

**COMPREHENSIVE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
UPDATE
LEE AND RUSSELL COUNTIES
SEPTEMBER 2009**



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REGIONAL VISION STATEMENT:

“To promote and maintain a healthy environment for growth and development in Lee and Russell Counties.”



ORGANIZING AND STAFFING FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) serves as a framework for future economic development activities in Lee and Russell counties that will help create jobs, foster a more stable and diversified economy and improve the quality of life in the region. Regional planning provides an opportunity to take a broader planning perspective and focus on issues that may be beyond the abilities of individual local governments to address.

In preparing this annual CEDS Update, planning staff at Lee-Russell Council of Governments utilized the expertise of planners at the cities of Auburn, Opelika and Phenix City, as well as administrators at Lee and Russell County. Strategic plans from member governments were reviewed. Additionally, updated information from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Alabama Department of Education, Alabama Rural Action Commission, Alabama State Data Center, US Census Bureau, US Department of Commerce, and US Department of Labor was examined.

Information was also gathered through the development of the Regional Growth Management Plan, and through meetings of the Lee and Russell County Rural Planning Organization, Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the United We Ride Coordinated Human Service Transportation Project.

The draft plan was posted in the Lee-Russell Council of Governments for comment.

Lee Russell Council of Governments is not an Economic Development District (EDA) but prepares and updates CEDS according to EDA guidelines in the event that one of our member governments wishes to apply for future EDA funding.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? A REGIONAL PROFILE

Location

Region 10 is comprised of two Alabama counties, Lee and Russell, located in East Central Alabama, along the Chattahoochee River. The land area is 1,250 square miles. In 2008, the population density per square mile in Lee County was 218. In Russell County it was 78. Regionally, the population density is 147 per square mile.

At the region's eastern border is the State of Georgia. To the north, south and west of the region are the Alabama counties of Chambers, Tallapoosa, Macon, Bullock and Barbour. The region is along and near Interstate 85 and Interstate Spur 185 which provide easy access and proximity to both Atlanta, Georgia and Montgomery, Alabama. Location and access to interstate highways is seen as a continuing source of opportunity for both Lee and Russell Counties.

Geography, Environment, and Natural Resource Characteristics

The terrain in the northern portion of the region is Piedmont Plateau characterized by hilly topography with gentle to steep slopes. The terrain for the southern portion is Coastal Plain which is level to gently rolling. Types of soil follow the same line as the terrain across the region with rocky, clay soil to the north and sandy soil to the south. Loblolly and shortleaf pine forests are common across the region.

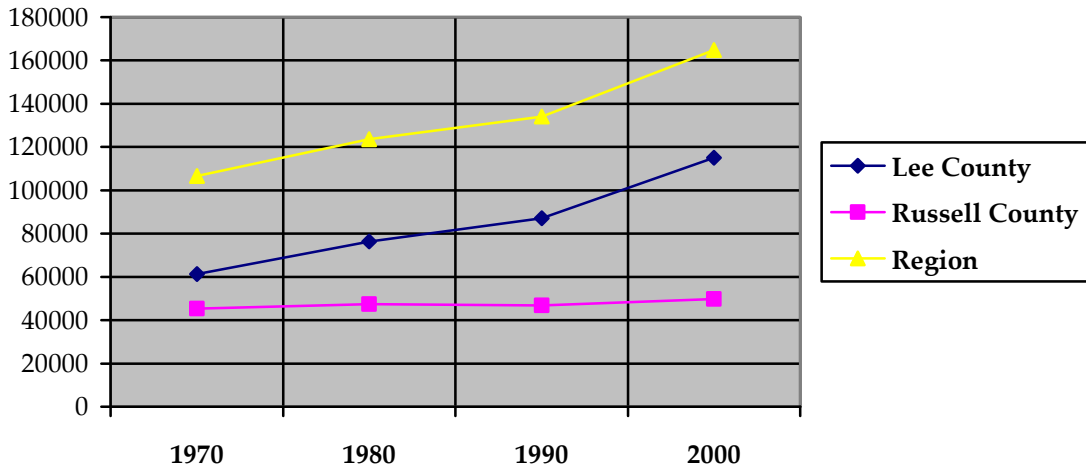
Many large creek systems form watersheds in the region. The western areas are drained by the Saugahatchee and Chewacla creeks as they flow to the Tallapoosa River. The creeks in the eastern areas, Little Uchee, Halawakee, and Wacoochee, flow to the Chattahoochee River which forms the border between Alabama and Georgia. The network of creeks, the many lakes, and the Chattahoochee River make the area desirable for both industry and tourism.

The climate is characterized by short, mild winters and long, moderately warm summers. The growing season is 230 to 240 days long. The annual mean temperature is near 65 degrees. The region rises from 250 feet above sea level in Russell County to approximately 700 feet above sea level in Lee County. The average annual precipitation is about 55 inches.

Population

Lee County has been among the fastest growing counties in Alabama for many years. Russell County's rate of growth has been much slower. Back in 1970, fifty-seven percent of the region's population resided in Lee County. Thirty years later, seventy percent of the region's population resides in Lee County. From 1990 to 2000, Lee County experienced a 32% increase in population. During the same time period, Russell County's population growth was 6.18%.

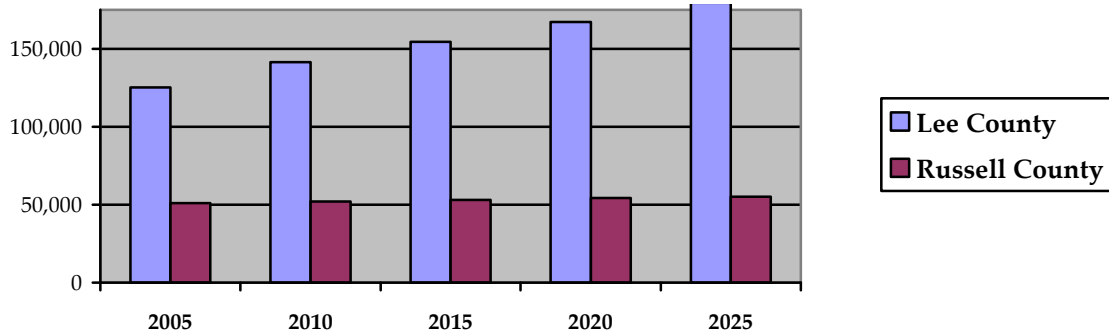
Figure 1: Population Growth 1970-2000



Source: US Census Bureau

The Alabama State Data Center estimates the regional population in 2008 to have reached 183,514. ASDC projects that by 2025 the population of the region will be 235,000. (See Figure 2 below) However, ASDC estimates for future growth are based on past growth and do not take into account the anticipated expansion of the automotive industry and increases in soldiers and military contractors at nearby Fort Benning. A Regional Growth Management Plan, completed in the spring of 2009, believes growth in Lee County will be 12% higher than projected between 2008 and 2028. The growth in Russell County is expected to be an astounding 56% higher than projected during this same time period.

Figure 2: ASDC Estimated Population Growth 2005-2025



Source: Alabama State Data Center

Lee County Population Data

According to the Alabama State Data Center, in 2008 the population of Lee County was estimated to be 133,010. Lee County ranks as the 8th most populous county in Alabama. The major population areas of Lee County are in the cities of Auburn, Opelika and Smith's Station. Sixty-seven percent of the counties' population resides in these 3 cities. Thirty-three percent reside in the rural and/or unincorporated areas of the county. The City of Auburn gained 13,101 citizens between 2000 and 2008 and was estimated to have a population of 56,088. This was the second highest increase in citizens among all places in Alabama. The County Seat, Opelika, gained 3,310 citizens and the 2008 population is estimated to be 26,808. The City of Smiths Station gained 136 citizens between 2000 and 2008 and has an estimated population of 4,679.

Russell County Population Data

The 2008 population of Russell County was estimated to be 50,504. Russell County is the 25th most populous county in Alabama. Between 1990 and 2000, the population of Russell County increased by 6.2 %.

