

Georgia Business AND Economic Conditions

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Regional Economic Profiles, 2001 ■ Part 3

AN ECONOMIC TRAVELOGUE OF GEORGIA

This special series discusses the prospects for economic development in each of Georgia's twelve service delivery regions--that together encompass all 159 counties--created by the State Legislature to foster regional collaboration and to bring state resources closer to the people. Funding for the original research was provided by a grant from the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

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Region 9 consists of 17 counties in east central Georgia. The region does not contain a MSA, nor does

it have a city that is likely to become an MSA. Since it is situated beyond the immediate influence of any metropolitan area, Region 9 is the state's most rural, and there-

fore will benefit from state's government's recent focus on rural economic development. Spearheaded by the OneGeorgia Authority, which is headquartered in Dublin, monies from one-third of the state's \$4.8 billion tobacco settlement will be spent throughout rural Georgia over the next 25 years for bricks-and-mortar projects, water and sewer projects, and deal closings. Projects already

funded include technical assistance for farmers to transition into nursery crop production, a loan to Statesboro for natural gas service to Metter and Candler County, and a grant to Wrightsville to make sewer system improvements. Over time, a succession of such projects

Region 9: Heart of Georgia

will increase the region's productive capacity, thereby stimulating and diversifying its economy. In contrast, efforts to decentralize state government operations probably will not help the region very much because these offices probably will go to cities that are much larger than those found here.

Even though the region's economic base is broaden-

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ing, agriculture, forestry, and labor-intensive manufacturing still account for much of it. Unfortunately, these sectors are very sensitive to changes in the U.S. and global economies, so any shifts in policy are deeply felt locally.

Although the Census 2000 data show that this sparsely settled region's population grew slower than the state's (13 percent versus 26 percent, respectively) between 1990 and 2000, it grew at the same pace as that of the nation (13 percent). Significantly, no county's population declined. This is a remarkable achievement given that almost half of them—including Bleckley, Emanuel, Johnson, Tattnall, Telfair, Treutlen, Wheeler, and Wilcox—lost population between 1980 and 1990. By 2000, however, seven of the counties had rebounded, and only Johnson County was 100 persons short of its 1980 level. Stronger demographics therefore reflect the region's progress in restructuring its economy in the face of significant adversity.

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SURVIVAL SKILLS

Interstate 16 bisects the region from east to west, providing vital links to I-95 near Savannah and to I-75 in Macon. The interstate provides easy access to the port in Savannah as well as to fast-growing business and consumer markets in Atlanta and Florida, and because of it, the region is ideal for distribution centers and for the manufacturing and assembly of component parts. Bleckley, Laurens, Truetlen, Emanuel, and Candler counties, which have one or more interchanges, stand to gain the most from the presence of I-16. The Best Buy distribution center in Laurens County, which opened in 2000, already employs over 200 and is expected to expand in 2003. Laurens County also will benefit from the announced expansion of YKK's operations in Dublin. Candler County's interchanges on I-16 are very close to I-95 and the port facilities in Savannah, and Metter has wide-band fiber optic lines that should appeal to technology companies.

The increasing traffic on I-16 also is powering the growth of businesses that depend on travelers' dollars. For example, a cluster of motels, restaurants, and service stations has developed at Exit 104 near Metter. But there is nothing major to attract visitors as they pass through on the way to and from Savannah. Moreover, the growing popularity of Savannah among vacationers and of Atlanta among business travelers helps ensure a steady flow of cash and credit cards in both directions along I-16, so the regional economy could benefit if it finds ways to tap into this growing river of spending power.

Widening major north-south highways U.S. 441 and U.S. 1, which intersect I-16, would help local communities, too, since many companies will not consider sites that are not on an interstate or easily connected to one. Swainsboro, Vidalia, and Baxley especially could benefit from the four-laning of U.S. 1. Expanding the Golden Isles Parkway, which runs east-to-west between I-75 and Brunswick, would help Eastman, Baxley, and Jesup.

The new runway planned for the regional airport in Eastman should further stimulate that city's emerging aircraft manufacturing industry, which already is utilizing workers trained at the Heart of Georgia Aviation and Technical College. One local company that's making a name for itself is the Heart of Georgia Metal Crafters in Eastman. After only one year in business, it recently won contracts with the U.S. Department of Defense. Also, Aircraft Manufacturing and Development Corporation has opened a facility that produces small planes. Meanwhile, Invostyle, a division of Bestop Inc. announced an expansion of its automobile parts manufacturing plant in Eastman.

Although high-tech companies usually select urban areas where the pools of talent are deep and broad, the high costs of operating in major cities—and investors' profit motives—are forcing them to move elsewhere. So rural areas with good telecommunications infrastructure and a pool of skilled workers should be prime candidates.

