



- Bankhead National Forest

2023 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Report

Submitted by:
The Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments
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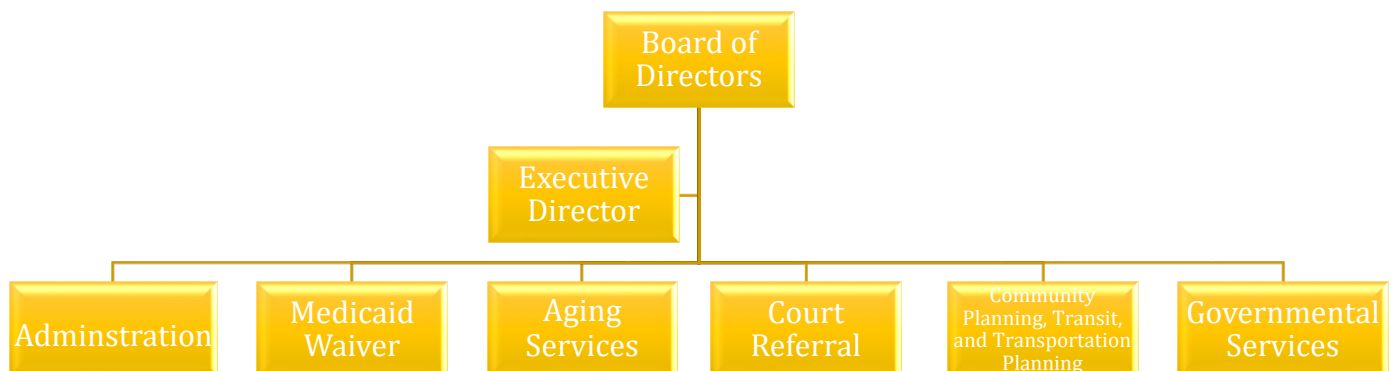
Introduction

The Annual Comprehensive Economic Developments Strategy (CEDS) report serves as an update of activities within the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG). This update shows recent trends observed between the issuance of NACOLG’s 2022-2026 *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS), and the present time. Areas discussed include demographic trends, plans and activities, meetings attended, participation in committees, large-scale projects, and major accomplishments.

Since the last annual report, State unemployment rates have decreased to 2.3% from its original 3.1 % average, making it lower than the national percentage (U.S. unemployment rates = 3.9%). Though unemployment rates continue to decrease, the region continues to find itself in a shortage of highly skilled laborers. Since the pandemic, the region has included an additional goal, Goal 6: Disaster Recovery and Resilience. The intention is to increase post-pandemic support through health-risk mitigation and resiliency to better economic and business sustainment. For PY 2022, the region secured funding to focus on workforce development and strengthen infrastructure. Nine economic and infrastructure driven grants were pursued and or procured and 28 loans were secured with a total value of \$2,645,500.

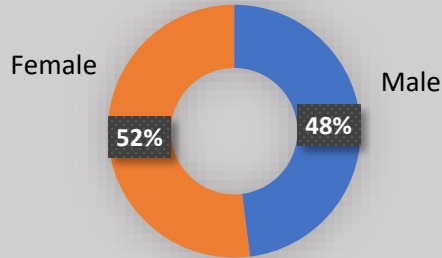
Although the annual report encompasses activities which occurred across the state, much of the data presented consists of the following counties: Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Marion, and Winston.