The major population areas of Russell County are in the northeastern area of the county, in and adjacent to the county seat, Phenix City. Sixty-four percent of the counties' population is located in this urban and suburban area of the county. The remaining 36% live in the more rural areas of the county. The City of Phenix City gained 2,860 citizens between 2000 and 2008 and is estimated to have a total population of 31,125. The only other incorporated area in Russell County is the Town of Hurtsboro. The population of Hurtsboro decreased between 2000 and 2008 by 46, from 592 to 546.

Expected Impacts of Growth at Fort Benning and Expansion of Automotive Industry

Population growth estimates and projections from the Census Bureau and Alabama State Data Center are based on past growth. Since the 2000 Census, two important economic development situations have arisen in the region that could potentially affect population growth.

First, the I-85 corridor has become a hot spot for the location of automobile manufacturers and tier one automotive suppliers. Hyundai is located in Montgomery, Alabama, 50 miles west of the region. KIA is constructing a massive automotive plant in West Point, GA, 25 miles northeast of the region. KIA is expected to bring 2,500 new jobs to Georgia and Alabama. New automotive suppliers are expected to bring in an additional 3,000 jobs.

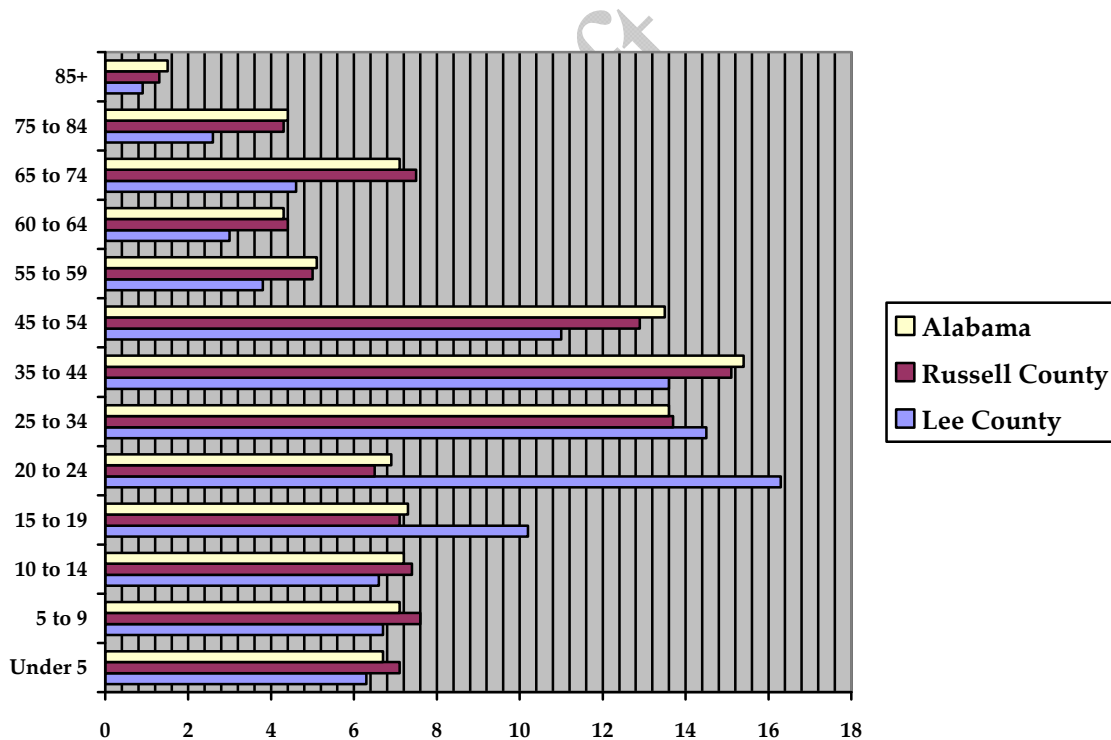
Secondly, Fort Benning, located in west Georgia and east central Alabama, will be profoundly impacted by BRAC realignment. The projected population growth, of military personnel, DoD civilian and contract company personnel and their families assigned to Fort Benning will total nearly 30,000 when BRAC implementation is complete.

The Regional Growth Management Plan, completed in the Spring of 2009, expects the impact on Russell County to be an additional 5,482 in population growth between 2008 and 2028. Lee County is projected to experience an additional 4,280 in population growth between 2008 and 2028. The bulk of this growth is expected to occur between 2011 and 2013.

Age Distribution

Age distribution can be an indicator of a county with an increasing or declining population. In 2007, the median age in Lee County was estimated at 28.5. In Russell County the median age is significantly higher at 38. Age distribution within the region shows the highest percentage of the population (29%) falls into the 25-44 age range. Twenty-one percent of the population is between the ages of 45 and 64. The large student population of Auburn University has a significant effect on the 21% of the region’s population between the ages of 15 and 24.

Figure 3: Age Distribution



Source: US Census

Senior Citizens as a Percentage of the Population

In 2008, the American Communities Survey estimated there were 10,847 individuals over the age of 65 in Lee County. This is 8.5% of the total population. In Russell County, 13.8% of the population, or 6,843 individuals, were over the age of 65.

Portions of the region, especially the cities of Auburn and Opelika, are increasingly seen as desirable locations for retirement. Projections from the Alabama State Data center show the elderly population of Lee County growing to 22,418 by 2025. The elderly population in Russell County is expected to increase to 9,135 by 2025.

Education

Education is an important factor in both preparing a skilled workforce and attracting and retaining business and industry to the region. Education is considered an area of strength for both Lee and Russell Counties.

There are three public school systems in Lee County: Lee County, Auburn City and Opelika City. All three public school systems located in Lee County met No Child Left Behind Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements in 2008. Access to technology, student attendance, percentage of highly qualified teachers, teachers with advanced degrees and fiscal management in these systems were well above state averages. Combined attendance in the three Lee County public school systems averaged 19,899.

There are two public school systems in Russell County: Phenix City and Russell County. Both systems attained their AYP goals in 2008. Access to technology, student attendance, percentage of highly qualified teachers, teachers with advanced degrees and fiscal management in these systems were above state averages. Combined attendance at the two Russell County public school systems averaged 15,083.

All of the region's school systems showed slight increases in enrollment over the previous year with the exception of the Russell County Schools. They experienced a decline of 221 students.

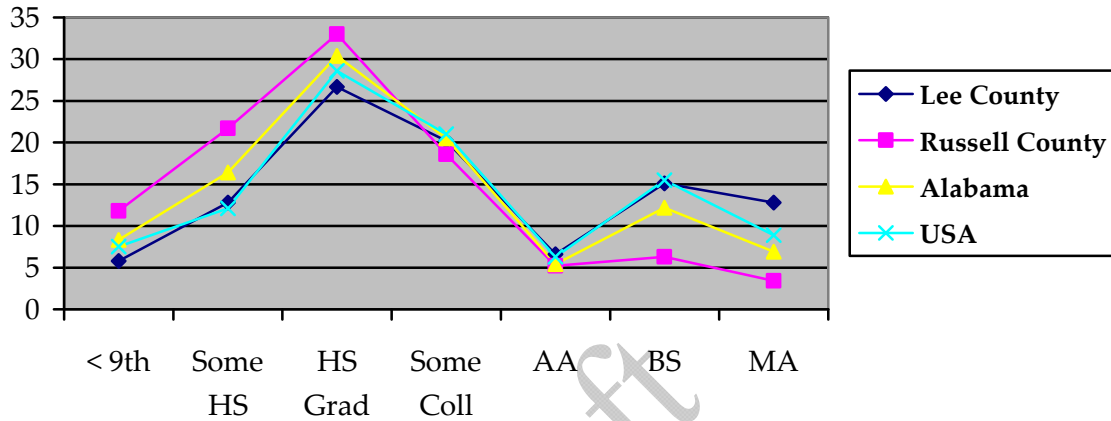
Figure 4: Public School Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate

School System	Avg Daily Attendance	2008 Graduation Rate %	4 Year Projected Drop-Out Rate %
Auburn City	5,668	92%	6.06%
Lee County	9,957	89%	14.65%
Opelika City	4,274	86%	11.02%
Phenix City	5,850	98%	4.32%
Russell County	3,383	76%	19.95%

Source: Alabama Department of Education

The educational attainment of the region’s citizens mirrors national trends with the highest percentage of residents reporting having a high school diploma or equivalent. Russell County has a higher than expected percentage of residents reporting less than 9 years of schooling (11.8%) and attending high school without receiving a diploma (21.7%). Lee County’s percentage of citizens with a graduate or doctorate degree (12.8%) is well above national averages.