**Region 9: Heart of Georgia
Population Statistics by County
1990 and 2000**

Area	Total Population		Percent Change in Population 1990-2000
	1990	2000	
Georgia	6,478,149	8,186,453	26.4
Region 9	241,578	272,894	13.0
Appling	15,744	17,419	10.6
Bleckley	10,430	11,666	11.9
Candler	7,744	9,577	23.7
Dodge	17,607	19,171	8.9
Emanuel	20,546	21,837	6.3
Evans	8,724	10,495	20.3
Jeff Davis	12,032	12,684	5.4
Johnson	8,329	8,560	2.8
Laurens	39,988	44,874	12.2
Montgomery	7,379	8,270	12.1
Tattnall	17,722	22,305	25.9
Telfair	11,000	11,794	7.2
Toombs	24,072	26,067	8.3
Treutlen	5,994	6,854	14.3
Wayne	22,356	26,565	18.8
Wheeler	4,903	6,179	26.0
Wilcox	7,008	8,577	22.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File and 1990 Census.
Internet Release Date: April 2, 2001.

Now Swainsboro is marketing itself to high-tech businesses that need to operate where the cost structure is low, where their basic needs for skilled labor are met, and where sites with advanced telecommunications infrastructure are available. East Georgia College not only has the capacity to educate and train workers in IT-related fields, it is marketing rural Georgia to businesses looking for sites or considering expansions. The new Swainsboro/Emanuel County Technology Park, next door to the college, has a fiber optic ring, high-speed Internet access, and a fixed wireless digital access system. An Alpharetta-based company, Zcorum, has seized the opportunity and will locate its new high-tech customer care center in the industrial park, creating 100 new jobs. Many of the new employees will be trained at East Georgia College. Civic leaders hope that more high-technology companies will follow.

In addition, Swainsboro will benefit from Nordson Corporation's plans to open a new facility to assemble industrial equipment, creating 125 jobs. Crider Poultry's new chicken-canning plant complements the company's existing processing plant. The trough in the aquifer that lies beneath Emanuel County should help the area lure water-intensive development. Recent improvements at the Emanuel County airport also make the area more appealing to companies that use business planes.

Attracting prisons and prison jobs is one way the region is diversifying its economic base. The prisons generate direct economic benefits via spending by the facility, its employees, and visitors. Prisons also are environmentally clean. But they one immense drawback: their very presence discourages many other types of development.

**Region 9: Heart of Georgia
Employment Statistics by County
1990, 2000, and 2005**

Area	Total Employment			Percent Change	
	March 1990	March 2000	March 2005*	1990-2000	2000-2005
Georgia	2,814,344	3,754,710	4,409,762		
Region 9	82,928	93,595	100,016	12.9	6.9
Appling	5,035	6,042	6,619	20.0	9.5
Bleckley	3,268	4,132	4,646	26.4	12.4
Candler	2,277	2,662	2,878	16.9	8.1
Dodge	4,347	5,963	6,984	37.2	17.1
Emanuel	7,870	7,325	7,067	-6.9	-3.5
Evans	3,311	4,483	5,216	35.4	16.4
Jeff Davis	5,817	5,243	4,978	-9.9	-5.1
Johnson	2,379	2,306	2,270	-3.1	-1.5
Laurens	16,509	19,845	21,758	20.2	9.6
Montgomery	1,663	1,676	1,683	0.8	0.4
Tattnall	5,518	5,825	5,985	5.6	2.7
Telfair	4,593	4,658	4,691	1.4	0.7
Toombs	9,052	10,760	11,731	18.9	9.0
Treutlen	1,338	1,132	1,041	-15.4	-8.0
Wayne	7,574	9,217	10,168	21.7	10.3
Wheeler	973	937	920	-3.7	-1.9
Wilcox	1,404	1,389	1,382	-1.1	-0.5

*Extension of trends.

Note: Counties and regions may not add exactly due to undistributed employment. Data are for covered employment, which includes employment subject to unemployment insurance law of Georgia, and are not comparable to other nonagricultural statistics.

Source: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia, based on data from Georgia Department of Labor Information Systems.

**Region 9: Heart of Georgia
Total Buying Power Statistics
by County, 1990 and 2001**

Area	Total Buying Power (thousands of dollars)		Percent Change in Buying Power 1990-2001
	1990	2001	
Georgia	98,984,939	191,840,268	93.8
Region 9	2,705,897	4,556,743	68.4
Appling	161,561	289,516	79.2
Bleckley	125,300	208,821	66.7
Candler	94,087	171,237	82.0
Dodge	182,774	303,658	66.1
Emanuel	214,436	338,371	57.8
Evans	101,984	202,595	98.7
Jeff Davis	141,188	217,042	53.7
Johnson	81,498	132,113	62.1
Laurens	485,172	845,040	74.2
Montgomery	79,199	128,948	62.8
Tattnall	197,189	366,641	85.9
Telfair	118,776	181,203	52.6
Toombs	284,898	463,175	62.6
Treutlen	55,644	93,477	68.0
Wayne	258,840	413,911	59.9
Wheeler	50,121	80,338	60.3
Wilcox	73,229	120,657	64.8

Buying power is disposable personal income.

Source: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia.

