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Regional Economic Profiles, 2001 ■ Part 2

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.

Beata D. Kochut
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Straddled by I-20 to the north, I-75 to the east, and I-85 running through its middle, Region 4 strives to reconcile a big-city appetite for growth with the charm of rural Georgia. While the region's northern half gains from proximity to Atlanta and major interstates, it also sets limits related to the MSA's overloaded infrastructure. The remaining parts of the region, often rural in character and dependant on textiles and wood manufacturing, see much less economic activity. Their economic growth often stems from the opportunities the proximity of Atlanta creates for the outlying areas, not yet burdened by infrastructural constraints.

Region 4: West Central Georgia

The northern part of the Region 4 is a part of the Atlanta MSA, and benefits from Atlanta's booming economy and superb transportation network. Coweta County, in particular, located just minutes from Hartsfield International Airport and I-85, bases its development on high technology. The county delivers a pool of technically skilled workers, and has invested in state-of-the-art computer networks. The city of Newnan, for example, supplements its southern charm with information technology infrastructure, with the goal of becoming a haven for urban-weary high-tech workers. Neighboring Carroll County, although more rural, has also launched an internet

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infrastructure project to make the county more attractive for high-tech industries.

Access to major transportation routes makes the region an attractive location for major distribution centers. Companies such as Walmart.com, K-Mart, and Eckerd have located their distribution facilities in Carroll and Coweta counties.

Housing, energy, and services related to recreation are the most prominent examples of economic opportunities emerging for Atlanta's outlying areas. Lamar, Butts, and Heard counties, where employment growth trails the increase in population, provide desirable locations and affordable living for Atlanta workers. Because Atlanta's growing population and expanding business created huge electricity demands, some of the outlying counties will soon reap significant revenues by offering locations to companies eager to supply electricity to the giant Atlanta market. Heard County, which is not subject to the EPA clean-air restrictions, will soon become a home to new power plants, a major source of revenues and jobs for the county. Thomas County also jumps into

the electrical power business by becoming a partner to the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG), a 32-city project whose goal is to produce its own power and sell it to member cities. The building of new power plants in the counties surrounding the Atlanta MSA, however, probably will be met by stiff opposition from residential developers, who are selling prospective home buyers on the area's pristine and rural character.

Some distance away from Atlanta, the city of La Grange in Troup County, in the southwest corner of the region, has staged a successful effort to diversify its economic landscape, and make it less dependent on the textile industry. The area has attracted a number of Fortune 500 companies, and continues to improve its business and technology infrastructure to remain competitive. La Grange has also made a significant investment in technology, and offered local businesses and residents a state-of-the-art network connections.

VITAL STATISTICS

The region's population grew more slowly than the state's (22 percent versus 26.4 percent, respectively) between 1990 and 2000, but Coweta County had one of the highest rates of growth in the state (65.7 percent). Pike, Heard, and Butts counties also exceeded the state's average rate of population growth, and the populations of Carroll and Lamar counties grew at the region's average rate of about 22 percent. The population growth was the slowest in the southern part of the region, where the improved efficiency in agriculture decreased demand for new workers, and non-agricultural employment has not picked up the slack. The rate of population growth in those areas has not exceeded 6 percent between 1990 and 2000. Meriwether, the slowest growing county in this region, increased its population by only 0.5 percent.

Per capita personal income (PCPI) in the region is lower than the state average (\$20,896 and \$25,839, respectively). Buying power (disposable personal income), also below the state average, increased by 73.2 percent between 1990 and 1998, and is projected to increase by 9.8 percent between 1999 and 2001, slightly below the 10.2 percent projected for the state. Coweta County showed the strongest gains in buying power between 1990 and 1999, with 122.3 percent growth. Butts, Carroll and Meriwether counties also registered strong percentage gains.

The unemployment rate for the region as a whole remained slightly above the state average in January 2001. Historically, Coweta, Pike and Upson counties have always stayed below the state's average unemployment level, while Meriwether, Heard and Troup counties in the region's southwest corner have stayed above it.

The unemployment rate is likely to increase in counties dependent on textile manufacturing because textile and apparel manufacturing, the region's largest employers, are both projected to decline between now and 2006.

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**Region 4: West Central 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 4	331,191	403,944	22.0
Butts	15,326	19,522	27.4
Carroll	71,422	87,268	22.2
Coweta	53,853	89,215	65.7
Heard	8,628	11,012	27.6
Lamar	13,038	15,912	22.0
Meriwether	22,411	22,534	0.5
Pike	10,224	13,688	33.9
Spalding	54,457	58,417	7.3
Troup	55,532	58,779	5.8
Upson	26,300	27,597	4.9

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

On the other hand, business services, one of the area's major employers, will continue to grow. Transportation-related industries, auto repair, and transport services, will show the fastest growth among the industries in this region.

Significant improvements to Region 4's business infrastructure, such as the investment in high-speed computer connections (in Coweta, Carroll, and Troup counties), new business incubators (Carroll County), and industrial parks (Troup County) go a long way in attracting new and keeping old businesses in town. Other infrastructure improvements, such as the downtown improvement projects in Carrollton, also have a positive impact on attracting and retaining business.