Figure 5: Educational Attainment



Source: US Census

INFRASTRUCTURE

Access to potable water and sanitary conditions is an important ingredient on economic development. Companies are much more likely to invest in regions where infrastructure is in place to support them. In both Lee and Russell Counties, water and sewer services outside of the incorporated areas have been sited as areas of weakness for many years. As the population expands, particularly in the Fort Mitchell area of Russell County and the Smiths Station area of Lee County, these long standing weaknesses have become critical issues in the region.

Water

Water service in Lee County is presently provided by two municipal public water systems and four (4) rural public water authorities. The two city systems, Auburn City Water Works and the Opelika Water Board, serve approximately 57% of the county’s total population. The remaining water systems of Lee County include the Beauregard Water System, Lee-Chambers Utilities District, Loachapoka Water Authority, and Smiths Station Water System. The water systems collectively serve approximately 107,035 persons, leaving 8,056 persons or 7% in Lee County unserved by a public organized system.

Russell County has four organized water systems in the county that serve 85% of the occupied households in the area. These water systems include Russell County Water Authority, Fort Mitchell Water System, Phenix City Utilities, and Hurtsboro Water and Sewer Board. These systems serve approximately 14,874 residential customers throughout the County. The combined water supply capacity from these four organized water systems is approximately 18 million gallons per day. Approximately 15% of the residents in Russell County do not have access to the public water system and must rely on private wells for water.

Sewer

Sewer services continue to be seen as an area concern throughout the region. Approximately 32% of households do not have access to sewer systems.

Public sewer service is available to 60%, or 27,621, of the households in Lee County, but only in the Auburn and Opelika incorporated areas. Public sewer service is not available to the 18,081 households, in the unincorporated areas of Lee County.

Nearly one-half (47%) of the households in Russell County do not have access to public sanitary sewer service. These areas include Fort Mitchell, Ladonia, Seale, Pittsview and Cottonton. Only Phenix City and Hurtsboro, with 9,350 residential customers, are served by a public sewer system while the remaining county residents must rely on other means of sewage disposal.

Russell County is currently experiencing a large amount of residential growth in the Fort Mitchell area of the county. Fort Mitchell is close to the back gate of Fort Benning and is projected to continue to be a high impact growth area. There is no sewer service in this part of the County. The cost of providing sewer to the area is prohibitive. Developers are currently building concentrated neighborhoods of homes with septic tanks on small lots. Septic tanks have been proven to fail over time in the soil conditions of the Fort Mitchell area.

TRANSPORTATION

High quality, accessible and affordable transportation services for people and goods are important to the ongoing economic growth of communities.

The region is bisected by Interstate 85 and lies midway between the capital cities of both Alabama and Georgia. Atlanta, Georgia is one hour northeast. Montgomery, Alabama is 45 minutes to the west. The region is also convenient to Birmingham, the largest metropolitan area in Alabama, which is located 90 minutes northwest via state Hwy 280. I-85 is a main transportation corridor between the Port of Mobile and Atlanta.

The Robert J. Pitts airport in Auburn provides services to private planes and corporate jets. A new terminal is planned for Robert J. Pitts. The Columbus Metropolitan Airport has daily connector flights to Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson Airport. Rail freight service is provided by the Norfolk Southern and Seaboard Railroads.

The average work commute in Lee County is 19.9 minutes. It is slightly longer in Russell County at 22.3 minutes. The overwhelming majority of workers in the region drive themselves to work alone. (Lee County: 81.4%; Russell County 78%). A small percentage carpool (Lee County: 11.6%; Russell County 16.8). Less than 1% of workers rely on public transportation to get to and from work.

Public transportation is seen as an area of weakness for the region. Public transportation is provided by 2 public transit systems, Lee-Russell Public Transit (LRPT) and Phenix City Express (PEX), Auburn University operated Tiger Transit, taxi services, and a variety of not-for-profit agencies that shuttle their clients to and from their homes to appointments. Transportation is difficult or impossible to access in the highly populated urban areas of the region at night or on the week-ends. In rural areas of the region, demand-response services are available only on certain days of the week and require riders to wait as long as 2 hours for return trips.

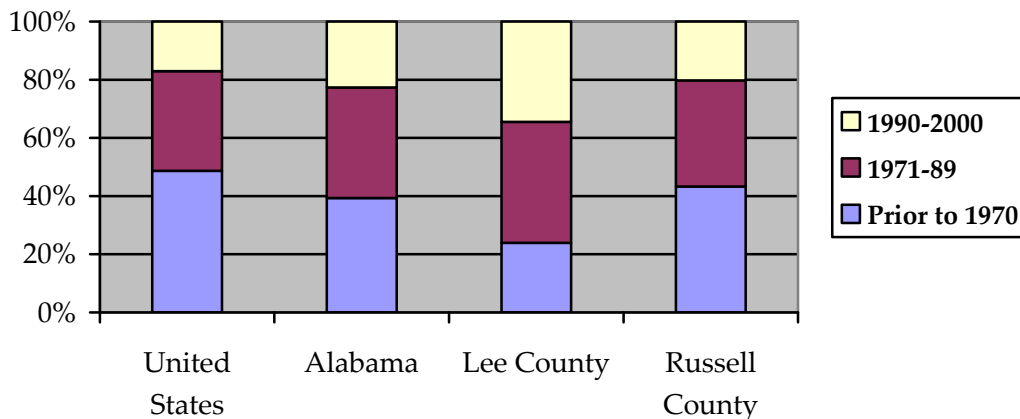
There are 984 miles of paved roads and 424 miles of unpaved roads in the region. Maintenance of unpaved roads local bridges are areas of concern for both counties.

HOUSING

Housing is a basic necessity of life. An adequate supply of affordable housing available for rent or purchase is necessary to attract and retain business.

The age of the housing stock in the region compares favorably to the age of housing stock across the country. Both Lee and Russell counties have a lower percentage of houses built prior to 1970 than the national percentage of 48.7%. Additionally, 20.2% of the housing in Russell County and 34.5% of the housing in Lee County has been built since 1990.

Figure 6: Age of Housing Stock: Year Built



In recent years the availability of affordable housing has been an area of concern for Lee County. According to the Alabama Center for Real Estate (ACRE), the median selling price for homes in Lee County in July, 2000 was \$131,350. By the July of 2007, the median price had risen to \$179,900. Following the economic downturn in 2008, median prices fell to \$168,000 in July 2008. In July, 2009, median sales prices fell again to \$160,235. In July, 2009 there were 1,246 houses on the market in Lee County. This is the highest inventory the area real estate market has ever had.

Housing has typically been more affordable in Russell County. Prices there have risen dramatically since 2000. In July, 2000, the median selling price for a home in Phenix City was \$90,950. By July of 2007, the median selling price was \$150,000. Although the economic downturn of 2008 impacted prices in 2008, dropping the median selling price back to \$142,000, the median selling price in 2009 had reached \$164,500. In July, 2009, there were 825 houses on the market in Phenix City. This is a substantial decrease in inventory from the 1,243 properties listed in July, 2008.

Lee County has a small number of subsidized housing units available to meet the needs of low income individuals. In 2008, 537 units were located at the Opelika Housing Authority, with 9 vacant units. Opelika has 480 Section 8 Vouchers. In the City of Auburn, the Auburn Housing Authority has 322 units, with only two vacant units.