NACOLG Organizational Structure

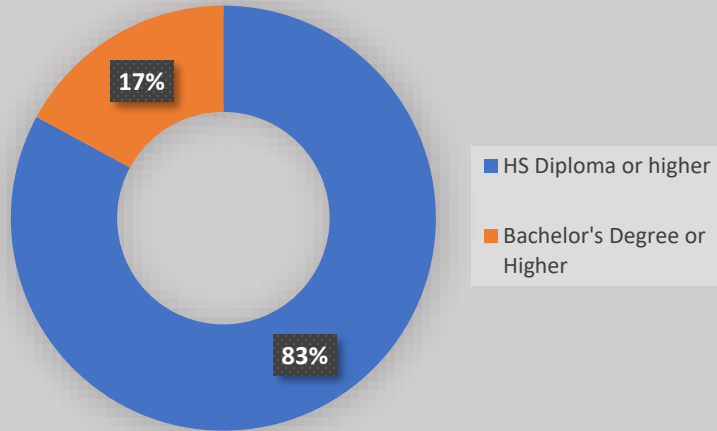


Demographic Trends: Colbert County

Gender



Education- Age 25+



Economic

Median Household Income
\$52,017

Per Capita Income
\$28,090

1 Adult Living Wage
\$14.76/hr.

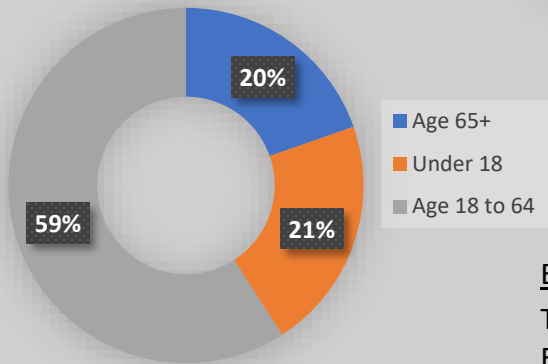
% Below the Poverty Line
15.1%

* Unemployment Rate 
2.7%

Housing Units
26,666

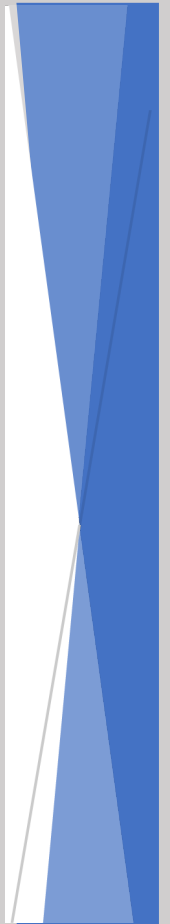
*Unemployment rates date
(10/21 to 10/22)

Population: 57,262



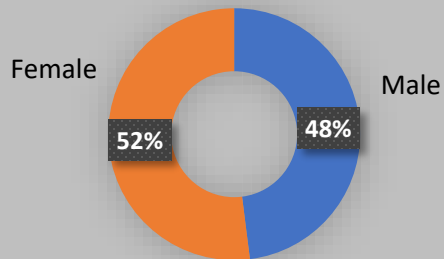
Employment Sectors

Total employer establishments: 1,229
 Estimated Total Employment: 22,159
 Largest employment industry: Auto Manufacturing
 Largest employer: North Alabama Lighting

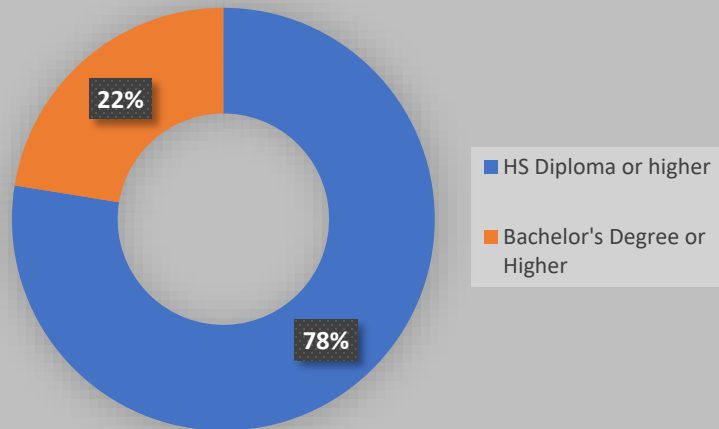


Demographic Trends: Lauderdale County

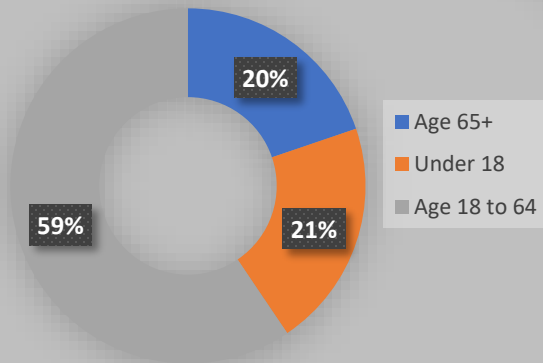
Gender



Education- Age 25+



Population: 93,564



Employment Sector

Total employer establishments: 2,031
 Estimated Total Employment: 25,540
 Largest employment industry: Healthcare
 Largest employer: North Alabama Medical Center