The region's continued efforts to diversify and attract investment show tangible results. Yamaha Motor Manu-

facturing Corporation of America announced a \$50 million investment and 300 jobs resulting from the expansion of the existing plant in Newnan. The Walmart.com distribution center in Carroll County will bring \$50 million in investment and another 300 jobs. Also in Carroll County, Greenway Medical Technology will bring another \$27 million of high-tech investment. Heard County will increase its revenues and add jobs with the construction of new power plants.

The area's location close to major transportation routes makes it attractive for foreign business, too. In addition to Yamaha Motor Manufacturing in Newnan, Yamaha Music has a facility in Upson County, and Mitsubishi recently invested \$200 million in a power plant in Heard County.

**Region 4: West Central 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 4	117,341	144,263	160,789	22.9	11.5
Butts	3,696	5,333	6,406	44.3	20.1
Carroll	27,399	31,725	34,138	15.8	7.6
Coweta	17,799	26,671	32,648	49.8	22.4
Heard	1,801	2,460	2,875	36.6	16.9
Lamar	3,492	3,778	3,930	8.2	4.0
Meriwether	5,857	6,075	6,187	3.7	1.8
Pike	1,198	1,852	2,303	54.6	24.3
Spalding	18,729	22,903	25,327	22.3	10.6
Troup	27,659	33,582	37,003	21.4	10.2
Upson	9,711	9,884	9,972	1.8	0.9

*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 4: West Central 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 4	4,142,692	7,878,022	90.2
Butts	171,363	336,207	96.2
Carroll	882,957	1,601,750	81.4
Coweta	796,012	2,048,473	157.3
Heard	83,381	160,362	92.3
Lamar	143,046	258,012	80.4
Meriwether	217,622	394,109	81.1
Pike	125,665	218,795	74.1
Spalding	674,252	1,108,770	64.4
Troup	749,014	1,264,507	68.8
Upson	299,381	487,039	62.7

Buying power is disposable personal income.

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

Region 5: North Central Georgia



Region 5, located in the northeastern part of the state, close to major metropolitan centers and interstate highways, enjoys unique opportunities for economic development. With I-85 running across its northern end, and I-20 cutting through

the south, a major four-lane highway (GA 316) connecting business and research facilities in Atlanta and Athens, and Route 441 bisecting from north to south, Region 5 is exceptionally well poised to attract investment and growth. Much of the region is a part of or borders on the Atlanta, Athens, and Macon metropolitan areas, and saw impressive population growth between 1990 and 2000. This growth, in turn, was followed by increased economic activity. Now the question is how to steer economic growth to avoid problems inherent in urban sprawl, but still benefit from the proximity to thriving urban centers.

Regional population growth radiates from both Atlanta and Athens. Walton, Barrow, and Newton counties, on the eastern fringe of the Atlanta MSA, show the steepest rate of growth in the region. The 1990 to 2000 population increase of 57 percent and 48 percent puts Walton and Newton among the fastest growing counties in the state. On the Athens side, Oconee and Jackson counties, which also border on the Atlanta MSA, registered rapid growth too, and increased their populations by 48 and 38 percent, respectively. Rural Jasper County, sandwiched between Atlanta and Macon, increased its population by 35 percent. Morgan and Greene counties lagged behind somewhat, experiencing growth in the neighborhood of 20 percent over the decade. Elbert county, in the northeast corner of the region, had the smallest gain—8.2 percent.

The patterns of population growth mirror the economic activity in the region. Most of the counties in Region 5 enjoy unemployment levels significantly lower than the state average, except for Elbert and Greene, where unemployment levels are typically higher than the state's. The area's economic base includes a good mix of industries, with business services and wholesale trade providing a welcome counterpart to declining textiles and apparel manufacturing, which still employs many local residents.

Interstates 85 and 20 open up Georgia's most vibrant economic regions to neighboring states and generate growth in industries related to transportation and distribution, such as trucking, warehousing, and air transport. Located along I-85, Barrow and Jackson

counties have recently attracted the attention of major industrial real estate developers. Construction is underway to develop a 503,000 square-foot bulk distribution center in Braselton, and future plans call for the development of an additional 5 million square feet of commercial space on 500 acres of land in that area. In the south of the region, Walton, Newton, Morgan, and Jasper counties created a regional development authority, which plans to develop an industrial park along I-20.

BURGEONING DEVELOPMENT

Although agriculture still provides employment to a significant number of the region's residents, the number of farm jobs is not going to increase in the coming years. So the rural counties in the southern part of the region are in the process of making tourism and recreation-related services the engine of their economic growth instead. Greene, Morgan, and Putnam counties, together with the cities of Madison, Greensboro, and Eatonton, have united around the Georgia Lake Country project, which markets the scenic and historic Lake Oconee area as a tourism and recreation destination.

The Lake Oconee area, crisscrossed east to west by I-20, and north to south by Highway 441, is ideal for the hospitality industry, because these major thoroughfares make Lake Oconee accessible for travelers and investors alike. The recent \$84 million investment in the new Ritz-Carlton Lodge and Convention Center will create 400 new jobs in Greene County. Golf and water sports on Lake Oconee already draw affluent visitors to Reynolds Plantation, another important asset to the region's economy.