To meet the needs of low income individuals, the Phenix City Housing Authority operates seven housing complexes. In the summer of 2009, there are a total of 922 apartments in the complexes and currently only 2 three-bedroom units are vacant. The Housing Authority reports that there are also 653 Section 8 participants in Phenix City. There are 75 families on the waiting list for public housing. The waiting list for Section 8 housing is closed.

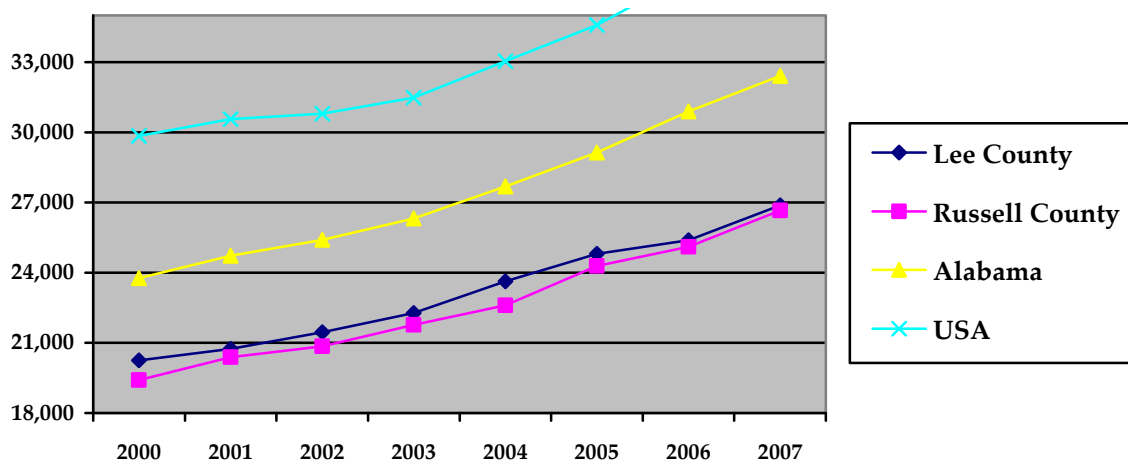
ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Per Capita Income

Per capita personal income is the total personal income of an area divided by the population of the area. It is an indicator of the economic well being of residents and the character of consumer markets.

Per capita personal income continues to rise in the region but it also continues to remain below both the state and national per capita income averages. In Lee County, the 2007 per capita income was \$26,883, ranking 32 out of Alabama's 67 counties. In Russell County 2007 per capita income was \$26,661, ranking 36th in the state. The Alabama statewide per capita income is \$32,419.

Figure 7: Per Capita Personal Income Comparison

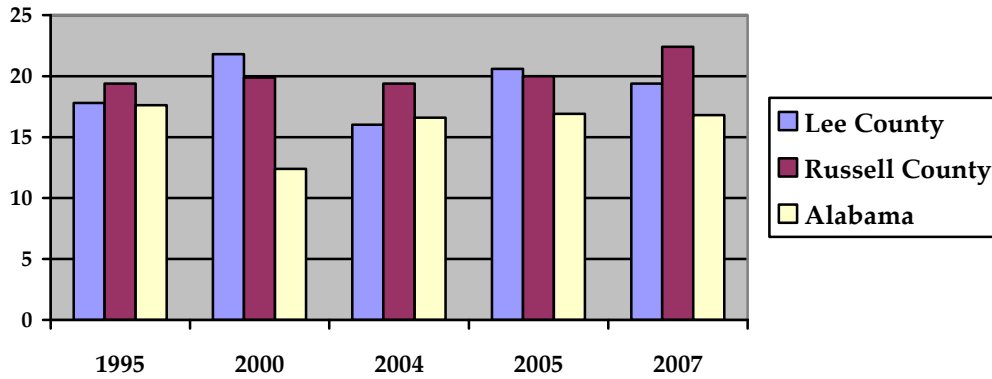


Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2008

Percent of Population Below Poverty

According to the 2005-2007 American Community Survey estimates, 23,845 individuals, 19.4% of the population in Lee County, live in poverty. In Russell County 10,961 individuals, or 22.4% of the population live in poverty. Statewide, 16.9 percent of Alabama citizens live in poverty.

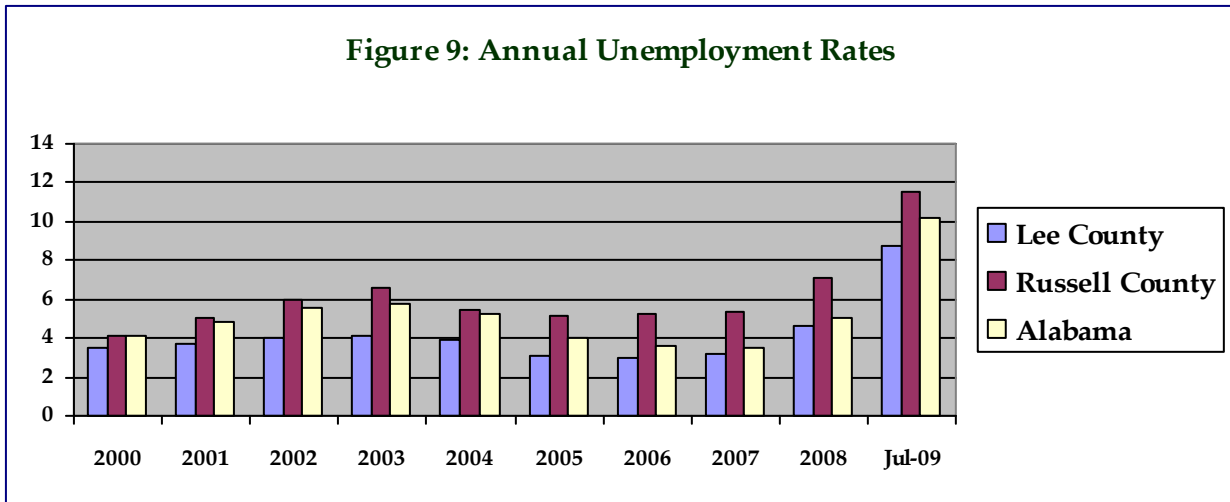
Figure 8: Percentage of Population in Poverty



Employment

Unemployment rates in Alabama have risen sharply over the last 14 months just as they have across the country. In July of 2009, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the state was 10.2%, up slightly from June, 2009's rate of 10.1%. These rates are the highest Alabama has experienced in 25 years. Lee County's unemployment rate has traditionally been among the lowest in the state. In July of 2009, Lee County's unemployment rate of 8.7%, with 5,402 individuals searching for work. Just 12 months earlier, in July, 2008, Lee County's rate was 5.2%. Russell County's unemployment rate has been above the Alabama state average since 2001. In July of 2009 the unemployment rate in Russell County was reported at 11.5%, with 2,455 individuals searching for jobs. In July 2008, the unemployment rate in Russell County was 7.9%.

Figure 9: Annual Unemployment Rates



Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009

Total employment in Lee County increased by 13,948 between 2001 and 2007. The majority of job growth occurred in the transportation and warehousing, manufacturing, and accommodation and food service. The increase in transportation and warehousing can be attributed to the Walmart and JoAnn Fabrics distribution centers located in Opelika. The increases in manufacturing are related to the automotive industry rather than the traditional textile manufacturing. The only sector that showed any decline in jobs in Lee County between 2001 and 2007 was Utilities and this reduction only involved 7 jobs. Between 2005 and 2007, manufacturing declined by 514 jobs but still accounted for 1,477 more jobs than in 2001.

In Russell County total employment of 17,484 in 2007 was still lagging slightly behind total employment levels of 17,440 in 2001. However Russell County continues to experience a slow but steady rebound in job growth. Food Service and accommodation was up 337 (from 1,165 to 1,502) over 2001 levels. Finance and insurance added 187 jobs, from 413 to 600, since 2001. Real estate, rental and leasing increased from 354 to 589 between 2001 and 2007. The biggest job declines in Russell County were seen in manufacturing, which has slipped from 3,708 jobs to 2,437 jobs.