Economic

Median Household Income
 \$59,461

Per Capita Income
 \$29,667

1 Adult Living Wage
 \$14.76/hr.

% Below the Poverty Line
 11.5%

*Unemployment Rate
 2.3%

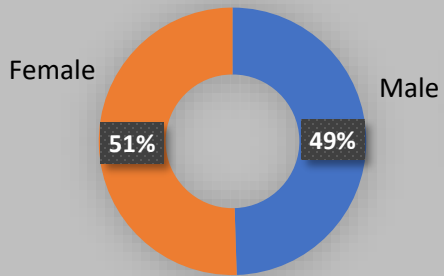


Housing Units
 44,585

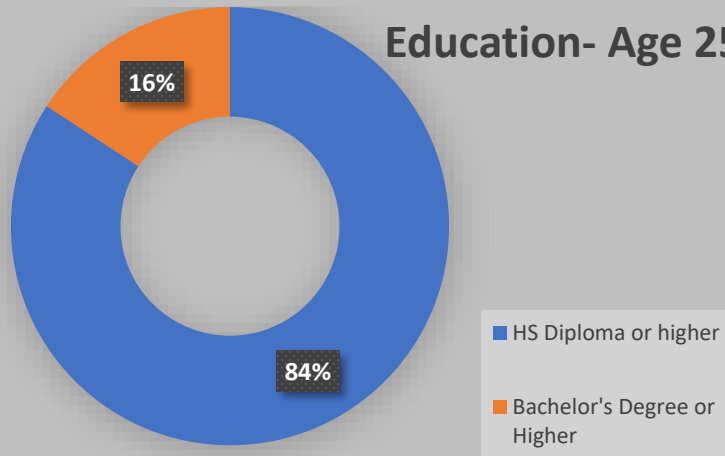
*Unemployment rates date
 (10/21 to 10/22)

Demographic Trends: Franklin County

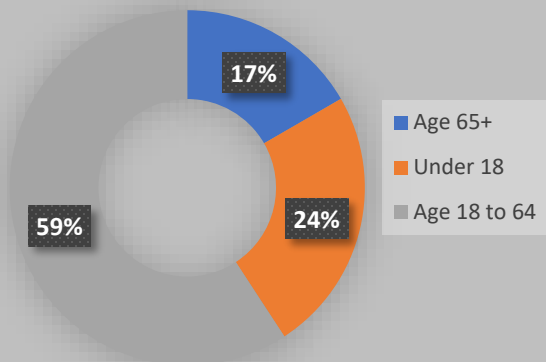
Gender



Education- Age 25+



Population: 32,113



Employment Sector

Total employer establishments: 523
 Estimated Total Employment: 9,627
 Largest employment industry: Poultry Processing, RV Manufacturing
 Largest employer: Pilgrim's Pride and Tiffin Motorhomes