The strip of metropolitan counties extending from the eastern fringes of the Atlanta MSA all the way to the east of Athens is the fastest growing area in the region. But the proximity of major industry and population centers, despite providing important stimulus for economic growth, also creates problems. With population growth outpacing the local economy, county coffers are stretched to their limits to cover infrastructure improvements and other services. To deal with the unprecedented population growth, local communities must create jobs and grow business to increase their revenues; and most have begun to realize that proactive infrastructure investment is key to economic growth.

For example, Newton County, located the eastern fringe of the Atlanta MSA, saw its population jump by 48

**Region 5: North Central 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 5	328,223	438,300	33.5
Barrow	29,721	46,144	55.3
Clarke	87,594	101,489	15.9
Elbert	18,949	20,511	8.2
Greene	11,793	14,406	22.2
Jackson	30,005	41,589	38.6
Jasper	8,453	11,426	35.2
Madison	21,050	25,730	22.2
Morgan	12,883	15,457	20.0
Newton	41,808	62,001	48.3
Oconee	17,618	26,225	48.9
Oglethorpe	9,763	12,635	29.4
Walton	38,586	60,687	57.3

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

percent between 1990 and 2000. The county's investment in upgrading its water and sewer system, road resurfacing, and installing up-to-date telecommunications has attracted significant business investment in recent years. Numerous international companies from Korea, France, and Japan now call Newton County home, and provide highly paying jobs in high tech, and sporting goods and machinery manufacturing.

THE ATHENS AREA

Oconee and Walton counties, on the other hand, strategically located between Athens and Atlanta, saw their populations soar, but economic development took longer to follow. Things are about to change, however, with the momentum gathering behind the projected fusion of Atlanta's booming business and research base with the resources and facilities at the University of Georgia in Athens. The proposed development of a massive, high technology park along the 316 corridor connecting Atlanta and Athens, which would mirror North Carolina's Research Triangle, would undoubtedly bring desirable, environmen-

tally benign development and high paying jobs to Clarke, Oconee, Barrow, and Walton counties. The future shape of this development, however, is contingent upon the proposed upgrades to this highway. Other prime sites include the intersection of U.S. Highway 78 and Highway 316, which many are eyeing for commercial possibilities. In addition, the major commercial tract straddling the Clarke and Oconee county line soon may become a commercial mega-zone, bringing investment and jobs to the whole region.

The recent infrastructure improvements, which will affect Clarke, Oconee, Barrow, and Jackson counties, are sure to accelerate business growth along Highway 316, regardless of what decisions are made as to its future shape. Adequate water and sewer systems are a must before major investors can be wooed, however, so the completion of the Bear Creek Reservoir, and a new sewage treatment plant serving Oconee County (slated for summer 2001), is vital.

The arrival of high-tech and other investors would provide a welcome addition to the Athens-Clarke County economy, where the University of Georgia and other local, state, and federal government agencies provide about 27 percent of jobs. In 1999 the impact of the

**Region 5: North Central 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 5	114,322	150,738	175,113	31.9	16.2
Barrow	8,641	11,651	13,529	34.8	16.1
Clarke	52,187	61,197	66,270	17.3	8.3
Elbert	6,913	7,183	7,322	3.9	1.9
Greene	4,175	5,016	5,498	20.1	9.6
Jackson	9,092	15,083	19,427	65.9	28.8
Jasper	1,929	2,518	2,877	30.5	14.3
Madison	2,145	3,573	4,611	66.6	29.1
Morgan	4,643	5,775	6,441	24.4	11.5
Newton	11,470	17,350	21,339	51.3	23.0
Oconee	2,752	6,396	9,751	132.4	52.5
Oglethorpe	1,327	1,648	1,837	24.2	11.4
Walton	9,048	13,348	16,212	47.5	21.5

*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.

University of Georgia alone measured \$704.2 million in earnings and 19,708 jobs. Although Athens enjoyed exceptionally low unemployment levels in recent years, per capita personal income in the area has been lower than the state average, primarily because a relatively large number of jobs in Athens do not pay as much as comparable jobs in other cities. Great location, together with a highly praised blend of UGA research facilities, and a supply of qualified workers produced by the University and by educational institutions such as the Truett-McConnell College and Athens Tech, make the area ripe for high-tech investment. The relatively low cost of doing business, good quality of life, and a vibrant cultural scene are also sure to become a major draw for prospective investors.

The first signs of progress are already visible. Recently, Athens has become known for its thriving life-sciences community, which is developing around the University's research facilities. University-affiliated centers now provide incubator space and expertise to computer and Internet startups. Continued interest and in-

vestment from major pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms paired with the proposed high-tech park along Highway 316 are likely to attract even more high-paying jobs to the area.

So, the future holds much promise for prosperity in Region 5. Good road and air transportation systems, high-speed telecommunications, and recent infrastructure improvements throughout the region prepare it for a major leap. The proximity of Atlanta's business community, and its expansion to the northeast creates business opportunities for the entire region. The University of Georgia's research facilities and human capital, together with highly-qualified graduates of the area's other colleges and technical schools provide an intellectual base for future development. Intra-regional cooperation and a diversified economy are also among the region's major strengths. In addition, the area boasts many natural riches, such as Lake Oconee in the south, and Lake Russell in the north, which draw tourist dollars from around the state.

