

# CENTRAL ALABAMA COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2022

*Growing Communities Together*



## ***CENTRAL ALABAMA REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION***

It is our steadfast mission to provide exemplary service to the local governments and citizens of Autauga, Elmore, and Montgomery Counties. We execute this mission through community and economic development programs and projects; extensive local, state, and federal partnerships; and various engagement and funding opportunities.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## 2022 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

### *REWRITE*

Performed by:

Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission  
(CARPDC)

And Approved by their Board of Directors

September 28, 2022

CARPDC is one of twelve regions in the state that are tasked providing technical assistance in the areas of planning and development. CARPDC works for local governments in Autauga, Elmore, and Montgomery Counties by providing assistance with community and economic development, planning and housing projects, and policies and initiatives.



# CARPDC

Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Mayor Gordon Stone  
Chairman

Greg Clark  
Executive Director

AUTAUGA, ELMORE & MONTGOMERY COUNTIES

## RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, the Central Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission (CARPDC), was formed with the objective of promoting the economic development and coordination in the Central Alabama District; and

**WHEREAS**, as a designate Economic Development District (EDD) by the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Central Alabama Region is provided annual funding from EDA to perform economic development planning tasks; and


**WHEREAS**, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is one of the tasks required by the EDA to be prepared every five (5) years with annual updates; and

**WHEREAS**, the CARPDC has prepared the 2022 five-year CEDS for Region 9;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Board of Directors of the Central Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission, that the 2022 CEDS is hereby APPROVED this the 28th day of September, 2022.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gordon Stone, Chairman

ATTEST:

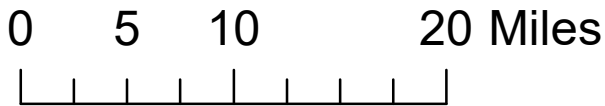
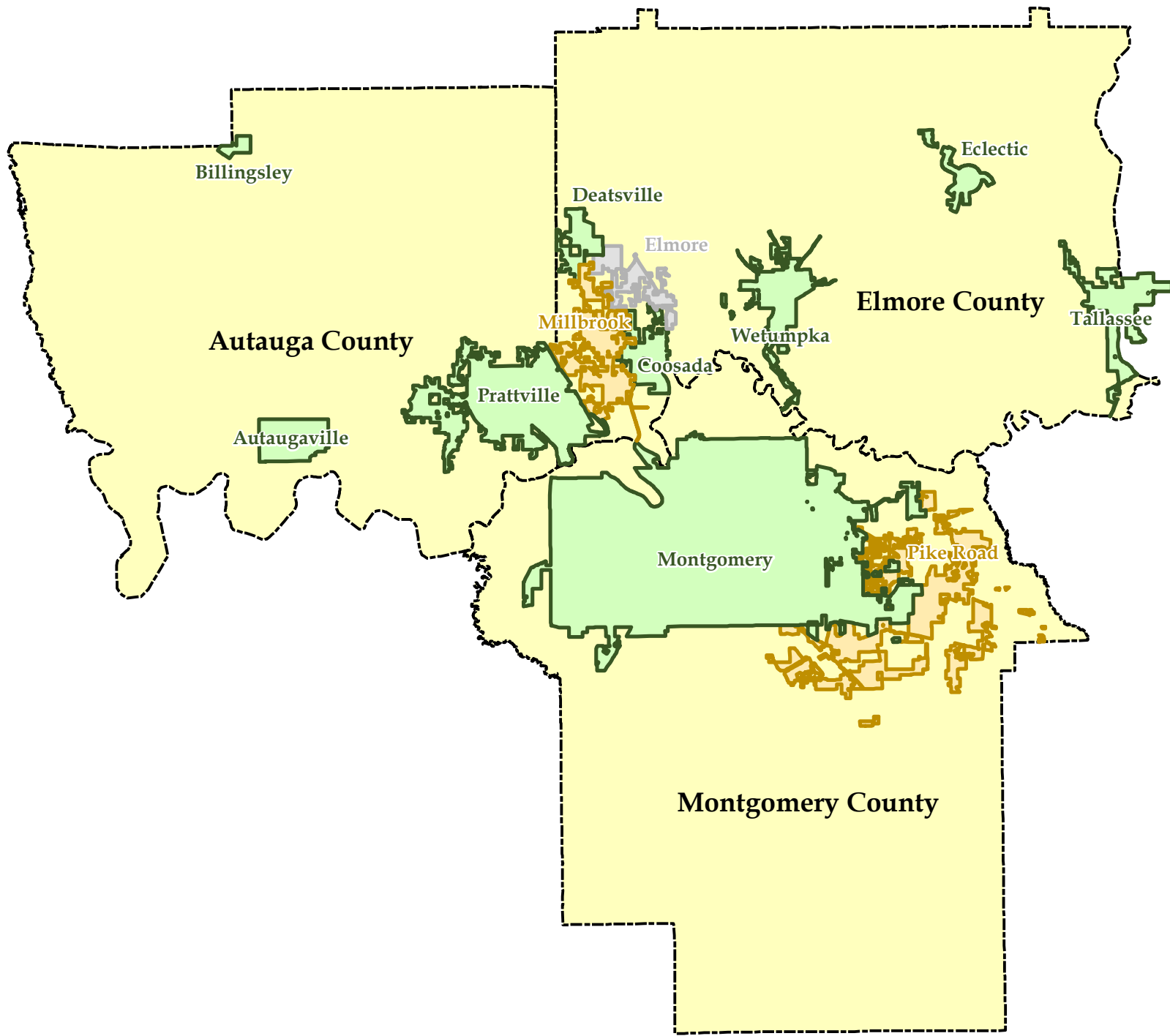
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Clark, Executive Director

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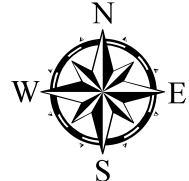
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# Central Alabama Economic Development District



# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

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**CENTRAL ALABAMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
2022 (CEDDS)**

# SECTION 1 | INTRODUCTION

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## Background and Purpose

In 2015, Central Alabama Planning and Development Commission (CARPDC) produced a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as its first formal act of participation in a continuous economic development planning process, as required by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) under its Economic Development District (EDD) program. While CARPDC has participated in the CEDS process for many years, we are proud to be doing so now as an officially recognized EDD.