Region 10: Southwest Georgia



Located in the southwest corner of the state, Region 10 borders Alabama to the west, and Florida to the south. The region is cradled by Interstates 75 and 10, which run just outside of its southern and eastern boundaries. Two MSAs—Albany to the north, and Tallahassee to the south—along the Georgia-Florida line have major impact on the region's economy and population. In addition to Albany, the smaller cities of Thomasville, Moultrie, and Bainbridge in the region's southeast are the main population and business centers. The western part of the region is less populated and depends heavily on agriculture as its economic base, with cotton, corn, hay, tobacco, peanuts, pecans, silage, and soybeans as the primary crops.

Because some of the rural counties of Region 10 are among the poorest in the state, they presumably would have slow growth or a decrease in population. But to the contrary, only Dougherty County, a part of the Albany MSA, lost population between 1990 and 2000. Dougherty's losses, however, were more than compensated by the growth of Lee County, the other part of the Albany MSA. As a whole, the Albany MSA's population increased by an estimated 7.3 percent between 1990 and 2000. Lee and Calhoun counties—on Albany's western edge—scored the highest 1990-2000 percentage population gains, 52.4 and 26.1 percent, respectively. Mitchell and Grady counties also exceeded the region's average 10.1 percent growth, and increased their populations by 18 and 16.7 percent, respectively. The population growth in these counties was fueled by Thomasville, Moultrie, and—in Grady County's case—Tallahassee, Florida.

A CLOSER LOOK

In step with population growth, Lee County's employment more than doubled (118.5 percent) between 1990 and 2000. Mitchell County enlarged its workforce by 45.5 percent, mostly due to the expansion of the Cagle's/Keystone Foods plant. Thomas and Colquitt counties also gained about 23 percent more workers over the decade. In terms of employment growth, Albany, Thomasville, and Moultrie were the centers of economic activity in the region. Grady County, on the other hand, gained in population but lost places of work. Baker, Early, and Terrell counties in the region's west

suffered employment losses, too, dropping 5.2, 6.5, and 10.4 percent, respectively.

Region 10's largest manufacturing employers made their homes in Mitchell (poultry processing), Colquitt (apparel manufacturing), and Dougherty counties. Dougherty County's diverse industrial base counts Procter & Gamble, Mars Inc., and Merck & Co. Inc. among its largest manufacturing employers. Procter & Gamble's \$100 million plant expansion and the addition of 150 well-paid jobs is a major asset to the local economy. The Marine Corps Logistics Base, which is now the Materiel Command for the entire U.S. Marine Corps, employs over 3,000 people. In its new capacity, the military base added 100 jobs and is authorized to purchase \$1.9 billion worth of equipment and other goods and services a year. MATCOM's sheer spending power and the outsourcing of contracts are projected to attract business to Albany.

Following the trend in other Georgia cities, Albany and Thomasville are recognizing the commercial potential of a thriving downtown, and both have embarked on ambitious revitalization projects, which are sure to attract business and visitors. Scheduled for completion by 2005, the Albany project, with the \$32 million Flint River Center as the main attraction, is expected to produce \$393 million impact in construction, 1,149 in jobs, and over \$26 million in salaries. Meanwhile, Thomasville's downtown revitalization has already produced \$2 million in property sales.

Unemployment rates in Region 10 stayed well above the state's average in recent years. Low income, high unemployment and low education levels are formidable obstacles to overcome, especially in the region's rural northwest corner, which had the highest unemployment levels in the state, and the nation. Terrell County, in particular, has endured double-digit unemployment rates throughout the 1990s. At the same time, Calhoun and Early counties saw their unemployment rates hover around 8 and 9 percent, respectively.

Although the entire region was hurt by the recent statewide agricultural slump, the most agriculturally-dependent counties suffered the worst. Several years of drought resulted in \$30 million in losses for farmers in Mitchell County alone. Early and Colquitt counties suffered losses in the neighborhood of \$20 million, or 20 percent of income. Falling cotton prices, and the uncertainty in the tobacco industry, only added to the problem.

Given these conditions, the Georgia Department of

**Region 10: Southwest Georgia
Population Statistics by County
1990 and 2000**

Area	Total Population		Percent Change in Population 1990-2000
	1990	2000	
Georgia	6,478,149	8,186,453	26.4
Region 10	320,399	352,880	10.1
Baker	3,615	4,074	12.7
Calhoun	5,013	6,320	26.1
Colquitt	36,645	42,053	14.8
Decatur	25,517	28,240	10.7
Dougherty	96,321	96,065	-0.3
Early	11,854	12,354	4.2
Grady	20,279	23,659	16.7
Lee	16,250	24,757	52.4
Miller	6,280	6,383	1.6
Mitchell	20,275	23,932	18.0
Seminole	9,010	9,369	4.0
Terrell	10,653	10,970	3.0
Thomas	38,943	42,737	9.7
Worth	19,744	21,967	11.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File and 1990 Census.
Internet Release Date: April 2, 2001.