**Region 5: North Central 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 5	4,232,624	8,348,758	97.2
Barrow	378,761	850,578	124.6
Clarke	1,162,586	1,965,465	69.1
Elbert	224,947	337,904	50.2
Greene	131,377	249,570	90.0
Jackson	372,109	790,529	112.4
Jasper	103,643	208,748	101.4
Madison	255,865	486,925	90.3
Morgan	171,434	338,699	97.6
Newton	527,095	1,171,918	122.3
Oconee	280,375	616,740	120.0
Oglethorpe	116,287	222,684	91.5
Walton	508,145	1,108,999	118.2

Buying power is disposable personal income.

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

Region 6: Middle Georgia



entered around the Macon MSA, Region 6 includes five metropolitan and six non-metropolitan counties. Interstates 75 and 16 crisscross the region from the northwest toward Macon, and then diverge to the south and south-

east. U.S. Highway 441 runs north to south through the eastern part of the region, and Highway 129 runs parallel through its center. Lined with major high-speed telecommunications facilities, the interstates are lifelines that connect Macon with Atlanta and Savannah. The new four-lane Fall Line Freeway, connecting Columbus and Augusta, will bisect the region south of Macon, and add an east-west link across the region's midsection.

Atlanta's proximity provides the backdrop for the demographic and economic dynamics of Region 6. The counties closest to Atlanta and to the interstates, such as Monroe and Crawford in the west of the region, have experienced explosive population and employment growth, but these gains unfortunately are not matched by the growth rates in per capita income, because the new jobs are often found in the low-paid service industries, such as food, lodging, and retail. The more balanced growth takes place in the center of the region, where most of the people live, and the greatest number of jobs is created. Bibb, Houston, Jones, and Pulaski counties have all registered strong gains in population and employment between 1990 and 2000, and per capita incomes in Bibb and Houston counties are the highest in the region. The eastern part of Region 6, farthest from Atlanta, and heavily dependent on the kaolin and lumber industries, saw the smallest gains in population and employment, and the highest unemployment levels.

Although the region's 1990 to 2000 average population growth of 13.1 percent is lower than the state's 26.4 percent, Crawford, Putnam, and Monroe counties (located close to Atlanta in the west and north of the region) surpassed both the region's and state's averages with 39, 33, and 27 percent growth, respectively. While employment gains in Crawford County followed the steep rates of population growth, Monroe County had fewer jobs in 2000 than in 1990. Separated from Macon and Warner Robins by I-75 and about an hour's drive from Atlanta, Crawford County increased its number of jobs by 53.8 percent between 1990 and 2000. The employment increase in this county, however, was not matched by a similar increase in per capita personal income, which

indicates that many jobs were the low-wage ones typical in urban sprawl.

Putnam County, also close to Atlanta, had a 46.7 percent employment gain, but its dynamics of growth are quite different from Crawford County. This county and the city of Eatonton, where Horton Homes is the main employer, enjoy a fairly diversified industry base. In fact, the 1998 per capita personal income in the county was the third highest in the region. In addition, the county's location offers a unique opportunity to cash in on the proximity to Atlanta, and on leisure and tourist development centered around Lakes Oconee and Sinclair. Recent investments in telecommunications and labor force education also put Putnam County in good position to shape the area's economic transformation.

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

Although growing at slower rates than Putnam County, Houston, Bibb, Jones, and Pulaski counties (which—except for Pulaski—are parts of the Macon MSA) are the region's best economic performers, measured by the rate of employment increase between 1990 and 2000, and the size of per capita personal income. Falling unemployment rates have almost closed the gap between the Macon MSA and the state average. The MSA as a whole experienced a period of accelerated growth in the 1990s, with the rate of population growth nearly doubling that of the previous decade. The overflow of Atlanta's growth accounts for some of this, but the expanding local economy, and the continued economic impact of Warner Robins Air Force Base are also factors. Although Bibb County, with the city of Macon at its center, saw only a modest population gain between 1990 and 2000, this 2.5 percent increase actually marks the reversal of the population decline that occurred between 1980 and 1990.

The Macon MSA has a diversified economic base, with trade, manufacturing, and lodging and food services providing most of the jobs. The aerospace, health, and insurance industries also provide a large number of well-paid jobs in the area. The recent decision by GEICO, one of the area's largest employers, to increase its workforce by 3,000 in the next 5 to 7 years, will pump many additional dollars into Macon's economy. The 1999 transfer of 158 government jobs from Atlanta to

**Region 6: Middle 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 6	389,186	440,121	13.1
Baldwin	39,530	44,700	13.1
Bibb	150,137	153,887	2.5
Crawford	8,991	12,495	39.0
Houston	89,208	110,765	24.2
Jones	20,739	23,639	14.0
Monroe	17,113	21,757	27.1
Peach	21,189	23,668	11.7
Pulaski	8,108	9,588	18.3
Putnam	14,137	18,812	33.1
Twiggs	9,806	10,590	8.0
Wilkinson	10,228	10,220	-0.1

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

Macon—bringing \$5 million in annual payroll—was also a welcome addition; and, last but not least, Warner Robins Air Force Base, responsible for over 17,000 jobs and \$740 million in annual payroll, with additional economic impact estimated at \$50 million, is a major factor in the area's economy.