The new 2022 CEDS represented a complete rewrite and reformatting of our earlier CEDS documents and will be the beginning of a continuous process to further economic development and economic resiliency in the Central Alabama Region.

The CEDS process is an opportunity for CARPDC to address economic development through a regional approach rather than just county by county.

Using this regional approach allows CARPDC to address the economic changes occurring in our region in a more comprehensive manner and to begin building cooperation and coordination among the governments, agencies, businesses, and special interest groups represented in our region.

The 2022 CEDS update allows us to build on the economic development planning process begun in 2015 and continued in 2017 and 2020. This process brings together both public and private sector partners working together to develop and maintain regional goals and fostering economic competitiveness for our region.

An EDA approved CEDS is required in order for our region to qualify for federal investments under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965. These EDA investments will serve to support and enhance public and private investments put in place to strengthen economic competitiveness in areas suffering from economic instability, distress, or job loss.

The EDA requires a new or updated CEDS be developed every five years; this 2022 CEDS serves as this District's most currently revised plan.



The 2020 outbreak of COVID-19 has presented challenges to the updating of the CEDS. It is our hope that during the upcoming five-year period, the CEDS Strategy Committee and the staff of CARPDC will work together to make additional, focused improvements to the CEDS as well as continue to monitor the region's economic trends and determine if further modifications to the plan are needed. If it is determined that changes to the plan are needed, they may be handled through amendments recommended of the Committee and adopted by the CARPDC Board of Directors.

### CEDS Strategy Committee

As part of the 2017 CEDS Update a new Strategy Committee was formed. This Strategy Committee acts as the principal facilitator of the economic development planning and implementation process, and will be responsible for developing, updating, replacing, and recommending amendments of goals and/or strategies. The Strategy Committee represents major community, business, and economic development interests of our region, allowing us to access local skills and resources, as well as recognize the interests of stakeholders. The Committee will include representatives of local governments, business, industry, finance, agriculture, labor, utilities, education, community organizations, public health agencies, the elderly, disabled, the unemployed, underemployed, racial, or ethnic minorities, and women.

During the development of the Central Alabama Region CEDS, regional meetings are held to review conditions and determine issues throughout the region. Local issues were also brought to the table during these meetings, which included citizens, business leaders and elected officials from all three counties. Additionally, the plan document is made available during a 30-day period for public review and input.

The results of the meetings and the public input received, has enabled the CARPDC to formulate a plan of action to address economic development and resiliency from a regional perspective that is conducive to local growth.

### Staff Support

The Strategy Committee has the full support and cooperation of the staff of CARPDC in carrying out the day-to-day functions required to ensure success of the process. These functions may include, but are not limited to, collecting and analyzing information on the area's economy, identifying strategy options, and preparing detailed implementation plans.

The Committee should ensure, through coordination with CARPDC leadership, that adequate staff resources are available to perform these functions.

## Committee Work Program

The functions of the Strategy Committee are to maintain a work program to provide the Committee with an agenda for carrying out its duties, reviewing and updating, as needed, committee bylaws and making recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding amending and adoption of the CEDS. The work program describes tasks to be performed; identifies the individual, organization, or work group responsible for completing each task and recommends timetables.

For the process to succeed, the Committee should take advantage of technical and financial assistance available from public and private sources. These sources include Federal, state, and local governments, foundations, educational institutions, local organizations, and major corporations. Under their planning, technical assistance, or economic adjustment programs, the EDA support may be used to help organize or carry out CEDS functions, such as updating or refining strategies.

# REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

## KEY STATISTICS

<b>375,736</b> 2020 Population Estimate	<b>388,351</b> 2040 Population Estimate	<b>168,210</b> Civilian Labor Force
<b>\$57,423</b> Median Household Income	<b>38.0</b> Median Age	<b>4.5%</b> Unemployment Rate

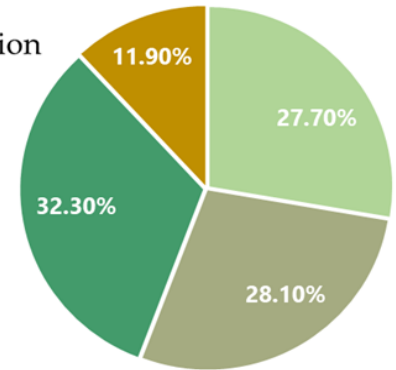
### Municipality Population 2010 Census | 2020 Census