Figures 10 and 11, on pages 16 and 17, detail employment by industry trends in Lee and Russell Counties from 2001 to 2007. Figure 12, on page 18, shows combined regional employment trends for the same time period.

The largest employers in Lee County remain Auburn University and East Alabama Medical Center. However, 2 traditionally large Lee County employers, Uniroyal Goodrich, and West Point Stevens have fallen on hard times. West Point Stevens has closed all operations in Lee County and Uniroyal Goodrich will cease operations in September 2009.

In Russell County, the largest employers are the Phenix City Board of Education, and Mead Westvaco Coated Board. Russell County is beginning to recover from the loss of several manufacturing companies in 2003-2004. McLendon Trailers has moved to Russell County and AlaTrade, a chicken processing plant has also located in Russell County.

Both Lee and Russell County are actively pursuing automotive manufacturing firms associated with the new KIA plant currently under construction in west central Georgia. It is hoped that these firms will balance the loss of textile manufacturing the region has experienced.

Figure 10: Lee County Full and Part Time Employment by Industry

ITEM	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total Employment	54,545	56,530	57,648	60,653	63,249	66,646	68,493
Wage and Salary Employment	46,047	47,830	48,575	51,210	53,060	55,073	56,202
Proprietors Employment (2)	8,498	8,700	9,073	9,443	10,189	11,573	12,291
Farm	374	372	363	355	353	348	347
Non Farm	8,124	8,328	8,710	9,088	9,836	11,225	11,944
Farm Employment	551	566	541	556	514	534	510
Non Farm Employment	53,994	55,964	57,107	60,097	62,735	66,112	67,983
Private Employment	40,570	41,784	42,267	44,473	46,818	50,099	51,775
Forestry, fishing	153	183	165	D	172	195	217
Mining	71	58	64	D	75	92	89
Utilities	172	186	190	182	160	165	171
Construction	3,482	3,401	3,311	3,575	3,775	4,218	4,486
Manufacturing	6,147	6,224	6,665	6,879	7,112	7,624	7,028
Wholesale trade	1,006	1,117	1,010	1,114	1,213	1,424	1,501
Retail trade	6,966	7,054	6,497	6,818	7,137	7,113	7,495
Transportation, warehousing	953	979	1,547	1,633	1,816	2,041	2,127
Information	621	627	631	632	663	711	1,030
Finance, insurance	1,272	1,282	1,251	1,240	1,273	1,425	1,542
Real estate, rental, leasing	1,803	1,725	1,782	1,898	2,088	2,152	2,240
Professional/technical services	D	D	D	2,223	2,471	2,743	2,973
Management	D	D	D	199	236	239	223
Administrative, waste services	3,247	3,849	3,704	4,025	4,235	4,511	4,676
Educational services	567	625	656	711	808	897	917
Health care, social assistance	3,328	3,393	3,398	3,296	3,420	3,663	3,840
Arts, entertainment, recreation	849	878	822	835	890	1,079	1,134
Accommodation, food service	4,790	4,883	5,180	5,586	5,693	5,935	6,033
Other services	3,170	3,300	3,290	3,411	3,581	3,872	14,053
Government and government enterprises	13,424	14,180	14,840	15,624	15,917	16,013	16,208
Federal, civilian	339	337	337	343	350	338	315
Military	750	728	726	827	797	832	821
State, local	12,335	13,115	13,777	14,454	14,770	14,843	5,072
State government	6,254	6,748	7,080	7,372	7,493	7,491	7,638
Local government	6,081	6,367	6,697	7,082	7,277	7,352	7,434

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2009

(2)= Excludes limited partners

D= Not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information, but estimates of this item are included in the totals

Figure 11: Russell County Full and Part Time Employment by Industry

ITEM	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total Employment	17,440	16,206	15,997	16,768	16,911	17,192	17,484
Wage and Salary Employment	15,024	13,616	13,320	13,998	13,973	14,152	14,291
Proprietors Employment (2)	2,416	2,590	2,677	2,770	2,938	3,040	3,193
Farm	279	277	270	265	264	260	259
Non Farm	2,137	2,313	2,407	2,505	2,674	2,780	2,934
Farm Employment	326	328	317	318	307	309	302
Non Farm Employment	17,114	15,878	15,680	16,450	16,605	16,883	17,182
Private Employment	14,232	13,014	12,758	13,436	13,486	13,754	14,013
Forestry, fishing	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Mining	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Utilities	93	89	87	88	74	67	66
Construction	1,792	1,293	1,269	1,571	1,459	1,484	1,562
Manufacturing	3,708	3,059	2,791	2,817	2,683	2,488	2,437
Wholesale trade	162	189	241	224	214	213	243
Retail trade	2,316	2,270	2,298	2,366	2,447	2,519	2,381
Transportation, warehousing	314	308	339	351	360	371	348
Information	143	118	122	122	129	130	D
Finance, insurance	413	439	478	493	503	522	600
Real estate, rental, leasing	354	385	407	455	479	528	589
Professional/technical services	319	362	363	381	404	375	380
Management	12	42	D	20	37	50	49
Administrative, waste services	454	446	D	458	510	500	474
Educational services	40	45	45	D	D	D	D
Health care, social assistance	1,394	1,143	1,077	D	D	D	D
Arts, entertainment, recreation	155	137	127	144	155	149	156
Accommodation, food service	1,165	1,211	1,289	1,336	1,384	1,445	1,502
Other services	1,157	1,239	1,218	1,247	1,274	1,301	D
Government and government enterprises	2,882	2,864	2,922	3,014	3,118	3,129	3,169
Federal, civilian	97	90	87	92	99	96	97
Military	286	279	273	310	288	290	283
State, local	2,499	2,495	2,562	2,612	2,731	2,743	2,789
State government	464	515	538	578	653	663	654
Local government	2,035	1,980	2,024	2,034	2,078	2,080	2,135

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2009

(2)= Excludes limited partners

D= Not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information, but estimates of this item are included in the totals

Figure: 12: Regional Total Full and Part Time Employment By Industry

ITEM	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total Employment	71,985	72,733	73,645	77,421	80,160	83,838	85,977
Wage and Salary Employment	10,914	11,290	11,750	12,213	67,033	69,225	70,493
Proprietors Employment (2)	10,914	11,290	11,750	12,213	13,127	14,613	15,484
Farm	653	649	633	620	617	608	606
Non Farm	10,261	10,641	11,117	11,593	12,510	14,005	14,878
Farm Employment	877	894	858	874	821	843	812
Non Farm Employment	71,108	71,842	72,787	76,547	79,340	82,995	85,165
Private Employment	54,802	54,798	55,025	57,909	60,307	66,892	65,788
Forestry, fishing	153	183	165	D	172 D	195 D	217 D
Mining	71	58	64	D	75 D	92 D	89 D
Utilities	265	275	277	270	234	232	237
Construction	5,274	4,694	4,575	5,146	5,234	5,702	6,048
Manufacturing	9,855	9,283	9,456	9,696	9,795	10,112	9,465
Wholesale trade	1,168	1,306	1,251	1,338	1,427	1,637	1,744
Retail trade	9,285	9,326	8,794	9,184	9,584	9,632	9,876
Transportation, warehousing	1,267	1,287	1,886	1,984	2,176	2,412	2,475
Information	764	745	753	754	792	841	1,030 D
Finance, insurance	1,685	1,721	1,729	1,733	1,776	1,947	2,142
Real estate, rental, leasing	2,157	2,110	2,189	2,353	2,567	2,680	2,829
Professional/technical services	319	362	363	2,604	2,875	3,118	3,353
Management	12	42	D	219	273	289	272
Administrative, waste services	3,701	4,295	3,704	4,483	4,745	5,011	5,150
Educational services	607	670	701	711	808 D	897/D	917 D
Health care, social assistance	4,722	4,536	4,475	3,296	3,420	3,663/D	3,840 D
Arts, entertainment, recreation	1,004	1,015	949	979	1,045	1,228	1,290
Accommodation, food service	5,955	6,094	6,469	6,922	7,077	7,380	7,535
Other services	4,327	4,539	4,508	4,658	4,855	5,173	4,053
Government and government enterprises	16,306	17,044	17,762	18,638	19,035	19,142	19,377
Federal, civilian	436	427	424	435	449	434	412
Military	1,036	1,007	999	1,137	1,085	1,122	1,104
State, local	14,834	15,610	16,339	17,066	17,501	17,586	17,861
State government	6,718	7,263	7,618	7,950	8,146	8,154	8,292
Local government	8,116	8,347	8,721	9,116	9,355	9,432	9,569

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2009

(2)= Excludes limited partners

D= Not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information, but estimates of this item are included in the totals

Economic Development

Both Lee and Russell County have strong leadership in economic development from elected officials, economic development departments, active Chambers of Commerce and Auburn University.