THE MACON AREA

City planners see Macon as a natural expansion area for the over-extended Atlanta MSA. Striving to avoid the perils of excessive growth, Macon's economic development targets tourism and convention business as a complement to the existing industrial base. The proximity to Atlanta, Hartsfield Airport, interstates 75 and 16, and the prospective Fall Line Freeway, put Macon at the crossroads between Atlanta, Columbus, Augusta, and Savannah. The Georgia Rail Passenger Program, which will begin construction of a Macon-to-Atlanta line in 2003, and which will eventually extend south to Albany, will put yet another MSA within an easy reach from Macon.

The city's historic buildings, festivals, and places of special interest, such as the Georgia Music Hall of Fame,

Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, the Tubman Museum, and the Ocmulgee National Historical Monument, already draw tourist dollars. To those seeking convention locations, Macon offers the Centroplex, one of the largest convention centers in Georgia. Major renovation and revitalization projects, under the umbrella of NewTown Macon, will convert Macon's downtown into a modern, mixed-development urban environment, and ultimately turn it into an attractive center for business and tourism.

Monroe County to the west, and Twiggs and Wilkinson counties to the east of the city of Macon, saw fewer people employed in 2000 than in 1990. The losses in employment were particularly heavy in Twiggs County, where the number of jobs declined by nearly 13 percent. The population increased by a modest 8 percent in Twiggs County, which belongs to Macon MSA, but decreased by 0.1 percent in rural Wilkinson County. Both Twiggs and Wilkinson counties depend on kaolin and lumber as their main industries. Although attracting high-tech jobs might sound unrealistic, affordable and available labor, county-sponsored workforce training, and tax incentives helped to lure one Internet technology firm to the city of Gordon, in Wilkinson County. The firm created 150 jobs, and plans to employ 500 people when fully operational. In addition to jobs, and much-

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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 6	159,891	188,948	205,822	18.2	8.9
Baldwin	17,911	20,603	22,097	15.0	7.3
Bibb	75,560	90,162	98,489	19.3	9.2
Crawford	958	1,473	1,827	53.8	24.0
Houston	38,296	44,921	48,652	17.3	8.3
Jones	2,216	3,127	3,715	41.1	18.8
Monroe	5,696	5,578	5,520	-2.1	-1.0
Peach	7,262	8,618	9,388	18.7	8.9
Pulaski	2,378	3,179	3,676	33.7	15.6
Putnam	4,221	6,194	7,503	46.7	21.1
Twiggs	2,019	1,763	1,647	-12.7	-6.6
Wilkinson	3,374	3,330	3,308	-1.3	-0.7

*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.

needed economic diversity, the company has also improved the county's infrastructure by bringing high-speed telecommunications equipment to the area.

Wilkinson County's experience may be a good example for other rural counties in Georgia, although the lack of modern telecommunications networks is the greatest obstacle for information technology businesses that wish to relocate. In some cases, however, the high cost of network installation may be offset by the low cost

of labor, attractively priced real estate, and tax and other incentives offered by local governments. Wireless networks, less expensive than fiber-optics lines, may prove to be a feasible Internet infrastructure solution for poor, rural counties. The tightening labor market in Macon, and the intense competition for skilled labor among the insurance, manufacturing and government sectors, may help Region 6's rural areas attract business, diversify their economies, and create well-paid jobs.

**Region 6: Middle 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 6	5,412,940	8,983,125	66.0
Baldwin	501,916	835,267	66.4
Bibb	2,284,019	3,731,514	63.4
Crawford	96,862	179,154	85.0
Houston	1,244,502	2,128,245	71.0
Jones	283,436	449,089	58.4
Monroe	217,279	363,133	67.1
Peach	290,249	451,850	55.7
Pulaski	101,369	167,159	64.9
Putnam	181,792	359,265	97.6
Twiggs	89,978	139,177	54.7
Wilkinson	121,538	179,272	47.5

Buying power is disposable personal income.

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

Region 7: East Central Georgia



Region 7 consists of 14 counties in eastern Georgia. Compared to the state as a whole, the region's population, buying power, per capita personal income, and employment will grow relatively slowly in general, but Columbia County will continue

to see fast-paced growth. Columbia County is the primary suburban residential county in the Augusta metropolitan area, and its diversification into retailing and services increasingly will drive the economy. The Georgia portion of the Augusta-Aiken MSA—Columbia, McDuffie, and Richmond counties—anchors Region 7's economy, and the prospects for neighboring Lincoln and Burke counties increasingly will be tied to economic developments in Augusta.

Augusta's location astride I-20 is a perfect location for regional distribution and manufacturing, and it will be a major factor in the city's development. Not only does the interstate have significant potential as an industrial corridor, it also links the area to rapidly growing markets in Atlanta and South Carolina. Augusta's warehouse and distribution sector should receive a boost when the Savannah River Parkway opens, and truckers have a four-lane north-south connection to Savannah's ports. Both I-20 and U.S. 78 help the Georgia portion of the Augusta MSA to benefit from recent successful business recruitment efforts by Aiken and Edgefield counties in South Carolina, and now many who work there commute from across the state line.

The Augusta Regional Airport at Bush Field will continue to have a considerable direct economic impact on the metropolitan area, and also makes the region more attractive as a site for a wide range of industries. The airport offers nonstop flights to Atlanta, Charlotte, and Cincinnati and full-service air freight. The airport in neighboring Aiken, South Carolina is competing for business, too; and civic leaders hope that investments in a new terminal, an instrument landing system, and a longer runway will pay off.