<b>Autaugaville</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>795</b>
<b>Billingsley</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Coosada</b>	<b>1,224</b>	<b>1,217</b>
<b>Deatsville</b>	<b>1,154</b>	<b>1,679</b>
<b>Eclectic</b>	<b>1,001</b>	<b>1,193</b>
<b>Elmore, Town</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>1,280</b>
<b>Millbrook</b>	<b>14,640</b>	<b>16,564</b>
<b>Montgomery, City</b>	<b>205,764</b>	<b>200,603</b>
<b>Pike Road</b>	<b>5,406</b>	<b>9,439</b>
<b>Prattville</b>	<b>33,960</b>	<b>37,781</b>
<b>Tallassee</b>	<b>4,819</b>	<b>4,763</b>
<b>Wetumpka</b>	<b>6,528</b>	<b>7,220</b>

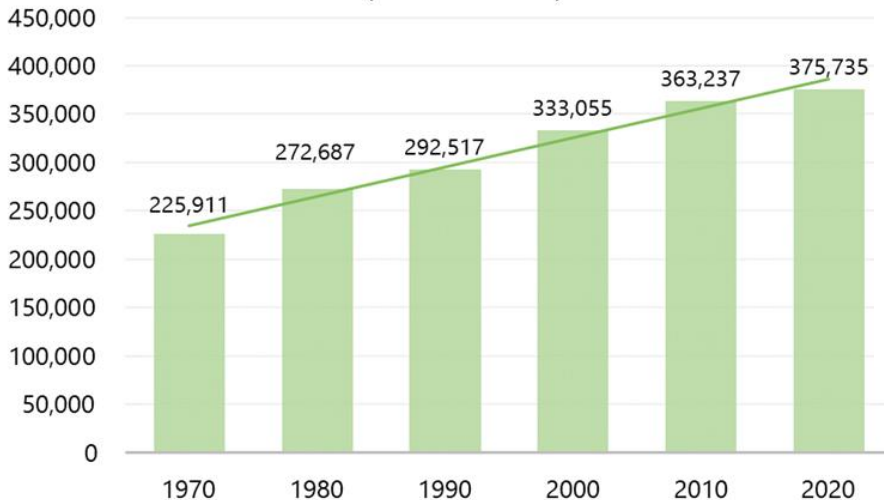
<b>Autauga County</b>	<b>54,571</b>	<b>58,805</b>
<b>Elmore County</b>	<b>79,303</b>	<b>87,977</b>
<b>Montgomery County</b>	<b>229,363</b>	<b>228,954</b>

Regional Age Distribution (2010)

- Under 19
- 20 to 39
- 40 to 64
- 65+

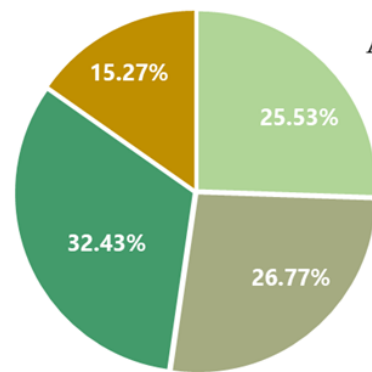


Total Regional Population Growth (1970 - 2020)



Regional Age Distribution (2020)

- Under 19
- 20 to 39
- 40 to 64
- 65+



### DEMOGRAPHICS SNAPSHOT

## SECTION 2: DEMOGRAPHICS AND ASSETS

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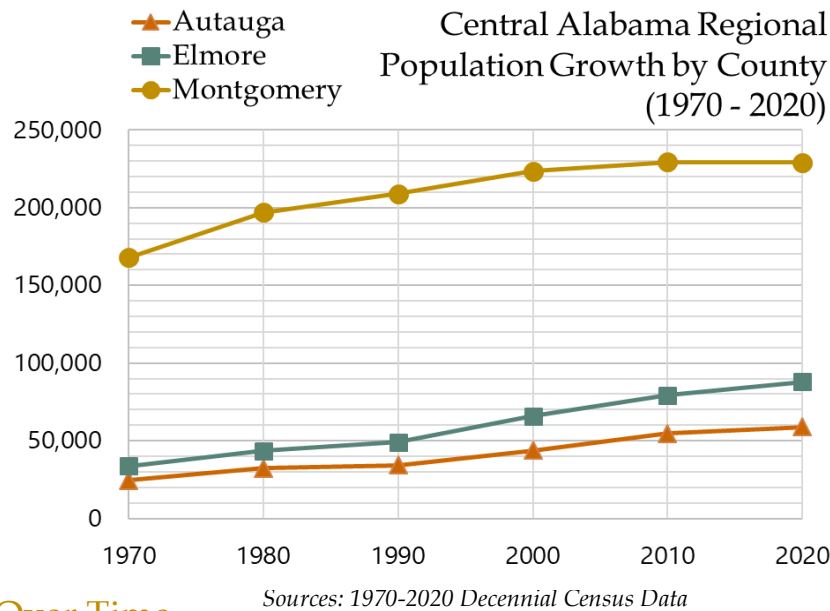


**CENTRAL ALABAMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
2022 (CEDDS)**

## SECTION II | REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS + ASSETS

### Central Alabama Overview

The Central Alabama Region comprises three counties with a total landmass of approximately 2,061 square miles (1,996 square miles of Land Area; 65 square miles of Water Area). This, when apportioned, equates to a population density of 182 persons per square mile. There are approximately 6,100 miles of roadway in the region – two of the most significant roadways are interstates 65 and 85.



### Population Over Time

From 1970 to 2020, the population of the Central Alabama Region increased substantially with each passing decade. Autauga and Elmore Counties grew exponentially (140.4% and 161.4% respectively) while Montgomery County’s population increased by 36.5%. In this fifty-year period, the overall regional population grew 66.3% - an increase that was predominately influenced by figures linked to Montgomery County’s population. The exponential growth in Autauga and Elmore possibly indicates a shift in the population preferring to live in the rural areas instead of the urban area, while perhaps still choosing to work and play in the urbanized areas of the region

According to the 2020 Census, the total population grew to 375,735 – a three percent (3.4%) increase from the 2010 Census figure of 363,848 persons. Despite the overall increase, however, some municipalities had begun to show slight declines in population. Migration data grants more insight into the reasons behind these losses. Some of the most common reasons involve employment opportunities in other areas of the region and state.