Auburn, Opelika and Phenix City all have strategic plans which include economic development as priorities. Lee County has been developing a strategic plan throughout 2009 and Russell County is planning to develop a strategic plan in 2010.

All member governments participated in the development of a Regional Growth Management Plan which was commissioned to help the area prepare for the impacts of BRAC at Fort Benning.

Economic Development Departments at Auburn and Opelika actively recruit industrial and commercial businesses to the region offering incentives, tax abatement and assistance with grants, licenses and permits.

In Russell County the County Commission and the City of Phenix City work in collaboration with the Phenix City-Russell County Chamber of Commerce and the Georgia based Valley Partnership to attract industry to the region.

There are a total of 8 industrial and technical parks in Lee County. Four are located in Opelika and 4 are located in Auburn. Two industrial parks are located in Russell County, both in Phenix City. The City of Auburn in collaboration with Auburn University has developed a Research Park on the university campus.

Workforce Development

There are several training and education programs in the region to assist in the development of a skilled workforce. The Alabama Technology Network (ATN), Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT), Columbus Technical College, and Industry Training Center of Southern Union Community College provide instruction in a variety of technical fields. AIDT also contracts with employers to recruit and train individuals to meet the employer's job needs. However, the availability of a skilled workforce was identified as an area of weakness in the region.

The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) impacts on Fort Benning and the new KIA plant will likely bring several new industries to the region. These industries will have new skill set requirements for employees that must be met. There is real apprehension that the local labor force will not be sufficient to fill the needs of new employers.

ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

I. REGIONAL ASSETS

EDUCATIONAL ASSETS

The variety of educational opportunities available in the region is an outstanding asset. The school systems in the region have all achieved AYP goals and 4 of the 5 consistently exceed the state average on scholastic achievement tests, graduation rates and performance on collage entrance exams.

One of the region's greatest assets is Auburn University, located in Auburn, Alabama has an enrollment of more than 24,600 students. Auburn University offers undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in a large number of disciplines including agriculture, forestry, architecture, building science, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, liberal arts, engineering, and science and math. The graduate school offers master's programs in more than 64 areas of study and doctorate programs in more than 40 disciplines. Auburn is consistently ranked among the top public colleges and universities in the country. It is also an excellent economic driving force for the region, attracting about 500,000 visitors annually to athletic, cultural, and academic events. Recent studies estimate that Auburn University has a \$4 billion economic impact on the State of Alabama.

Southern Union Community College is located in Opelika, Alabama. The outstanding community college specializes in two-year academic, technical, and health science programs. Southern Union has forged strong partnerships with the region's vocational and technical public school programs, providing excellent opportunities for workforce development. Southern Union has an enrollment of 4,500 full and part time students.

Troy University's Phenix City, Alabama campus has an enrollment of nearly 2,000. Troy mainly serves full-time working adults and offers bachelors and graduate degrees in business, counseling, education and nursing. Chattahoochee Valley Community College, also located in Phenix City, Alabama is committed to preparing students to transfer to four-year colleges by providing a strong foundation and to developing the region's workforce through career fields such as health sciences, business, information technology, and public safety. CVCC has an enrollment of 2,000 students.

In adjacent Columbus, Georgia, Columbus State University offers more than 70 majors and serves 5,500 students from the region and 45 other states. Columbus Technical College offers associate degrees in business, health, and technical fields. For students interested in higher learning with a Christian perspective, Beacon College in Columbus places emphasis on academic programs and spiritual growth, while students earn a Bachelor of Arts or Associate of Arts degree.

RECREATION/CULTURAL ASSETS

The number of recreational and cultural resources is another asset for the region. The parks and recreation departments in Auburn and Opelika have both received awards for the outstanding programs they make available to the community.

In addition to eight parks open to the public, the City of Auburn offers an adult and youth sports leagues, arts and crafts classes, dance classes, fitness programs, photography, martial arts, soccer, tennis, and other special events.

The City of Opelika has three recreation centers, seven parks, and also provides classes in dance, piano, dog obedience, crafts, and programs for soccer, tennis, football, baseball, softball, basketball, and swimming, and a number of special events.

The Opelika Sportsplex and Aquatic Center, a state of the art health and fitness center, opened its doors in the summer of 2009. In addition to swimming, the facility offers indoor and outdoor running tracks, basketball, racquetball and a weight room.

The Auburn-Opelika area is also home to seven 18-hole golf courses, including 2 championship courses which are part of the nationally renowned Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail.

Lee County Park at Smiths Station has 3 recently constructed baseball and softball fields and is beginning development of a walking trail.

Phenix City has five municipal parks open to the public, which offer fishing, playgrounds, walking trails, picnic areas, sports facilities, and swimming pools. Three federal recreational areas are also available along the Chattahoochee River and Hathcechubbee Creek. In Seale, Alabama, the Russell County Sports Complex has three new baseball fields.

The Riverwalk along the Chattahoochee in Phenix City is a lighted area for walking, jogging, or just enjoying the beauty of the river at one of the three observation decks.

The Opelika Arts Association (OAA) brings quality performances to the 1200-seat Opelika Center for the Performing Arts. The OAA also sponsors the Arts Center Gallery at the Lewis Cooper, Jr. Memorial Library and Arts Center. In addition, the OAA fosters an appreciation for the arts by its involvement in art education at Opelika City Schools.

The Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center in Auburn, Alabama offers community theatre, musical concerts, and quarterly art exhibits local artists. The Center also hosts an arts education program for Auburn elementary students called an Adventure in Arts.

The Jule Collins Smith Art Museum in Auburn, Alabama has an extensive permanent collection of paintings, sculpture, pottery, china and textiles on display.

HEALTH SERVICE ASSETS

East Alabama Medical Center, located in Opelika, Alabama, is a 340-bed facility with 145 physicians on staff. The hospital is also Lee County's second highest employer with a staff of 2,500.

East Alabama Medical Center's mission statement declares that they they are devoted to their patients, physicians, employees, and the community. The hospital provides a large number of specialized medical services including cardiac procedures. EAMC is a Community Cancer Center, has an Outpatient Services Center, and has a modern childbirth facility. Auburn Medical Park is also owned by EAMC, and includes an assisted living facility, a hospice, and the HealthPlus Fitness Center.

Jack Hughston Memorial Hospital, located in Phenix City, Alabama, is a 70-bed facility specializing in orthopedic procedures, diagnostics and emergency medicine. Jack Hughston is actually owned by physicians.

Columbus Georgia, directly adjacent to Phenix City provides much of the eastern portion of the region with medical care through St Francis Hospital and the Columbus Regional Healthcare System, which includes Doctor's Hospital, The Medical Center, Hughston Hospital and the John B. Amos Cancer Center.

SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATION ASSETS

A large number of social service organizations provide programs and services for the region. Many of these agencies depend on local philanthropic giving and volunteers.