Having Fort Gordon in the neighborhood hasn't hurt, either. This Army installation houses the largest communication electronics training center in the world, and its presence helps attract technology-oriented people and businesses. Thus Augusta is emerging as a center for telecommunications services, relying on a good telecommunications infrastructure and a skilled but underutilized labor force to attract customer service, call, and directory assistance centers.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Savannah River Site, located in South Carolina, also is one of the metropolitan area's largest employers. In the mid-1990s, cutbacks at the Site led to economic stagnation and recession, but employment and spending levels are expected to remain relatively steady and may even climb slightly higher in coming years.

Recent reports in the media suggest that the Southern Company will apply for a federal license to build a new nuclear plant at the site of one of its existing nuclear power plants. Augusta's Plant Vogtle is one possibility, since it was originally licensed for four reactors, but only two were built. The construction and operation of a new nuclear plant would contribute significantly to the regional economy, but even if Vogtle is selected, it will take many years before anything materializes.

Although the health care industry is a major part of Augusta's economy, it has not provided much recent fuel for growth. Locally, the sector appears to have overexpanded, and it also faces more competition from medical centers located elsewhere in the Southeast. The continuing focus on efficiency and the gradual replacement of fee-for-use programs by managed care also is retarding the health care industry's growth. Eventually, favorable demographics and other factors should encourage renewed expansion, but significant job growth is not expected for some time.

While the health care sector languishes, the newly created Georgia Medical Authority will use the expertise available at the Medical College of Georgia to establish Augusta as a center for the rapidly growing biotechnology sector. One long-range goal is to develop a high-tech medical park that focuses on private biotechnology research and its practical application. Geographically, however, metropolitan Atlanta has already emerged as Georgia's medical-biotechnology center.

Augusta's hospitality industry will continue to benefit from recent downtown development, including Riverwalk, the Morris Museum of Art, the National Science Center's Fort Discovery, and Georgia's Golf Hall of Fame. The Cotton Exchange Museum, the Enterprise Mill, numerous antique shops, and many historic structures also will capture tourists' attention. Of course, Augusta is world-famous for the Masters golf tournament. Although the city is ideal for small meetings, corporate retreats, and daytrippers, it is unlikely to become a major destination for business and leisure travel-

**Region 7: East Central 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 7	392,354	435,008	10.9
Burke	20,579	22,243	8.1
Columbia	66,031	89,288	35.2
Glascock	2,357	2,556	8.4
Hancock	8,908	10,076	13.1
Jefferson	17,408	17,266	-0.8
Jenkins	8,247	8,575	4.0
Lincoln	7,442	8,348	12.2
McDuffie	20,119	21,231	5.5
Richmond	189,719	199,775	5.3
Screven	13,842	15,374	11.1
Taliaferro	1,915	2,077	8.5
Warren	6,078	6,336	4.2
Washington	19,112	21,176	10.8
Wilkes	10,597	10,687	0.8

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

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**Region 7: East Central 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 7	154,621	173,936	185,698	12.5	6.8
Burke	6,355	6,681	6,850	5.1	2.5
Columbia	12,670	20,057	25,235	58.3	25.8
Glascocok	619	551	520	-11.0	-5.7
Hancock	1,726	1,763	1,782	2.1	1.1
Jefferson	5,601	5,488	5,432	-2.0	-1.0
Jenkins	2,280	2,956	3,366	29.6	13.9
Lincoln	1,734	1,578	1,505	-9.0	-4.6
McDuffie	6,646	8,572	9,735	29.0	13.6
Richmond	99,620	107,103	111,053	7.5	3.7
Screven	4,060	3,918	3,849	-3.5	-1.8
Taliaferro	238	226	220	-5.0	-2.6
Warren	1,695	1,726	1,742	1.8	0.9
Washington	7,637	9,005	9,778	17.9	8.6
Wilkes	3,740	4,312	4,630	15.3	7.4

*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.

ers because there simply aren't enough unique attractions to make Augusta a major draw. Retirees, however, are attracted to Augusta by its low costs, good climate, and medical facilities, or by family ties.

PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Economic prospects for Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren, Washington, and Wilkes counties are influenced by trends in agriculture, forestry, and the use of natural resources, so these rural counties can expect slow to moderate growth. Since all have relatively small economic bases, decisions by one or two large employers often can dramatically affect economic activity. Dependence on industries that are vulnerable to global compe-

titution, such as textile and apparel manufacturing, not to mention poor short-term prospects for the region's important lumber and pine pulpwood industries, also will limit economic gains.

The region's rural counties lack major attractions that could boost tourism-based development, and there is scant potential for retiree-based development. Many communities currently do not have prime sites ready for immediate occupancy and/or lack multi-lane access to an interstate; therefore the state legislature's recent decision to accelerate spending on four-lane highways such as the Fall Line Freeway and the Savannah River Parkway will make it easier for several of these rural counties to recruit new industry. Finally, although there are a number of barriers to high-paced growth, the risk of large declines in either population or buying power appears to be relatively low.