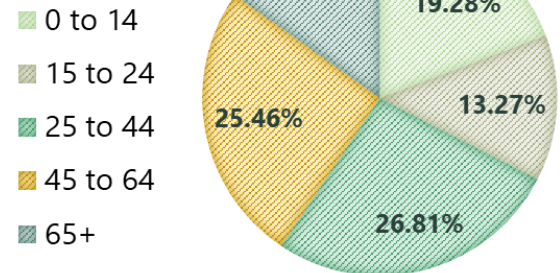
## Age + Population

The 2020 population estimates project the 25-44 group as the largest age group in the region. These individuals are pursuing professional degrees, jumpstarting careers, becoming entrepreneurs, and in some cases, starting families. Over the last twenty years, there has been a 3.59% decline in this age group, with similar trends in 0-14 and 15-24 populations. On the other hand, the 45-64 and 65+ age groups each increased by 29.48% and 45.86%, respectively. Although the reasons for these occurrences may vary, this trend mirrors demographic shifts in other regions throughout the country.

Aging populations have proven to have significant impacts on economic growth. Pension systems receive less investment as the number of contributing individuals decreases; however, the number of retirees that rely on these systems for supplementary (or post-retirement) income increases. According to one publication, by 2030, the Census Bureau estimates that the number of working-age people available to support each retiree will fall from just over five today to barely three.

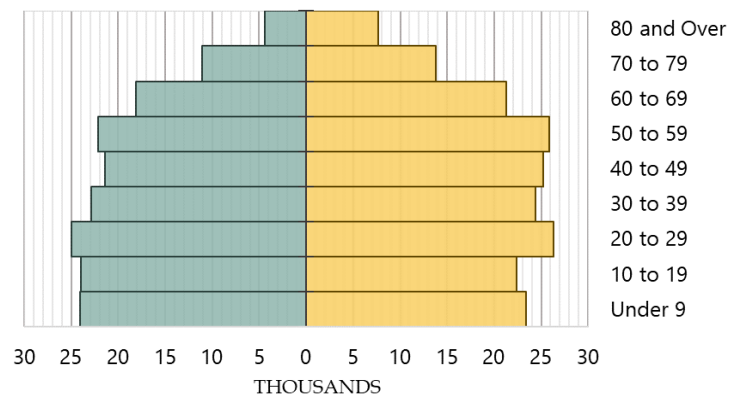
The demand on Medicare and the Social Security system will become more significant. Also, the need for specific senior services, transportation, housing, and other employment opportunities will also increase as the population continues to age.

Regional Population by Age Group (2020)



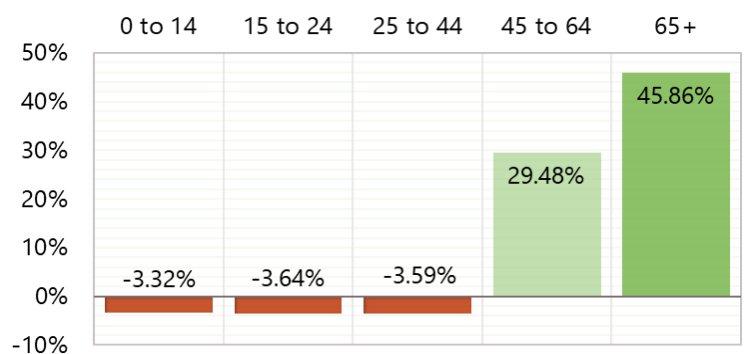
Source: 2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates

Regional Population Distribution by Age and Sex (2020)



Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Regional Population Percent Change by Age Group (2000 - 2020)



Sources: 2000 Decennial Census, (DP1).  
2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, (S0101)

Source: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/how-american-overcome-the-challenges-of-an-aging-population>

# Current Population and Projections

## Racial + Ethnic Diversity

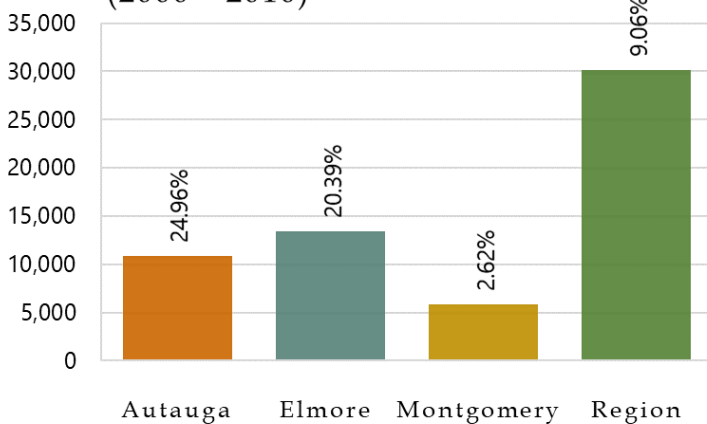
Over half of Central Alabama’s population is white (50.02%). Most of the region’s municipalities’ populations follow this trend; one exception is the City of Montgomery, where the population is 57.92% black. Since the 2010 Census, Central Alabama’s Hispanic population has grown an estimated 2.31%.