Labor projects that agricultural employment in Region 10 will continue to decline. Some of the losses will be absorbed by a grant from the OneGeorgia program, which distributes funds the state received from the tobacco company settlement. The program has recently awarded its first \$1.5 million grant to the Joint Development Authority of Brooks, Colquitt, Grady, Mitchell, and Thomas counties. The money was used to buy and refurbish an abandoned plant, which is now leased to a beef packaging company that invested \$8 million and created 200 new jobs.

While many employers consider an available and affordable workforce a bonus in today's taut labor market, investment in workforce education and infrastructure will make it more enticing for new businesses to move here. The \$10 million contract to expand Moultrie Technical College is a welcome addition to the local economy, and a valuable contribution to labor force education. The college offers courses and degrees in business, health, and industrial technology, and additional training through Quick Start and continuing education programs. In addition, Albany's Darton Col-

lege offers specialized, on-site training geared to specific employer and local industry needs.

In a region where resources are scarce, cooperation on the sub-regional level helps stretch every dollar. The mutual agreement among the cities of Thomasville, Cairo, Camilla, and Moultrie, all in the region's southeast corner, will soon result in a state-of-the-art telecommunications network. Among other infrastructure improvements, Albany's Southwest Regional Airport will be expanded and modernized to accommodate increased cargo and traffic resulting from the consolidation of UPS's operations.

In addition to industrial development, tourism and recreation has proven a valuable addition to local economies. The recent \$30 million acquisition of the Chickasawhatchee Swamp by the Georgia Chapter of Nature Conservancy will create a new wildlife management area in the northwest of Region 10. One of the Southeast's largest fresh water swamps—second in size to the Okefenokee—Chickasawhatchee is likely to draw much-needed tourist and recreation dollars to Calhoun, Baker, and Dougherty counties.

**Region 10: Southwest Georgia
Employment Statistics by County
1990, 2000, and 2005**

Area	Total Employment			Percent Change	
	March 1990	March 2000	March 2005*	1990-2000	2000-2005
Georgia	2,814,344	3,754,710	4,409,762		
Region 10	116,436	136,785	149,329	17.5	9.2
Baker	621	589	574	-5.2	-2.6
Calhoun	1,363	1,571	1,687	15.3	7.4
Colquitt	12,177	15,020	16,681	23.3	11.1
Decatur	10,223	11,262	11,820	10.2	5.0
Dougherty	46,941	54,222	58,276	15.5	7.5
Early	4,726	4,421	4,276	-6.5	-3.3
Grady	6,009	5,908	5,858	-1.7	-0.8
Lee	1,808	3,950	5,838	118.5	47.8
Miller	1,200	1,431	1,563	19.3	9.2
Mitchell	5,939	8,640	10,421	45.5	20.6
Seminole	2,096	2,473	2,686	18.0	8.6
Terrell	2,891	2,589	2,450	-10.4	-5.4
Thomas	17,168	21,258	23,655	23.8	11.3
Worth	3,274	3,451	3,543	5.4	2.7

*Extension of trends.

Note: Counties and regions may not add exactly due to undistributed employment. Data are for covered employment, which includes employment subject to unemployment insurance law of Georgia, and are not comparable to other nonagricultural statistics.

Source: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia, based on data from Georgia Department of Labor Information Systems.

**Region 10: Southwest Georgia
Total Buying Power Statistics
by County, 1990 and 2001**

Area	Total Buying Power (thousands of dollars)		Percent Change in Buying Power 1990-2001
	1990	2001	
Georgia	98,984,939	191,840,268	93.8
Region 10	3,807,547	6,503,019	70.8
Baker	38,834	62,722	61.5
Calhoun	58,329	91,146	56.3
Colquitt	435,013	725,503	66.8
Decatur	296,552	476,218	60.6
Dougherty	1,227,345	1,940,914	58.1
Early	136,711	187,639	37.3
Grady	211,657	351,203	65.9
Lee	188,225	480,323	155.2
Miller	72,864	119,617	64.2
Mitchell	221,013	393,865	78.2
Seminole	97,868	164,285	67.9
Terrell	104,564	158,916	52.0
Thomas	506,069	953,682	88.4
Worth	212,503	396,984	86.8

Buying power is disposable personal income.

Source: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia.

Region 11: Southeast Georgia



Region 11 occupies much of Georgia's southeastern corner. Interstate 75, Route 441, and U.S. Highway 23 crisscross the region north to south, and U.S. Highways 82 and 84 run from east to west. Major railroads intersect in Waycross, providing connections to the ports of Brunswick and Savannah, and Jacksonville, Florida. The region's proximity to the Georgia coast and to the Jacksonville MSA provides a vital economic and demographic stimulus, too.