Economic

Median Household Income
 \$43,633

Per Capita Income
 \$19,314

1 Adult Living Wage
 14.76/hr.

% Below the Poverty Line
 19.7 %

*Unemployment Rate
 2.2 %

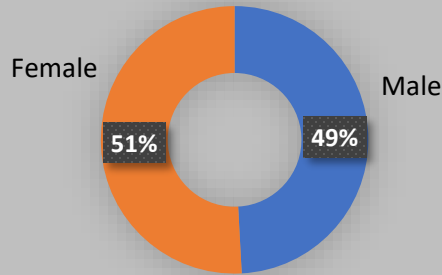


Housing Units
 13,912

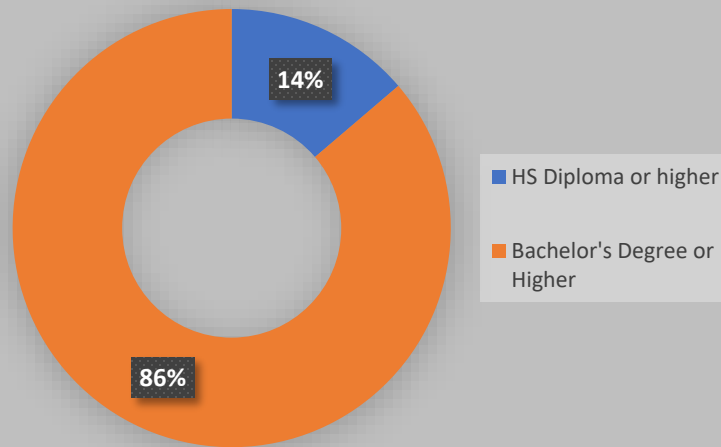
*Unemployment rates date
 (10/21 to 10/22)

Demographic Trends: Marion County

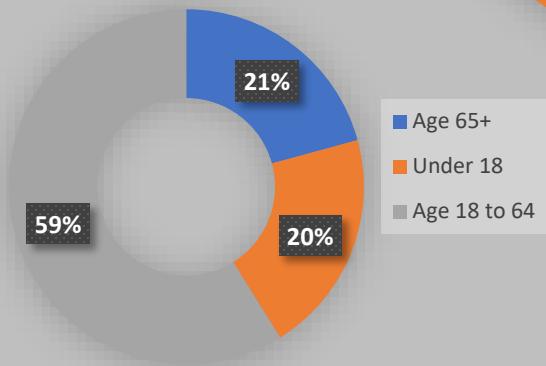
Gender



Education- Age 25+



Population: 29,341



Employment Sector

Total employer establishments: 531
 Total Employment: 7,625
 Largest employment industry: Cabinet Doors
 Largest employer: Door Components LLC/ Kith Kitchens

Economic

Median Household Income
 \$44,551

Per Capita Income
 \$23,093

1 Adult Living Wage

\$14.80

% Below the Poverty Line
 17.5 %

* Unemployment Rate
 2.7 %

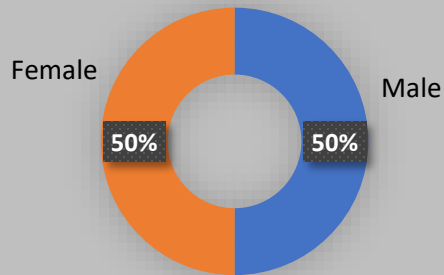
Housing Units
 14,073

*Unemployment rates date
 (10/21 to 10/22)

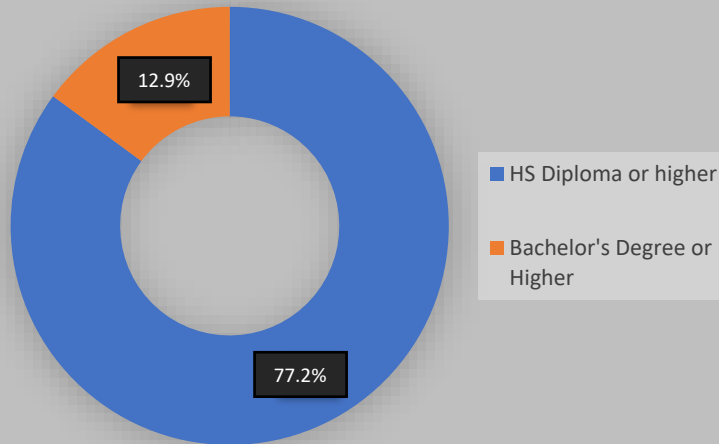


Demographic Trends: Winston County

Gender



Education- Age 25+



Economic

Median Household Income
\$46,096

Per Capita Income
\$25,624

1 Adult Living Wage
\$14.80

% Below the Poverty Line
19.3 %

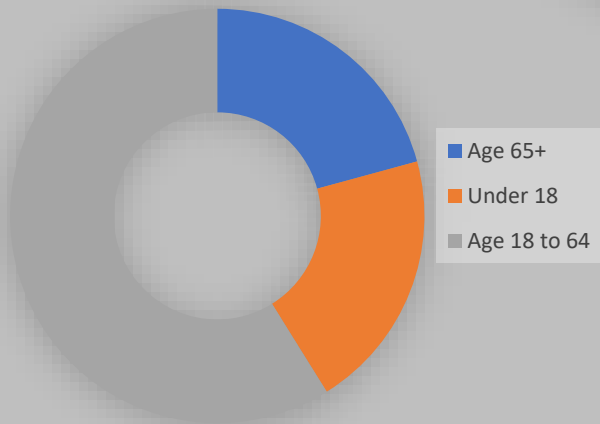
* Unemployment Rate
2.6 %



Housing Units
13,015

*Unemployment rates date
(10/21 to 10/22)