## Population Change

The 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates continue to report a declining population total within Montgomery County. At the municipal level, most population gains and losses are modest; falling in the one to five percent range. On the other hand, there have been considerable population increases in some of our municipalities, such as Pike Road and Wetumpka.

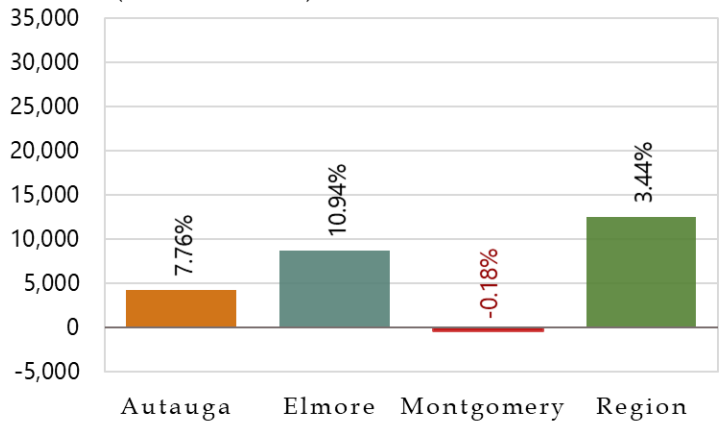
The 2020 Census reports that the largest municipalities in the region are the City of Montgomery (200,603), Prattville (37,781), and Millbrook (16,564), while the smallest municipalities are Billingsley (125), Autaugaville (795), and Eclectic (1,193). Autauga and Elmore Counties continue to experience increases in population; Montgomery County’s population, however, has declined consistently despite Pike Road being one of the fastest growing municipalities in Central Alabama.

Population Change by County (2000 - 2010)



Sources: 2000 Decennial Census, (DP1).  
2010 Decennial Census, (P1)

Population Change by County (2010 - 2020)



Sources: 2010 Decennial Census, (P1).  
2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, (S0101)

According to the Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER), the overall population of the Central Alabama Region will increase by 11.1% by 2040; a figure that parallels the state’s projected growth of 11.2%. The most significant increases in population will take place in Autauga and Elmore Counties, with Autauga County being

the fastest growing in the region. Originally, it was anticipated that Montgomery County will begin recovering from these declines in 2020. However, COVID-19 drastically impacted all predictions for the year 2020 and beyond. Nonetheless, it is noted that CBER’s projections were derived by population change between the last three Censuses as well as data provided by the Alabama Department of Health on births and deaths between 2000 and 2020.

### Regional Population Projections

	Census 2000	Census 2010	Census 2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Population Change (2010 - 2040)	
<b>Autauga</b>	43,671	54,571	58,805	62,452	66,099	69,745	73,392	14,587	24.8%
<b>Elmore</b>	65,874	79,303	87,977	93,305	98,632	103,960	109,288	21,311	24.2%
<b>Montgomery</b>	223,510	229,363	228,954	230,419	231,885	233,350	234,816	5,862	2.6%
<b>Region</b>	333,055	363,237	375,736	386,176	396,616	407,055	417,496	41,760	11.1%
<b>Alabama</b>	4,447,100	4,779,736	5,024,279	5,165,416	5,306,554	5,447,691	5,588,829	564,550	11.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and CBER, The University of Alabama, August 2022

The projected growth should also increase the diversity of the population itself, which would help enhance the region’s appeal to major industries. Diversity, with regard to the workforce population, is one of the major qualities that companies look for in an area when deciding where to expand.

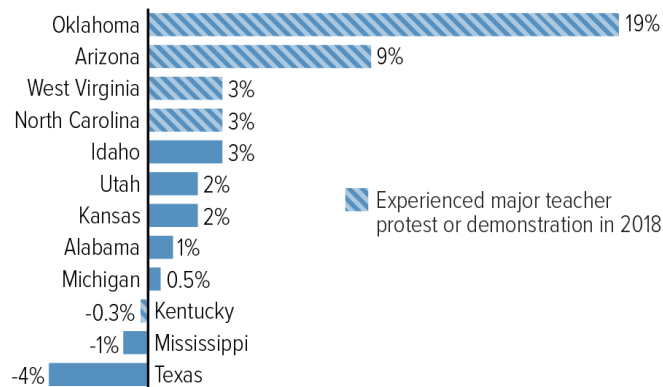
### Education

Public investment in K-12 schools is crucial for communities to thrive and the U.S. economy to offer broad opportunity has declined dramatically in several states over the last decade. Worse, states with the greatest amount of funding cuts have also cut income tax rates, weakening their main revenue source for supporting schools.

Steep state-level K-12 spending cuts have had serious consequences, some of which include weakening a key funding source for school districts, slowing the economy’s recovery from the recession and impeding reforms widely acknowledged to boost student achievement.

#### Many States With Deep K-12 Funding Cuts Since Recession Boosted Funding in 2018

Percent change in state formula funding\* per student, inflation adjusted, fiscal years 2018-19



\*General or formula funding is the primary form of state K-12 funding. States also typically provide revenue for other, more specific purposes, such as bus transportation and contributions to school employee pension plans.