Although none of its counties is designated a metropolitan area, the region is scattered with several major population centers. Valdosta and Lowndes County, aspiring to MSA status after the Census 2000 count, is by far the region's largest population center, followed by Tifton (Tift County), Douglas (Coffee County), and Waycross (Ware County). Four out of the region's 18 counties saw a 1990-2000 population increase equal to or exceeding the state's average gain of 24.6 percent. Tiny Echols County, which is adjacent to Lowndes County and Valdosta, saw the steepest population growth (60.8 percent), while another neighbor, Lanier County, had a 32.1 percent increase. The Census 2000 count revealed a 26.4 percent growth in populous Coffee County, which is home to the city of Douglas. Brantley County, adjacent to Ware County and Waycross, saw a 30.9 percent increase in population growth during the decade.

VITAL STATISTICS

The region's economic activity is centered around its major population centers, with the largest manufacturing employers located in Coffee (poultry) and Berrien counties (textiles). The recent closing of Valdosta's Levi Strauss factory, the region's third largest manufacturing employer, eliminated 850 jobs, but most of the losses were absorbed by other employers in the area. Other major manufacturers are located in Douglas, where an airplane engine parts manufacturing plant provides 750 jobs; Waycross, with a mobile home manufacturer supplying 650 jobs; and Tifton, where a spark plugs manufacturing plant employs 600 people. Among non-manufacturing employers, Moody Air Force Base (5,500 jobs), Valdosta State University (2,200 jobs), and the South Georgia Medical Center (1,800 jobs) are the largest in the region.

The large number of government jobs accounts for

the relatively low unemployment rates in Valdosta and surrounding counties. In recent years, Clinch and Echols counties, in particular, have kept their unemployment at, or lower than, the state average. Region 11's fairly uniform unemployment rate remained about 1 percent above the state's average, with the notable exception of Turner County (in the region's northwestern corner), where joblessness ran in double digits.

Region 11's per capita personal income is among the lowest of all the state's service delivery regions, even though the 47 percent increase between 1990 and 1998 was the third highest in Georgia. Tift County has highest per capita personal income in the region, and saw one of the highest 1990-1998 percentage increases. Lowndes County has the region's second highest per capita personal income, and neighboring Clinch County registered the region's highest 1990-1998 per capita income increase. Per capita personal incomes in Coffee and Ben Hill counties, in the region's north, also exceed the regional average, with Atkinson County and neighboring Ben Hill County ranking second and third, respectively, in the 1990-1998 percentage gain.

The fastest growing areas in the region's economy are poised to continue this upswing in the future. One of the area's largest employers, a Tifton medical facility, which provides 850 jobs and \$19 million in annual payroll, has plans for a \$30 million expansion. Tifton will also see a \$1.7 million airport expansion. When completed, the improved facility will accommodate larger aircraft, and help draw aviation-related business, such as aircraft maintenance and repair. Adding to the area's infrastructure, Tifton and Tift County recently invested \$8 million to build high-speed data transfer networks.

VIBRANT VALDOSTA

Though Valdosta had hoped to become an MSA, the 2000 census shows that the city and surrounding Lowndes County fell short of the number of residents required for MSA status. Nonetheless, population growth in areas adjacent to Valdosta may still tip the scales in the city's favor. If so, the MSA designation will translate into millions of dollars in state and federal grants over the next ten years, and provide an incentive to new businesses.

Although its location on I-75—on the route to Orlando—brings jobs and income, Valdosta's large and

**Region 11: Southeast Georgia
Population Statistics by County
1990 and 2000**

Area	Total Population		Percent Change in Population 1990-2000
	1990	2000	
Georgia	6,478,149	8,186,453	26.4
Region 11	315,351	364,925	15.7
Atkinson	6,213	7,609	22.5
Bacon	9,566	10,103	5.6
Ben Hill	16,245	17,484	7.6
Berrien	14,153	16,235	14.7
Brantley	11,077	14,629	32.1
Brooks	15,398	16,450	6.8
Charlton	8,496	10,282	21.0
Clinch	6,160	6,878	11.7
Coffee	29,592	37,413	26.4
Cook	13,456	15,771	17.2
Echols	2,334	3,754	60.8
Irwin	8,649	9,931	14.8
Lanier	5,531	7,241	30.9
Lowndes	75,981	92,115	21.2
Pierce	13,328	15,636	17.3
Tift	34,998	38,407	9.7
Turner	8,703	9,504	9.2
Ware	35,471	35,483	0.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File and 1990 Census.
Internet Release Date: April 2, 2001.

diverse economic base creates independent growth. The area's relatively high per capita personal income and relatively low unemployment is partly attributed to the presence of major government employers, such as the Moody Air Force Base and Valdosta State University. Valdosta's South Georgia Medical Center, together with a host of establishments that make food products, lumber, and agricultural chemicals, among other products, also generate a major economic impact. Moreover, the recent addition of customer call centers for Convergys and Z-Tel Communications put Valdosta on the map for technology-related firms seeking new locations.

Valdosta's location, climate, and health services have proven to be a major attraction for retirees, whose demand for housing, goods, and services results in new jobs and income added to local coffers. In addition, the area's Wild Adventures amusement park—one of the South's fastest growing—draws Orlando-bound travelers as well as residents from the surrounding counties,

and contributes between \$120-\$150 million to the local economy. Hosting 100,000 visitors a year, and with a staff of 350, the popular amusement park's \$35 million, five-year expansion plan will provide another important economic boost.