**Region 7: East Central 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 7	5,364,158	8,233,769	53.5
Burke	207,566	354,178	70.6
Columbia	1,011,918	1,957,584	93.5
Glascock	28,195	50,060	77.5
Hancock	83,256	133,476	60.3
Jefferson	182,565	282,786	54.9
Jenkins	80,557	137,211	70.3
Lincoln	84,741	139,520	64.6
McDuffie	248,280	390,729	57.4
Richmond	2,824,803	3,825,900	35.4
Screven	155,559	244,587	57.2
Taliaferro	20,673	24,697	19.5
Warren	59,781	92,926	55.4
Washington	241,387	399,976	65.7
Wilkes	134,878	200,138	48.4

Buying power is disposable personal income.

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

Region 8: Southwest Central Georgia



Region 8 consists of three metropolitan counties that are part of the Columbus MSA and 13 rural counties in southwest-central Georgia. I-185 connects the Columbus MSA to what is now a largely undeveloped stretch of I-85 between Atlanta and Birmingham, but this interlink has tremendous potential for industrial recruitment. I-75 connects the region's easternmost counties, Dooley and Crisp, to fast-growing markets in Atlanta and Florida, and U.S. 27 links the region's western counties to the Florida panhandle. When completed, the Fall Line Freeway will provide uninterrupted four-lane access to Macon and Augusta.

The region's employment is growing moderately and per capita personal income is rising. Improving labor market conditions are powering the growth of the consumer market, which spurs retail activity. Data show that Region 8's buying power (or disposable personal income) rose from \$4.1 billion in 1990 to \$7 billion in 2001, an increase of 69 percent in eleven years. This gain nearly matches the 70 percent increase in the nation's buying power, but falls far short of the 94 percent gain posted by the state as a whole.

One fundamental problem that plagues the region is very slow population growth. According to Census 2000, Region 8's population grew from 332,120 persons in 1990 to 353,120 persons in 2000, or an increase of only 6.4 percent. In contrast, Georgia's population grew by 26.4 percent and the U.S. population rose by 13.2 percent. Only Harris County, whose population grew by 33.2 percent, equaled or surpassed the statewide rate of population growth; and did so because it is the preferred bedroom community in the Columbus MSA. The proposed Heritage-at-Callaway Farms golf resort community would provide a considerable additional boost to the county's population. Plans call for the 4,000-acre development to include several thousand homes, retail stores, and inns. A nearby business/light industrial park also is proposed.

Callaway Gardens itself is known for attracting both business meetings and leisure travelers. Now, the newly completed Discovery Center at Callaway Gardens will further enhance the appeal of this established resort, which already attracts more than one million visitors per year.

In addition to Harris County, three others exceeded the nation's rate of population growth. Quitman County's population jumped by 17.6 percent; Dooly County's population grew by 16.4 percent; and Taylor County's escalated by 15.3 percent. Across the entire state, only eight counties lost population and five are part of Region 8. Chattahoochee and Stewart counties lost 12.1 percent and 7.1 percent of their populations, respectively. Randolph County's population dropped by 2.9 percent, while Talbot and Clay counties had relatively small losses of 0.2 percent and 0.4 percent, respectively.

The region's slow population growth reflects the heavy out-migration and the limited in-migration of working-age persons and their families as the ongoing restructuring of agriculture, forestry, and labor-intensive manufacturing takes its toll. In counties with small or very homogenous economic bases, the loss of one or two large employers can be severe. Also, the superabundance of good jobs in Atlanta and Florida is sucking the local labor force away.

THE COLUMBUS AREA

The Columbus MSA is the main growth center in Region 8. Fort Benning is by far the area's largest employer and it will continue to be an economic mainstay, but federal spending probably will not be a major source of additional jobs. Columbus could benefit from successful efforts to move state government operations out of Atlanta, however.

Several of the world's most respected financial services companies are headquartered in Columbus, including AFLAC and Synovus Financial Corporation. Nationally ranked among the best companies in which to work, AFLAC and Synovus continue to expand, and their presence helps to position Columbus as a place where high-technology companies flourish. Moreover, a Blue Cross/Blue Shield claims processing center adds to the city's growing reputation as a headquarters for transactions processing.

AFLAC's new marketing campaign (and its spokesduck) is proving to be a great success in boosting sales domestically. In 2001, AFLAC will open a new corporate campus in the Corporate Ridge Industrial Park; and the company could add up to 1,000 jobs over the next five years.

**Region 8: Southwest Central 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 8	332,120	353,274	6.4
Chattahoochee	16,934	14,882	-12.1
Clay	3,364	3,357	-0.2
Crisp	20,011	21,996	9.9
Dooly	9,901	11,525	16.4
Harris	17,788	23,695	33.2
Macon	13,114	14,074	7.3
Marion	5,590	7,144	27.8
Muscogee	179,280	186,291	3.9
Quitman	2,210	2,598	17.6
Randolph	8,023	7,791	-2.9
Schley	3,590	3,766	4.9
Stewart	5,654	5,252	-7.1
Sumter	30,232	33,200	9.8
Talbot	6,524	6,498	-0.4
Taylor	7,642	8,815	15.3
Webster	2,263	2,390	5.6

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

The importance of Total Systems Services' decision to keep and expand its operations in Columbus cannot be overstated. The company's transformative potential is enormous. The expansion of Columbus College and the large-scale training of employees for Total Systems Services improve the skills of the labor force, making the entire area more attractive to industry, and giving the MSA the solid base for a high-tech future. The area's advanced telecommunications infrastructure also helps to attract technology-oriented companies, which is a major economic benefit. Industries such as business services and information and data processing pay higher salaries than most other industries, and attract highly-qualified workers. With this young, new economy-oriented workforce comes a corollary benefit: the city and metropolitan area are enhanced by the increased demand for better schools, which in turn makes Region 8 even more attractive to business.