Source: CBPP budget and enrollment analysis

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

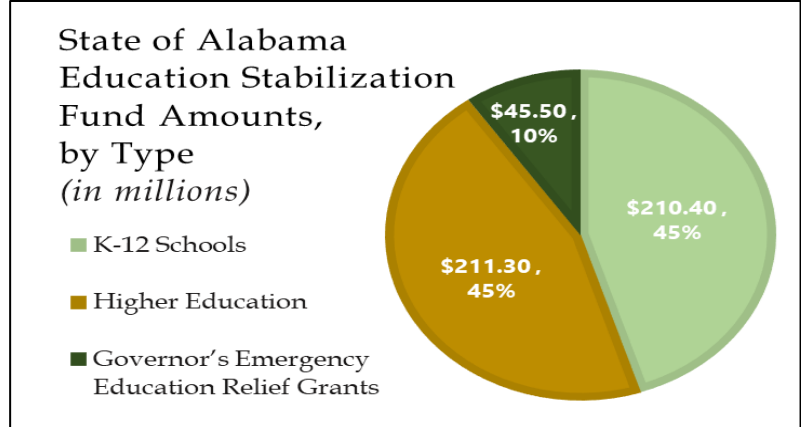


States typically distribute most of their funding through a formula that allocates money to school districts. Each state uses its own formula. Many states, for instance, target at least some funds to districts with greater student need (e.g., more students from low-income families) and less ability to raise funds from property taxes and other local revenues. However, typically this targeting does not fully equalize educational spending across wealthy and poor school districts.

In Alabama, local public schools are chiefly dependent on state support, although many wealthier systems get a boost by raising local taxes and some poorer systems get more help from federal grants. The state's school districts are still spending fewer dollars per student than they did in 2008, after adjusting for inflation.

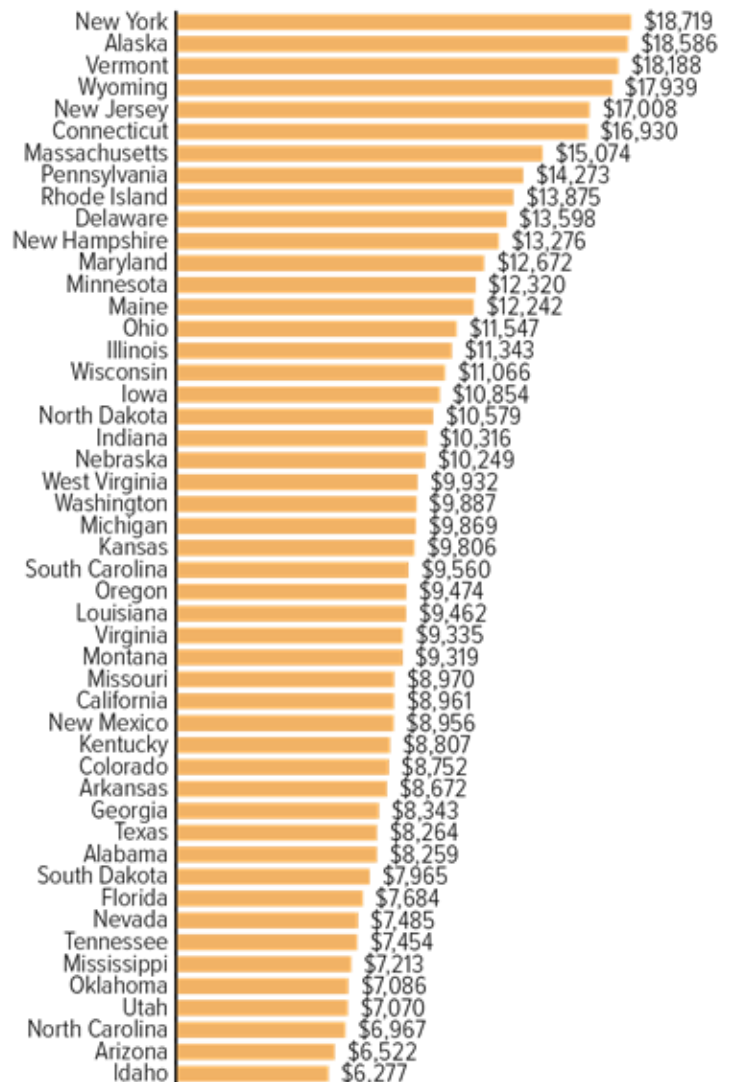
Alabama is one of few states that uses a resource-based formula to fund education. In FY 2020, 94 of the 142 school districts in the state spent more in federal funding than local funding

The Central Alabama Region, for FY 2020, spent between \$8,139 - \$9,424 per pupil. These expenditures comprise 75.6% state funding, 15.9% federal funding, and 8.3% local funding. Additionally, on a percentage basis, the City of Tallassee school system received the least amount of state funding, but provided the most local funds of any school system in the region.



**Wide Public School Funding Disparities Exist Across States**

Estimated per student state and local funding, after adjusting for cost of living, poverty, and other factors



Source: Baker, et al., "Is School Funding Fair?"

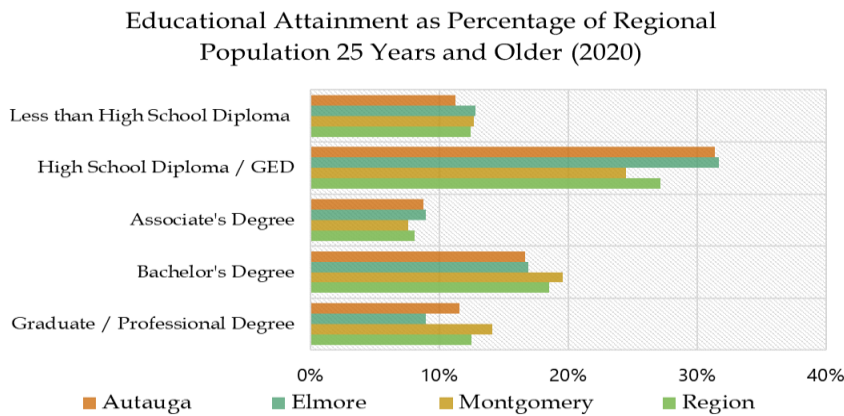
## Career + Technical Education Funding

Alabama provides specific funding for career and technical education (CTE) programs. To account for CTE program costs, has allocated \$5 million for FY 2021. This generates additional staff funding that districts may use for CTE programs. The state also funds Career Technical Education Directors and Career Technical Education Counselors for each school district, and provides separate funding for CTE program operations and maintenance. (Source: Funded: Alabama Report – A Detailed Look at Alabama’s Funding Policies)