The city of Douglas and Coffee County also are economically vibrant, thanks to an exceptionally diverse manufacturing base that produces aircraft engine parts, mobile homes, and construction materials, among other things. Like other small cities that recognize the economic potential of a useful downtown, Douglas recently invested \$4.6 million to improve and renovate its Central Square area.

The economic potential of convention and tourism business underpins the recent development in Waycross (Ware County), where an old rail station was converted into a unique office space and conference center. As its name implies, Waycross is the crossroads of major rail lines, and these transportation facilities employ 1,200

people in rail freight service. CSX Railyard's expansion, servicing traffic bound for the port of Brunswick, is an important addition to the area's economy. Waycross is also a gateway to the Okefenokee Swamp, the largest freshwater swamp in the United States. Over 150,000

tourists visit the swamp each year, and the numbers will continue to increase as ecotourism becomes more popular. The Okefenokee is also an important resource for Charlton and Clinch counties.

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Employment Statistics by County
1990, 2000, and 2005**

Area	Total Employment			Percent Change	
	March 1990	March 2000	March 2005*	1990-2000	2000-2005
Georgia	2,814,344	3,754,710	4,409,762		
Region 11	109,951	144,591	166,875	31.5	15.4
Atkinson	1,548	2,043	2,347	32.0	14.9
Bacon	3,413	3,685	3,829	8.0	3.9
Ben Hill	6,368	8,613	10,017	35.3	16.3
Berrien	4,653	4,501	4,427	-3.3	-1.6
Brantley	1,324	1,968	2,399	48.6	21.9
Brooks	3,432	3,255	3,170	-5.2	-2.6
Charlton	1,761	1,996	2,125	13.3	6.5
Clinch	1,857	2,654	3,173	42.9	19.5
Coffee	11,907	18,871	23,757	58.5	25.9
Cook	4,079	5,648	6,646	38.5	17.7
Echols	253	758	1,312	199.6	73.1
Irwin	1,758	2,587	3,138	47.2	21.3
Lanier	1,141	1,435	1,609	25.8	12.1
Lowndes	32,017	43,702	51,058	36.5	16.8
Pierce	2,616	3,643	4,299	39.3	18.0
Tift	16,367	20,629	23,160	26.0	12.3
Turner	1,924	2,378	2,644	23.6	11.2
Ware	13,533	16,225	17,766	19.9	9.5

*Extension of trends.

Note: Counties and regions may not add exactly due to undistributed employment. Data are for covered employment, which includes employment subject to unemployment insurance law of Georgia, and are not comparable to other nonagricultural statistics.

Source: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia, based on data from Georgia Department of Labor Information Systems.

**Region 11: Southeast Georgia
Total Buying Power Statistics
by County, 1990 and 2001**

Area	Total Buying Power (thousands of dollars)		Percent Change in Buying Power 1990-2001
	1990	2001	
Georgia	98,984,939	191,840,268	93.8
Region 11	3,616,551	6,607,970	82.7
Atkinson	68,645	145,603	112.1
Bacon	102,339	188,043	83.7
Ben Hill	190,637	314,851	65.2
Berrien	162,993	286,917	76.0
Brantley	108,031	238,683	120.9
Brooks	151,305	248,448	64.2
Charlton	79,386	144,702	82.3
Clinch	59,380	123,125	107.4
Coffee	365,497	731,764	100.2
Cook	136,871	246,479	80.1
Echols	24,229	39,213	61.8
Irwin	99,011	179,384	81.2
Lanier	61,013	125,476	105.7
Lowndes	939,567	1,742,280	85.4
Pierce	147,003	286,242	94.7
Tift	429,323	799,973	86.3
Turner	91,744	145,950	59.1
Ware	399,578	620,836	55.4

Buying power is disposable personal income.

Source: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia.

To Our Readers

Beginning in 2002, *Georgia Business and Economic Conditions* will be issued quarterly. Look for our freshly-redesigned publication in your mailbox—or on our Website at www.selig.uga.edu—in March.

Region 12: Coastal Georgia

Located on Georgia's eastern seaboard, Region 12 is bordered by South Carolina to the north, and Florida to the south. All but three of the region's nine counties have access to the Atlantic coast. Three counties, Bryan, Chatham, and Effingham, belong to the Savannah MSA. In addition to Savannah, Brunswick in Glynn County and Statesboro in Bulloch County are the region's strongest population and economic centers. Fort Stewart, housing over 15,000 active duty personnel and 37,000 of their family members, is located in the center of the region and to the west of Savannah. I-95 runs north to south parallel to the coast and intersects with west-bound I-16 near Savannah. Additional four-lane highways and railroads radiate from Savannah, Brunswick, and Statesboro.