Area Agency on Aging

The Area Agency on Aging at Lee-Russell Council of Governments provides a variety of services to the seniors in Lee and Russell Counties. The agency operates four senior centers in Lee County and two in Russell County. The centers serve as a community focal point where an array of services and programs can be channeled to individuals who are 60 or older. The agency also sponsors the home-delivered meal program for eligible senior citizens and receives money from the state for providing care for Medicaid Waiver patients. In addition, the agency serves as an information and referral source for seniors in the region.

Clothing, Food, Shelter, Emergency Assistance

Several organizations are involved in providing emergency assistance to citizens in the form of clothing, shelter, food, and income assistance. Some of these organizations are listed below:

Clothing:

Churches Cooperative Ministries
Lee County Department of Human Resources
Russell County Department of Human Resources

Goodwill Industries
Russell Baptist Center
Salvation Army

Food:

East Alabama Services for the Elderly
Russell County Family Service Center
United Way of Lee County

East Alabama Food Bank
Churches Cooperative Ministries

Shelter:

Crisis Center of Russell County

His Place (Drug Rehabilitation)
House of Restoration

Domestic Violence Intervention
Center
Habitat for Humanity

Income Assistance:

Alabama Council on Human Relations

United Way of Lee County

THREE AREAS OF REGIONAL CONCERN

Water

Russell County has four organized water systems in the county. These systems serve approximately 14,874 residential customers throughout the County. Approximately 15% of current residents in Russell County do not have access to the public water system and must rely on private wells for water. Most of these households are in unincorporated areas of the county.

Water service in Lee County is presently provided by two municipal public water systems and four rural public water authorities. The water systems collectively serve approximately 107,035 persons, leaving 8,057 persons or 7% of current Lee County residents without public water. Many of the households with no access to potable water are in Smiths Station and unincorporated areas of southeast Lee County which are projected to experience much of the growth impact from BRAC.

Sewer

Presently, nearly one-half (47%) of the households in Russell County and 40% of the households in Lee County do not have access to public sanitary sewer service.

Russell and Lee County residents who do not have access to public sewer use on-site waste disposal systems. Approximately 30% of these households experience waste disposal problems often associated with the absence of a sanitary public sewer service in populated areas. The Smiths Station area in Lee County and Ladonia area in Russell

County have a critical need for sanitary sewage collection and treatment facilities. Both of these areas are expected to experience high levels of growth over the next 3 years.

Schools

Projections from the Seven Rivers Coalition indicate that an additional 3,000 students will enter the school systems in Lee and Russell Counties just as a result of BRAC. Accommodating this growth has caused concern across the region.

A total of 4 new elementary schools and 1 new middle school will be needed to house the growing student population. Additionally, 1 existing elementary school and 2 existing high schools will need extensive renovations. The total cost of these construction projects is nearly \$90,000,000.

The annual cost of educating and transporting 3,000 additional students will reach \$24,860,258 by 2011.

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VISION: WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

Throughout 2008-2009, public forums and planning meetings were held in both Lee and Russell Counties as well as in adjacent Columbus, Georgia. The goal of these meetings was to determine how the region could cope with the expected impacts of the BRAC expansions at Fort Benning and the developing automotive industry along the I-85 corridor. Information from the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, State of Alabama Workforce Development Plan, Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan, Jurisdictional Preliminary Project Report, Seven Rivers Coalition, and the Fort Benning Futures Land Use Study and Growth Management Initiative have been included in this section of the update.

Lee County Citizens believe their three greatest strengths were Auburn University, the public school systems and geographic location. The growth of the automotive industry, access to I-85, and the Highway 280 corridors were seen as areas of great opportunity for Lee County. For southeastern areas of the County, the BRAC expansion at Fort Benning was also seen as an opportunity. The lack of rural land use planning and zoning was identified as threats.

In Russell County, Troy University, Chattahoochie Community College, and Phenix City government were identified as strengths. Affordable land and housing, revitalization of downtown Phenix City and the BRAC expansion of Fort Benning were seen as areas of opportunity for Russell County. The lack of sewer systems outside of Phenix City and the town of Hurtsboro were seen as weaknesses. Retail development competition from Columbus, Georgia, environmental concerns and the lack of rural land use planning and zoning were listed as threats.

**STRATEGIC PROJECTS, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES
SUGGESTED AND VITAL PROJECT LISTINGS**

The expansion of Fort Benning and the burgeoning automotive industry are expected to have profound and wide ranging impacts on the jurisdictions in Lee and Russell Counties. Statistics from Fort Benning tell us that historically 8% of military personnel live off post in Alabama and 19% of the civilian workers at Fort Benning reside in Alabama. Applying historical data to the projected BRAC growth statistics reveals that Lee and Russell Counties could reasonably expect growth of 1,030 family units between 2009 and 2011. The new KIA plant in Georgia is located along I-85 just 25 miles north of the Auburn-Opelika metropolitan area. It is expected that KIA will employ 2,500 at their West Point location and bring another 7,000 jobs to the area through their suppliers.

A large increase in population places a great strain on local governments, water and sewer authorities, school systems, roads, public safety, public transportation, and maintenance of quality of life. This is reflected in the suggested and vital project lists below which include improvements and expansion of streets, water and sewer systems, public buildings, and recreational facilities.

Project lists are organized by lead organization and then by category of the proposed project. Where estimated costs have already been projected, they are included.

SUGGESTED PROJECTS

Lead Organization	Project Category	Project Description	Estimated Cost
Auburn	Downtown Revitalization	Parking improvements to increase access to retail, dining and business establishments	\$850,000
Auburn	Industrial Park	Expansion of Auburn Technology Park West; currently in first phase	
Auburn	Public Safety	Fire Station #6 Construction	\$1,000,000
Auburn	Roads/Bridges	Proposed new interchange; Exit 50	\$22,000,000
Auburn	Roads/Bridges	Highway 147 re-route; Outer Loop	
Auburn	Roads/Bridges	Slaughter Avenue; sidewalk improvements	\$84,273
Auburn	Roads/Bridges	Carlisle Street Resurface	\$30,000
Auburn	Roads/Bridges	Drainage Improvements at Judd and Stubb Avenue intersection	\$80,000
Auburn	Roads/Bridges	Martin Luther King Drive Resurface	\$190,000
Auburn	Workforce Development	Addition of CNC milling machine to Auburn Training Connection	\$80,000
Auburn	Workforce Development	Addition of precision measurement lab to Auburn Training Connection	\$85,000

Lead Organization	Project Category	Project Description	Estimated Cost
ALDOT/ MPO	Roads/Bridges	Widen I-85 throughout Lee County to increase access to industrial parks, retail development and Auburn University.	\$50,000,000
Lee County	Alternative Energy	Expand solar photovoltaic power system at the Lee County Justice Center	\$2,000,000
Lee County	Public Building/Public Safety	Renovate existing County Courthouse and other county properties	\$8,000,000
Lee County	Recreation	Increase the number of playing fields at Lee County Park at Smiths Station	\$1,910,000
Lee County	Recreation	Improvements to Beauregard Park	\$2,870,000
Lee County	Recreation	Improvements to Beulah Park	\$2,870,000
Lee County	Roads/Bridges	Improve bridge on Lee Road 054	\$973,000
Lee County	Roads/Bridges	Improve bridge on Lee Road 010	\$762,000
Lee County	Roads/Bridges	Improve road and bridges on Lee Road 379	\$4,695,000
Lee County	Roads/Bridges	Improve Lee Road 236, Lee Road 240, Lee Road 248 and Lee Road 427 to handle increased traffic as residential areas in southeast Lee County continue to grow.	\$6,358,400
Lee County	Roads/Bridges	Resurface Lee Roads 188, 401, 170 and 129	\$2,500,000
Opelika	Downtown Revitalization	North Railroad Streetscape Project; Phase 1- 6 th Street to 8 th Street	\$450,000
Opelika	Downtown Revitalization	North Railroad Streetscape Project; Phase 2- 8 th Street to 10 th Street	\$450,000
Opelika	Public Safety	Oak Bowery Road Fire Station Construction	\$900,000
Opelika	Public Safety	Police Department Communication Upgrades	\$312,000
Opelika	Public Safety	Renovation of 42 year old Police Station	\$4,000,000
Opelika	Roads/Bridges	Industrial road from Northeast Industrial Park to Chambers County Line	\$5,500,000
ALDOT/ Opelika/ MPO	Roads/Bridges	Frederick Road Extension; arterial connector	\$2,100,000
Opelika	Roads/Bridges	Bridge Replacement; Oak Bowery Rd	\$450,000
Opelika	Water/Sewer	Expand sewer service from NE Opelika Industrial Park to Eastside Sewer Treatment Plant Waste Water Treatment Plant	\$5,500,000
Opelika	Water/Sewer	Extend sewer service to Celebrate Alabama Commercial Development	\$2,000,000