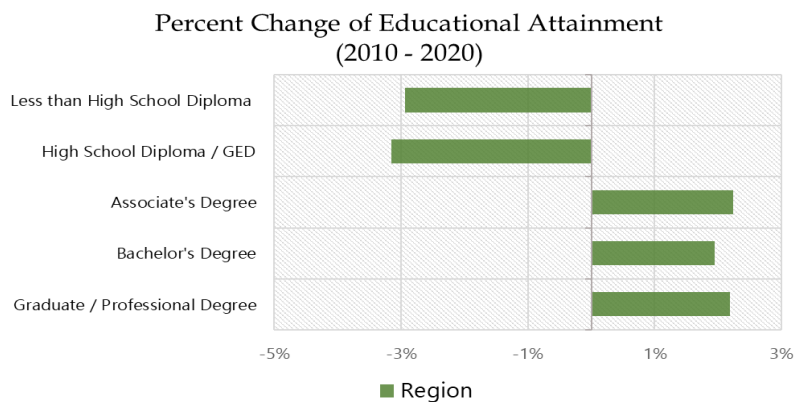
Source: Funded: Alabama Report – A Detailed Look at Alabama’s Funding Policies

## Regional Educational Attainment

In 2020, the American Community Survey (ACS) estimated that 87.53% of the Central Alabama population aged 25 or older completed high school (including equivalency). Since the 2010 Census, the regional population with an educational attainment of less than a High School Diploma or equivalent has decreased by 2.94%. Additionally, more than 31.06% of the population attained a Bachelor’s degree or higher, which is increase of 4.16% since the 2010 Census.

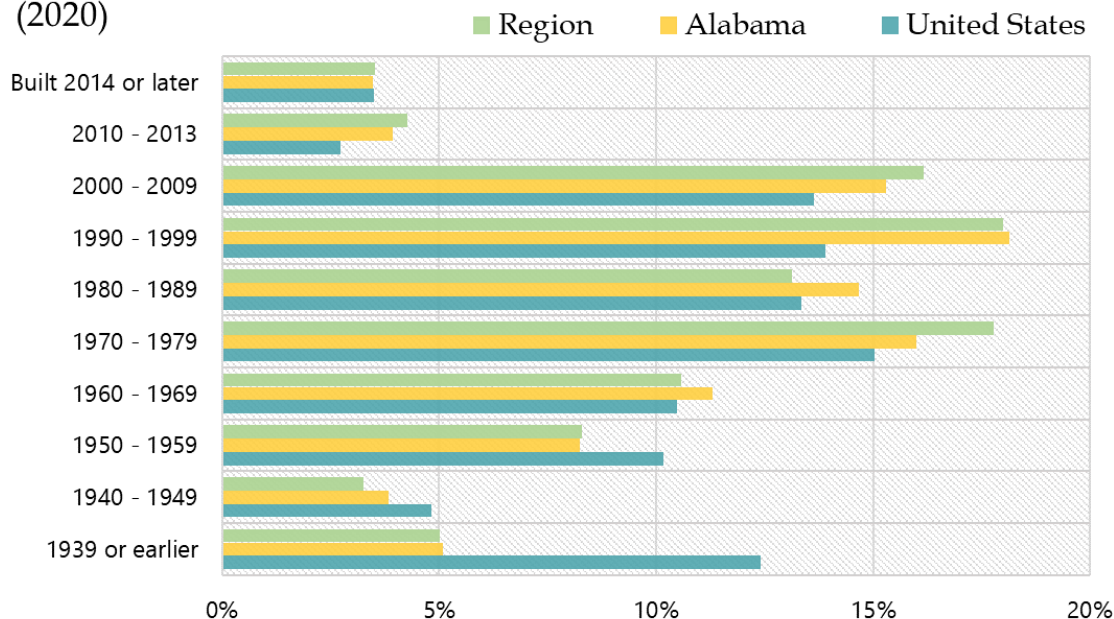


Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimate, (S1501)



Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Percentage of Housing Units by Year Structure Built (2020)



Source:  
2020 ACS  
5-Year  
Estimates,  
(B25034)

## Housing

According to the 2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, there is a higher percentage of single-family units in the Central Alabama Region than the State of Alabama (73.52% vs 70.30%). However, out of the total number of housing units in the region, the units listed as owner-occupied were lower than that of the state (55.23% vs 57.55%).

In the region, approximately 42% of all residential structures have been built since 1990 compared to 40.9% for the state. When compared with the nation as a whole, the age profile of housing structures in the Central Alabama Region are significantly ahead of the age profile of housing in the country, with 33.74% of homes built during the same period.

According to the 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the Central Alabama Region also has a lower rate of vacant housing units (13.63%), than that of the State of Alabama (16.82%), but is right in line with that of the U.S. (11.61%).

Occupied housing units in the region and the State of Alabama are far less reliant on fossil fuels than those in the nation as a whole. Fifty-six percent of the occupied houses in the Central Alabama Region use electricity as their primary heating source, as compared to the national estimate of 39.3%.