Savannah's new Mason Intermodal Container Transfer Facility enables a seamless transfer of shipping containers onto trains and shortens the ship-to-market transit time to its 25-state delivery area. Among the commodities shipped out through the Port of Savannah are kaolin clay, linerboard, machinery, woodpulp, lumber, and foodstuffs, while iron, steel, machinery, plywood, lumber, cocoa beans, granite, and rubber are the major imports. Brunswick made its reputation in shipping cars, machinery, and wood products. The new Sidney Lanier Bridge—with its higher central span—and the deepening of the harbor will make it possible for larger ships to come into this port.

Georgia's accessible ports also are a major advantage for the manufacturing and distribution companies located throughout the region. JCB North America, a British manufacturer of construction equipment, recently invested \$62 million in its new facility in Pooler, near Savannah. Kerr-McGee Corporation, the world's third-largest producer and marketer of titanium dioxide pigment, bought an existing plant in Savannah, and expects to upgrade its facilities and technology, thus saving the plant from a possible closing. Aluminum dome maker Temcor transferred its manufacturing plant from California to Savannah's Effingham County, bringing the potential of 100 highly-paid jobs and \$5 million investment to the local economy.

Farther inland, Bulloch County saw a 43 percent 1990-2000 employment increase, and consistently low unemployment rates. The city of Statesboro is home to

Georgia Southern University, which supplies the local economy with nearly 5,000 jobs and creates an economic impact measured at \$283.8 million annually. The county's diverse economic base is supported by modern manufacturing plants, such as architectural glass manufacturer Viracon, research and education facilities, and agriculture.

FOCUS ON SAVANNAH

Services, distribution, tourism and convention business, and manufacturing are the basis of Savannah's economy. The city's dual personality—that of a major tourist attraction and a thriving Atlantic Ocean port—is the core of its success. Unique ambience coupled with a good transportation network make it an attractive place in which to live and to do business. Out of 39 international companies located in the region, 26 are located in Chatham County alone, which is the most outside of metro Atlanta.

Tourism and convention business is the fastest growing sector of Savannah's economy. In 1999, it supported 19,550 jobs and provided \$384 million in payroll and profits. Visitors are drawn to the thriving historic district, and the nearby ocean beaches. Convention organizers bank on the city's attractions and easy access via the Savannah International Airport and two major interstates. The new International Trade and Convention Center on Hutchinson Island, together with the adjacent Westin Savannah Harbor Resort have already begun to deliver on the promise of multimillion dollar annual revenues. Just across the river from Savannah, the 333,000 square-foot convention center offers state-of-the-art meeting and exhibit space. Savannah's plans to accommodate major cruise lines, if materialized, would bring additional tourist dollars to the city.

Savannah's diversified economy is enriched by the influence of the Savannah College of Art and Design, Armstrong Atlantic State University, and the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. Aside from their direct economic impact, these institutions provide a "critical mass of academe," an indispensable element of the information age economy, which, although slow in coming, has begun to make difference. The recent addition of high-speed computer connections to the city's infrastructure is a start. The two proposed high-tech incubators would

**Region 12: Coastal Georgia
Population Statistics by County
1990 and 2000**

Area	Total Population		Percent Change in Population 1990-2000
	1990	2000	
Georgia	6,478,149	8,186,453	26.4
Region 12	461,268	542,976	17.7
Bryan	15,438	23,417	51.7
Bulloch	43,125	55,983	29.8
Camden	30,167	43,664	44.7
Chatham	216,774	232,048	7.0
Effingham	25,687	37,535	46.1
Glynn	62,496	67,568	8.1
Liberty	52,745	61,610	16.8
Long	6,202	10,304	66.1
McIntosh	8,634	10,847	25.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File and 1990 Census.
Internet Release Date: April 2, 2001.

help. But the \$150 million investment in the high-tech campus at the Crossroads Business Park is certain to become a major draw for high-tech companies.

Although rapid population growth, low unemployment, and rising personal income have significantly improved the region's economy, this escalating growth has strained the region's existing infrastructure.

Effingham County, for example, has problems with inadequate water supply. The demands of Savannah's rapidly growing port facilities raise environmental concerns. All of these issues, in addition to possible labor shortages, could challenge future economic development in the region. ■

**Region 12: Coastal Georgia
Employment Statistics by County
1990, 2000, and 2005**

Area	Total Employment			Percent Change	
	March 1990	March 2000	March 2005*	1990-2000	2000-2005
Georgia	2,814,344	3,754,710	4,409,762		
Region 12	175,820	224,056	253,890	27.4	13.3
Bryan	2,546	4,333	5,653	70.2	30.5
Bulloch	14,638	20,898	24,970	42.8	19.5
Camden	9,079	14,004	17,392	54.2	24.2
Chatham	103,187	123,696	135,432	19.9	9.5
Effingham	4,074	6,813	8,810	67.2	29.3
Glynn	30,003	37,314	41,613	24.4	11.5
Liberty	10,152	14,204	16,801	39.9	18.3
Long	365	639	845	75.1	32.3
McIntosh	1,776	2,155	2,374	21.3	10.2

*Extension of trends.