Lead Organization	Project Category	Project Description	Estimated Cost
Opelika	Water/ Sewer	Excessive Wastewater Diversion Project; West Side to the East Side Treatment Plant	\$600,000
Opelika	Water/Sewer	SCADA System for sewer lift stations	\$250,000
Opelika	Water/Sewer	New pump station and force main at East Side Sewer Treatment Plant	\$1,600,000
Opelika	Water/Sewer	Upgrade Golf Course Lift Station and Force Main and Sewer Line	\$960,000
Phenix City	Roads/Bridges	Resurface city streets in Railroad Street area of Phenix City.	\$4,500,000
Phenix City	Roads/Bridges	Improve lighting on Hwy 431 and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway.	\$1,500,000
Phenix City	Roads/Bridges	Replace bridges on 10 th and 12 th Ave	\$2,500,000
Phenix City	Information/technology	Expand GIS capabilities	\$50,000
Phenix City	Water/Sewer	Rebuild sewer lift station at Holland Creek.	\$1,000,000
Phenix City	Water/Sewer	Install new pump station at Knowles Road Tank.	\$900,000
Phenix City	Water/Sewer	Extend water and sewer lines into newly annexed areas in south Phenix City.	
Phenix City	Public Buildings/Public Safety	Improve fire protection to newly annexed areas of Phenix City by constructing an additional fire station.	\$940,000
Phenix City	Public Buildings/ Public Safety	Renovate Phenix City Library	\$500,000
Russell County	Roads/Bridges	Improve access to back gate of Fort Benning by widening and repaving 165	
Russell County	Roads/Bridges	Extension Bridge over Weolustree Creek	\$4,000,000
Russell County	Roads/Bridges	Resurface 6.3 miles of County Rd 43	\$750,000
Russell County	Water/ Sewer	Construct 4 water wells	\$6,000,000
Russell County	Water/Sewer	Drill new well, install new water tank and 15 miles of pipe in Fort Mitchell	\$4,600,000
Russell County	Public Buildings/Public Safety	Complete renovation of new and historic Russell County Courthouses	\$2,000,000
Russell County	Recreation	Complete the Russell County Sports Complex in Seale	\$1,000,000

VITAL PROJECT LISTINGS

Lead Organization	Project Category	Project Description	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Auburn	Downtown Revitalization	Parking improvements to increase access to retail, dining and business establishments	\$850,000	EDA City Funds Congressional Allocations
Auburn	Industrial Park	Expansion of Auburn Technology Park West; currently in first phase		City Funds University Funds
ALDOT/ Auburn/ MPO	Roads/Bridges	Proposed new interchange; Exit 50	\$22,000,000	DOT
ALDOT/ Auburn/ MPO	Roads/Bridges	Highway 147 re-route; Outer Loop		DOT
ALDOT/ Lee County MPO	Roads/Bridges	Improve bridge on Lee Road 054	\$973,000	DOT
ALDOT/ Lee County	Roads/Bridges	Improve Lee Road 236, Lee Road 240, Lee Road 248 and Lee Road 427 to handle increased traffic as residential areas in southeast Lee County continue to grow.	\$6,358,400	DOT
Lee County	Alternative Energy	Expand solar photovoltaic power system at the Lee County Justice Center	\$2,000,000	EECBG
Lee County	Public Buildings/ Public Safety	Renovate existing County Courthouse and other County buildings	\$8,000,000	County Funds Historical Preservation EECBG
Opelika	Public Safety	Oak Bowery Road Fire Station Construction	\$900,000	Fire Fighter Safety Grants City Funds
Opelika	Roads/Bridges	Industrial road from Northeast Industrial Park to Chambers County Line	\$5,500,000	EDA City Funds Congressional Allocation
ALDOT/ Opelika/ MPO	Roads/Bridges	Frederick Road Extension; arterial connector	\$2,100,000	DOT
Opelika	Water/Sewer	Expand sewer service from NE Opelika Industrial Park to Eastside Sewer Treatment Plant Waste Water Treatment Plant	\$5,500,000	EDA City Funds Private Investment

Lead Organization	Project Category	Project Description	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Phenix City	Roads/Bridges	Resurface city streets in Railroad Street area of Phenix City.	\$4,500,000	CDBG City Funds
Phenix City	Roads/Bridges	Improve lighting on Hwy 431 and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway.	\$1,500,000	EECBG City Funds DOT
Phenix City	Roads/Bridges	Replace bridges on 10 th and 12 th Ave	\$2,500,000	DOT
Phenix City	Information/technology	Expand GIS capabilities	\$50,000	Delta City Funds
Phenix City	Water/Sewer	Rebuild sewer lift station at Holland Creek.	\$1,000,000	EDA City Funds
Phenix City	Water/Sewer	Install new pump station at Knowles Road Tank.	\$900,000	City Funds Congressional Allocation
Phenix City	Water/Sewer	Extend water and sewer lines into newly annexed areas in south Phenix City.		CDBG Delta City Funds
Phenix City	Public Buildings/Public Safety	Improve fire protection to newly annexed areas of Phenix City by constructing an additional fire station.	\$940,000	Firefighter Safety Grants
Russell County	Roads/Bridges	Improve access to back gate of Fort Benning by widening and repaving 165		DOT ADECA Congressional Allocation
Russell County	Water/Sewer	Drill new well, install new water tank and 15 miles of pipe in Fort Mitchell	\$4,600,000	USDA
Russell County	Public Buildings/Public Safety	Complete renovation of new and historic Russell County Courthouses	\$2,000,000	County Funds EECBG

PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Priority Infrastructure

Goal Improve and expand water, sewer and transportation services to residents and industry.

Objectives:

- Promote expansion of existing water and sewer systems to unserved areas of the region.
- Improve and repair aging water lines
- Provide sewer services in Fort Mitchell and Smiths Station
- Expand capacity of wastewater treatment plants.
- Utilize federal grant sources to fund construction/expansion of water and sewer facilities.
- Improve roads with back gate access to Fort Benning.
- Improve access to interstate highways.
- Improve surface travel on local and county roads and bridges.

Priority Growth Management

Goal Establish smart growth principles and regulations throughout the region.

Objectives:

- Encourage subdivision regulations and zoning in unincorporated areas of the region.
- Plan public facilities to support cluster commercial development.
- Implement strategies to reduce energy consumption and reliance on traditional sources of energy in public buildings.
- Improve waste management and littering in unincorporated Lee County.

Priority Regional Economic Development

Goal Diversify local economies and revenue sources for local government Economies

Objectives:

- Educate elected officials and citizens to think regionally.
- Attract compatible industries to expand regional employment opportunities.

Priority Education

Goal Maintain high quality education as population in the region expands.

Objectives:

- Research grant and congressional appropriation opportunities for school expansion and construction.
- Explore new school structure options, such as freshman academies.
- Expand technical education opportunities.
- Encourage parental involvement in schools.

Priority **Revenue**
Goal **Expand and diversify revenue sources for local governments**

Objectives

- Apply for grant funding from Delta Commission, CDBG, Recreation Programs, Congressional Appropriations, EDA
- Explore the possibility of bonds as a revenue stream.
- Attract new, compatible industry to the area.

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