population Snapshots: ESRI Community Analyst Comparison Reports.*
4. **Land Use\Land Cover Classifications, Page 18.** *ArcGIS Online Hosted Layer, compiled and provided by Impact Observatory, Microsoft, and ESRI.*
5. **Agriculture and Aquaculture, Mapped, Page 19.** *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS); USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS); Alabama Farmers Federation.*
6. **Agricultural Categories in the Region, Page 20.** *USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service (2022) annual Cropland Data Layer (CDL).*
7. **Location of Oyster Farms in the Region, Page 22.** *Alabama Aquaculture- Oyster Farming. https://alaquaculture.com/state/*
8. **SARPC Region Air, Rail, and Road, Page 28.** *USGS National Transportation Dataset (NTD) (2020). U.S. Census (2020).*
9. **Industrial Parks and Opportunity Zones, Page 33.** *StatsAmerica, Opportunity Zones Tool (2018). https://www.statsamerica.org/opportunity/*
10. **Natural Assets, Page 40.** *USGS, US Census (2020), US Forest Service, National Estuarine Program (NEP) 2022, https://www.mobilebaynep.com/*
11. **Healthcare, Page 52.** *ArcGIS Online, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) Homeland Security Infrastructure Program (HSIP 2022); USGS NTD (2022).*
12. **Top Exports, Page 64.** *Mobile Chamber of Commerce. https://mobilechamber.com/*
13. **Brownfield Site Locations, Page 75.** *US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Geospatial Download Service, Brownfield Properties. https://www.epa.gov/frs/geospatial-data-download-service*
14. **ACE and MAIN STREET Communities, Page 77.** *https://www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org/, https://www.mainstreetalabama.org/*
15. **Flood Zone Locations Within Each County, Page 87.** *Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Hazard Data (2021?).*
16. **Storm Surge, Hurricane Categories 1-5, Page 89.** *National Hurricane Center, National and Atmospheric Administration (NHC-NOAA 2021) Inundation Data.*
17. **NFIP & CRS, Page 90.** *National Flood Insurance Program and the Community Rating System, Participating Communities. FEMA (2022). https://www.fema.gov/floodplain-management/community-rating-system*
18. **Hurricane Evaluation Routes in the Region, Page 92.** *ArcGIS Online, hosted layer (accessed 2022); USGS; Homeland Infrastructure Foundation Level Data*

References & Acknowledgements

Textual References

1. **Population Highlights and Tapestry Segments, Pages 7-12.** *ESRI Community Analyst, US Census, American Community Survey (ACS).*
2. **Economic Assets, Page 13.** *Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance (BCEDA); Mobile Chamber of Commerce; Escambia County Industrial Development Authority*
3. **Tourism Industry, Pages 14-16.** *Alabama Tourism Department Annual Report, https://alabama.travel/*
4. **Transportation Infrastructure, Pages 23, 24, 29, and 30.** *Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT); Mobile Metropolitan Organization (MPO).*
5. **Air Infrastructure, Page 25.** *Business Alabama Magazine (https://businessalabama.com/); Mobile Chamber of Commerce*
6. **Port of Mobile, Page 27.** *Alabama Port Authority, https://www.alports.com/*
7. **Industrial Parks, Pages 32-33.** *Business Alabama Magazine*
8. **South Alabama Mega Site, Page 34.** *Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance (BCEDA)*
9. **Education, Pages 47-51.** *Public School Boards, https://www.bcbe.org/; https://www.mcpss.com/; https://ecsd-fl.schoolloop.com/*
10. **Opportunity Zones, Pages 70-72.** *StatsAmerica and US Economic Development Administration (EDA)*
11. **Agricultural Statistics, Pages 18-20.** *USDA-ERS; USAD*
12. **Mobile Bay, Freshwater Wetlands, and Watersheds, Pages 41-43.** *Mobile Bay National Estuarine Program, https://www.mobilebaynep.com/*
13. **Workforce Development and Training, Pages 45-46.** *www.aidt.edu; alabamaworks.com*
14. **Ecotourism and Outdoor Economies, Page 16,** *Outdoorindustry.org*
15. **Manufacturing Clusters, Page 17.** *https://www.novelis.com/bayminette/*
16. **Tourism & Hospitality Industry, Page 14, Gulf Shores/Orange Beach Sports & Events***Gulfshores.com; Foleysports.com*

Acknowledgements

1. **Coastal Alabama Community College,** *https://www.coastalalabama.edu/*
2. **Alabama Power,** *https://www.alabamapower.com/*
3. **Escambia County Emergency Management Agency (EMA),** *https://www.escambiacountyal.gov/health___safety/emergency_management_agency.php*
4. **Mobile Chamber of Commerce-Economic Development,** *https://mobilechamber.com/*
5. **University of South Alabama, Department of Research and Economic Development,** *https://www.southalabama.edu/departments/research/*

APPENDIX C

FUNDING SOURCES & PARTNERS

C APPENDIX Funding Sources & Partners

	Agency Name	Type of Funding
ACCS	Alabama Community College System	Cash and In-kind – Workforce Training
ALDOT	Alabama Department of Transportation	Cash – Road Improvements
ADECA	Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs	Grant 80% - 20% ---$50,000 – $500,000. Depends on Funding. Economic Development Grant - $200,000 - $350,000. (HUD restrictions apply)
ADO	Alabama Development Office	Grant- Access Roads for Industries
BCEDA	Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance	Assists with Grants – Alabama Industrial Development Grant: $10,000 to $150,000. Alabama Industrial Access Road Grant and CDBG Economic Development Grant: $200,000 to $350,000
BPOSF	British Petroleum Oil Spill Fund	Grant – through the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council.
CCAA	Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama	
DRA	Delta Regional Authority	Various Grants- limited to Escambia County
DOL	Department of Labor	Grants to Community Colleges or Universities for workforce training.
EDA	Economic Development Administration	Grant – EDA – 50% - 50% (Million plus) Depends on Funding
EDPA	Economic Development Partnership of Alabama	Varying types of support for businesses and communities
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration	Airport funding and support
(ADC) IDA	Alabama Department of Commerce (Industrial Development Authority)	Industry and Small Business Support - State Tax Incentive packages
MCC	Mobile County Consortium	Grant's limited to Mobile County – HUD criteria)
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization	Grants from ALDOT – sidewalks, landscaping, gateways.
SARPC	South Alabama Regional Planning Commission	Grant preparation and limited gap loan financing - $10,000 to $125,000.
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture	Grants and Loans to Rural Areas. Limited by geographic boundaries.
USA	University of South Alabama	Cash and In-kind (Research to Market and Incubators and entrepreneurial centers)