Note: Counties and regions may not add exactly due to undistributed employment. Data are for covered employment, which includes employment subject to unemployment insurance law of Georgia, and are not comparable to other nonagricultural statistics.

Source: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia, based on data from Georgia Department of Labor Information Systems.

**Region 12: Coastal Georgia
Total Buying Power Statistics
by County, 1990 and 2001**

Area	Total Buying Power (thousands of dollars)		Percent Change in Buying Power 1990-2001
	1990	2001	
Georgia	98,984,939	191,840,268	93.8
Region 12	6,230,183	11,168,264	79.3
Bryan	183,918	491,340	167.2
Bulloch	459,575	922,973	100.8
Camden	325,912	677,037	107.7
Chatham	3,428,501	5,415,694	58.0
Effingham	321,856	741,939	130.5
Glynn	978,859	1,755,431	79.3
Liberty	398,903	908,946	127.9
Long	51,461	107,692	109.3
McIntosh	81,199	147,212	81.3

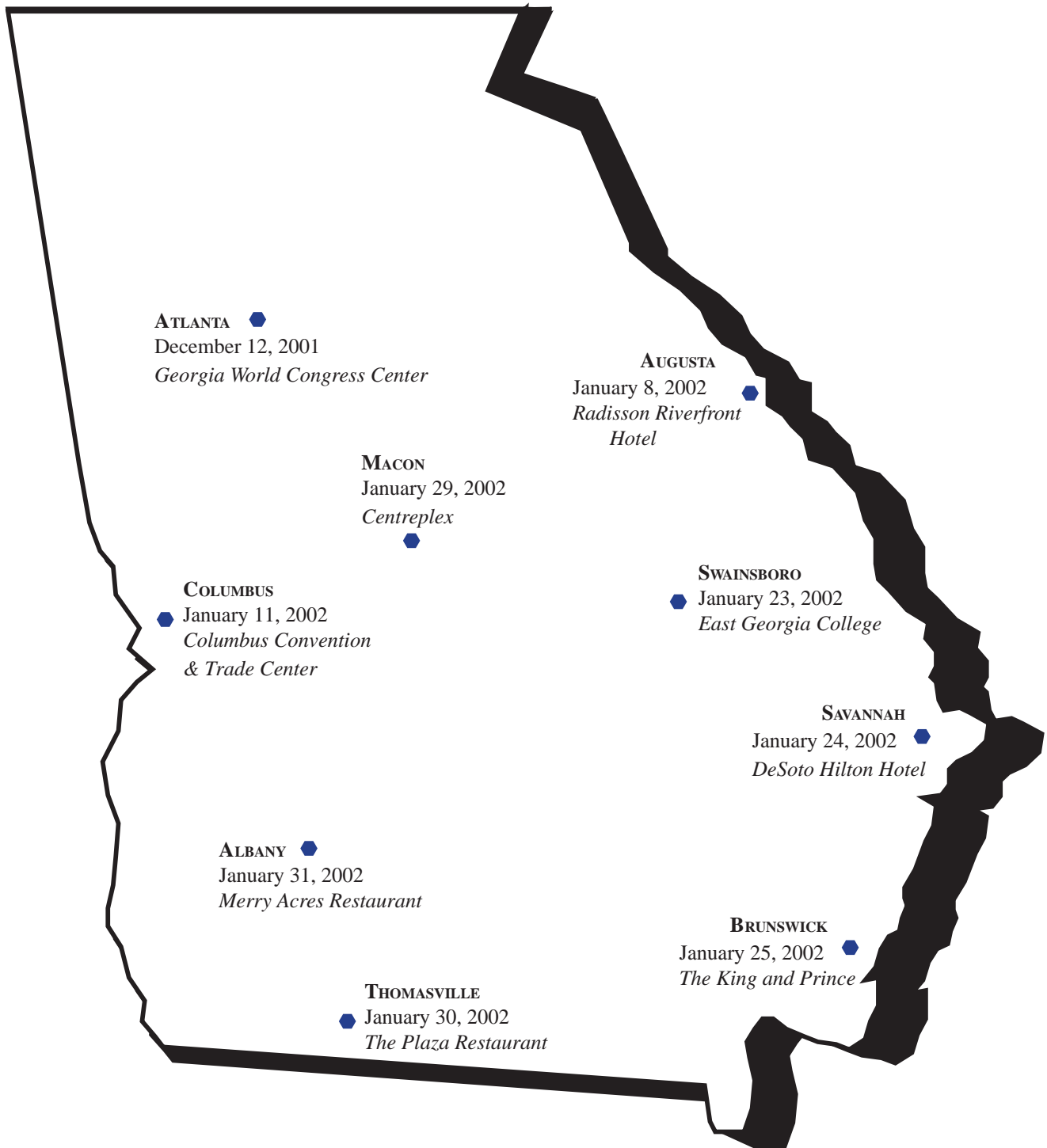
Buying power is disposable personal income.

Source: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia.

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