Population: 23,540



Employment Sector

Total employer establishments: 448

Total Employment: 6,368

Largest employment industry: Cabinets

Largest employer: Kith Kitchens

Vision

Northwest Alabama is a prosperous, family-friendly region defined by its strong, nationally, and globally competitive economy, and high quality of life.

The Northwest Alabama region continues to focus on job retainment and economic stability through infrastructure development. Several initiatives were put into place to reduce the economic and labor deficit while still meeting the goals set out by the CEDS strategy.

Metrics

Goal 1: Economic Resilience- *lead community preparedness, planning and risk assessment actions in the region; support economic diversification, business services, and workforce development initiatives that prepare the region's economy to withstand natural and man-made disasters.*

- Provided mapping services to the agency and partnering municipalities for various programs.
- Provided comprehensive planning services to cities and towns within the region.

Goal 2: Business and Industry Support and Recruitment- *provide resources to support new and existing businesses and industries.*

- Two partnering agencies employed 60 home attendants at an average wage of \$10.00/per hour, providing approximately \$1.2 million in annual wages.

Goal 3: Infrastructure and Community Services- *support the development and redevelopment of sustainable infrastructure and investments in community services to create attractive, safe communities that sustain and support local and regional economies.*

- NACOLG assisted in securing \$397,000 in FY22 CDBG funds for the Town of Lexington for water improvements.
- NACOLG requested and secured \$304,000 in FY22 CDBG funding for paving improvements with a commitment of \$31,701 in local matching funds for the Town of Guin.
- NACOLG requested and secured \$362,422 in FY22 CDBG funding for water improvements for the Town of Cherokee.

- NACOLG requested and secured \$342,000 in FY22 CDBG funding for demolition with a commitment of \$38,500 in local matching funds for the City of Winfield.
- NACOLG assisted in securing \$329,000 in FY22 CDBG funding for downtown revitalization improvements with a commitment of \$4,250 in local matching funds for the Town of Hodges.
- NACOLG assisted and secured \$350,000 in FY23 ARC funding with a commitment of \$694,000 in local matching funds for a sanitary sewer project for the Russellville Water & Sewer Board.
- NACOLG submitted three FY23 CDBG applications requesting \$1,297,000 in funding with commitments of \$762,989.76 in local matching funds.
- The Shoals Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) met as needed throughout the year to discuss transportation infrastructure needs and long-range transportation needs throughout the Shoals Area.
- NACOLG assists local municipalities in applying for Industrial Access grants for improvements that will benefit industrial businesses with transportation of goods and services.
 - The Marion County Commission obtained \$565,100 for Timber Creek Housing. The funding will be used for intersection improvements at County Road 65 and Alabama State Highway 172 and roadway improvements along County Road 65 approximately 2,600 linear feet to the Timber Creek Housing entrance.
 - The City of Red Bay obtained \$596,151 for Southeast Sales, Inc. This funding will be used for roadway widening and improvements along 7th Avenue NW from Old AL HWY 24 (Tammy Wynette Highway) East to 9th Street SW and along 9th Street SW from 7th Avenue NW approximately 620 feet South.
- NACOLG submitted applications on behalf of the cities of Muscle Shoals, Sheffield, and Russellville and the towns Bear Creek, Hackleburg, Lexington, and Vina for the Rebuild Alabama Act (RAA) Annual Grant Program. The City of Florence received \$250,000 to repair the Pine Street Bridge Structure and the road deck of the bridge. The project also includes upgrades to the pedestrian facilities located along the bridge.
- NACOLG submitted applications on behalf of Muscle Shoals for the ALDOT Transportation Alternative Set-Aside Program. The application was for the construction, planning, and design

of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclist, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The application for funding for Muscle Shoals was awarded for the Transportation Alternative Set-Aside Program.