Due to the growing demand for private planes and business jets, Cessna Aircraft Company plans to expand its facility in Columbus. The \$5.8 million expansion will add about 300 production and assembly jobs over the next two years.

The demonstrated commitment of business, government, and residents to economic development is one of the metropolitan area's greatest strengths. Highly effective leadership and generous financial contributions from the Bradley-Turner Foundation and others have led to extensive redevelopment of downtown Columbus. Recent projects include the Columbus Museum, the Springer Opera House restoration, the Coca-Cola Space Science Center, the Woodruff Confederate Naval Museum, the River Center for the Performing Arts, the State Theatre of Georgia, and the city's extensive riverwalk along the Chattahoochee. Moreover, the StoneTree Group has announced plans to develop the historic Sol Loeb and Garrett-Joy buildings for downtown retail, restaurant and office uses. The thriving Columbus Convention Center—recently expanded from 1.5 to 1.7 million square feet—itself is located in a beautifully renovated factory.

While the high tech, service, tourism, and retail sectors of the Columbus area's economy flourish, traditional blue-collar jobs in the once thriving manufacturing sector are dwindling. In January, Johnson Industries closed its Columbus Mills fabric plant. Almost simultaneously, Beaulieu of America closed its carpet mill on

**Region 8: Southwest Central 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 8	121,632	148,618	168,459	22.2	13.4
Chattahoochee**	6,103	1,281	1,645	-79.0	28.4
Clay	542	667	740	23.1	10.9
Crisp	8,013	8,948	9,456	11.7	5.7
Dooly	2,602	3,569	4,180	37.2	17.1
Harris	3,396	5,037	6,134	48.3	21.8
Macon	4,008	4,057	4,082	1.2	0.6
Marion	1,629	2,701	3,478	65.8	28.8
Muscogee	75,875	99,114	113,280	30.6	14.3
Quitman	158	300	413	89.9	37.8
Randolph	2,377	2,484	2,539	4.5	2.2
Schley	1,033	1,210	1,310	17.1	8.2
Stewart	1,105	1,237	1,309	11.9	5.8
Sumter	12,032	14,770	16,364	22.8	10.8
Talbot	806	806	806	0.0	0.0
Taylor	1,601	2,005	2,244	25.2	11.9
Webster	352	432	479	22.7	10.8

*Extension of trends.

**Employment drop related to changes at the area's military base.

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.

River Road. Also, Matsushita Battery Industrial Corp. recently shut down one part of its operations in Columbus, costing the area about 360 jobs.

As home prices in Harris County rise, suburban growth may spread into Talbot County, so it could regain some population. Harris is experiencing some success in attracting new industry. For example, Junction City Mining will build a new granite products plant and Svedala will build a facility that sells and services mining machinery. Also, Oglethorpe Power may build a large peak power generating plant in the county.

During the 1990s, Randolph County's economy was devastated by job losses in the textile industry and agriculture. In 2000, there were no more textile jobs remaining, and the county's population fell to 7,719. The

recent announcement by pesticide manufacturer Circle One International Inc., of plans to relocate its corporate headquarters from Florida to Randolph County could be a turning point. Approximately 200 office, research, and manufacturing jobs will be created at the facility, and the multiplier effect of direct spending undoubtedly will create additional jobs. Eventually, Randolph County will receive additional stimulus when U.S. 27 is four laned.

Region 8's hospitality industry receives a considerable boost from the Walter F. George Reservoir and Lake Blackshear. Indeed, the Georgia Veterans Memorial State Park on Lake Blackshear in Crisp County is one of the most popular parks in the state. Boating, fishing, swimming, golf, a military museum, and conference

**Region 8: Southwest Central 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 8	4,134,457	6,986,301	69.0
Chattahoochee	189,574	318,579	68.1
Clay	30,014	48,280	60.9
Crisp	227,773	365,038	60.3
Dooly	103,814	170,929	64.6
Harris	252,411	521,841	106.7
Macon	140,291	210,806	50.3
Marion	53,852	98,834	83.5
Muscogee	2,410,521	4,076,575	69.1
Quitman	23,325	40,620	74.1
Randolph	79,960	118,131	47.7
Schley	40,309	68,886	70.9
Stewart	55,294	83,201	50.5
Sumter	358,716	595,300	66.0
Talbot	60,826	98,021	61.2
Taylor	84,000	136,079	62.0
Webster	23,777	35,180	48.0

Buying power is disposable personal income.

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

center help to draw the visitors. The excellent road between the park and I-75 also makes it easy to visit the lake.

The heavily-traveled I-75 corridor provides obvious benefits to retailers, hotels, and others located on one of the interchanges in Crisp and Dooley counties. I-75 also

creates an ideal location for distribution or manufacturing centers that serve markets in Georgia and Florida. Nationwide Homes, a manufacturer of modular housing, is a prime example of a company that is taking advantage of this strategic location. ■