- The Shoals Area MPO hired Garver Engineering to perform a corridor study along Reservation Road and River Road in the Cities of Muscle Shoals and Sheffield and portions of Colbert County for \$125,000(\$100,000 federal and \$25,000 local (Muscle Shoals and Colbert County).
- The Shoals Area MPO hired Volkert, Inc. to perform an engineering and environmental study around the West College Street area of Florence, Alabama. The goal was to have a Traffic Study outlining improvements which would be implemented for this corridor to help with the connections within the west Florence area. (\$80,000 federal and \$20,000 Local (City of Florence). The study has been completed.

Goal 4: *Education and Workforce Development- support local and regional efforts to improve the quality of education and workforce development necessary to economic development success throughout the region.*

- The Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program provided transportation to low-income workers for job searches and commutes providing 2,319 trips.

Goal 5: *Community Capacity Building and Planning- provide support for local and regional coordination, planning, and capacity building including leadership development, capital and land use planning, and hazard mitigation plans.*

- NACOLG has continued its position as a regional repository of U.S. Census data, providing technical assistance to member governments and regional partners.
- NACOLG is currently aiding with redistricting for several counties in the region.

Goal 6: *Disaster Recovery and Resiliency- Provide local and regional support to increase capacity building geared towards post pandemic resiliency, health-risk mitigation and economic business sustainment.*

NACOLG is currently participating in several training courses to begin the full updating of the multi-jurisdiction hazard mitigation plan.

NACOLG successfully requested and received \$500,000 in FY21 CDBG-CV funds to respond, and prevent, emergencies during the COVID-19 pandemic for each of the following counties: Colbert County, Lauderdale County, Franklin County, Marion County, and Winston County, with Colbert County receiving an additional \$500,000 in the second round of CDBG-CV funding.

Opportunity Zones

Of the 158 opportunity zones located within the state of Alabama, The Northwest section of the state has the following areas designated as opportunity zones:

- Colbert County (Tract 010330202.00); Population within zone: 1,927; Labor Force: 795; Highest Employing Industry: Manufacturing
- Franklin County (Tract 010599737); Population within zone: 6,235; Labor Force: 2,218; Highest Employing Industry: Manufacturing
- Lauderdale County 1 (Tract 010770101); Population within zone: 1,886; Labor Force: 729; Highest Employing Industry: Trade, Transportation, and Utilities
- Lauderdale County 2 (Tract 010770109); Population within zone: 7,060; Labor Force: 3,525; Highest Employing Industry: Trade, Transportation, and Utilities
- Marion County 1 (Tract 010939644); Population within zone: 4,727; Labor Force: 1,894; Highest Employing Industry: Manufacturing
- Marion County 2 (Tract 010939645); Population within zone: 2,323; Labor Force: 1,050; Highest Employing Industry: Manufacturing
- Winston County (Tract 011339657); Population within zone: 4,100; Labor Force: 1,843; Highest Employing Industry: Manufacturing

Disaster Resiliency

An additional goal was added to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: Goal 6: Disaster Recovery and Resilience. The intention is to increase post-pandemic support through health-risk mitigation and resiliency to better economic and business sustainment. The fragilities exposed by the pandemic acted as a conduit to establish a sustainable long-term recovery plan for local communities. Areas of strategy focus include:

- Creating policies and incentives to encourage the private sector to remain in the area, enhancing economic strength.
- Working with local transit agencies to determine route needs.
- Promoting business continuity and preparedness.
- Ensuring SMEs (small and mid-size enterprises) can participate in e-commerce, such as, providing policy, regulatory or financial incentives for sales diversification, and establishing a level playing field for SMEs relying on the services of online platforms.

Accomplishments

As stated, NACOLG's contribution to Region 1's economic advancement has been largely focused on the capacity building of businesses, infrastructure and workforce development and economic sustainability post-pandemic. Apart from achieving the targeted goals, NACOLG has been instrumental in other areas of service which has caused a positive economic impact not only for the region, but the state.