Utility or bottled gas fuel for house heating in the region is at 43.36% as compared to the state at 32.6% and nation at 52.4%. Additionally, in Central Alabama 0.09% of the occupied housing units heat with fuel oil, kerosene, coal, or other petroleum-based fuels, slightly lower than the state at 0.22%, and substantially lower than the nation as a whole at 5.2%. Some 0.34% of occupied housing units in Central Alabama heat with wood, again

less than the state at 0.9% or nation at 1.7%. Solar and other alternative energy sources have barely been tapped as a source of home heating fuel.

### Strategic Findings: Housing

The housing stock in the Central Alabama Region is relatively new as compared to other parts of the county and provides a wide range of housing styles and price points from which residents may choose. The region has reliable sources of energy, affordable land for development and low taxes all of which make this area a desirable place to live, work and invest in new development. While housing slowed after the recent pandemic and recession, as the economy improves it is anticipated that new development will once again reach robust levels of activity.

### Healthcare

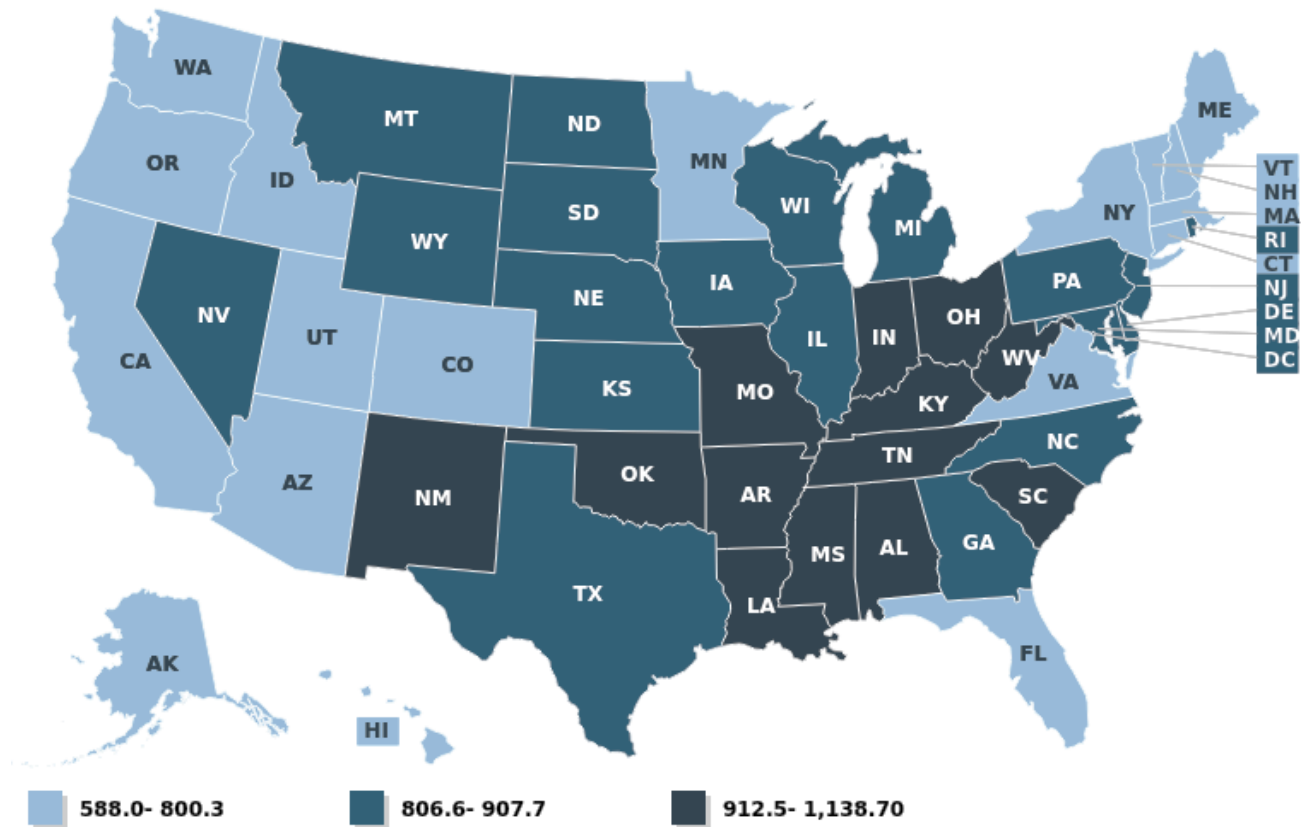
*The Effect of Health on Economic Growth: Theory and Evidence* examined two variables that micro-economists have identified as fundamental components of human capital: work experience and health. The main finding was that good health has a positive, sizable, and statistically significant effect on aggregate economic output. Past studies have understood labor quality as it relates to educational attainment, which is a narrow understanding.

There is a direct connection between a region's health and its human capital. Healthier workers are physically and mentally more energetic and robust. They are more productive and earn higher wages. They are also less likely to be absent from work because of illness (or illness in their family). Improvements to health and reductions in costly chronic diseases are key drivers of economic growth. Communities also need quality wellness, preventive and healthcare services; an adequate supply of trained healthcare providers; modern, accessible facilities; and a motivated, wellness-oriented population in order to achieve optimum public health.

The consequences of poor public health and illness generate an economic burden to individuals, companies, and regions. An unhealthy population generates costs in preventable healthcare expenditures; higher premiums from insurance companies; as well as greater costs to business and public expenditures on Medicaid and Medicare. These expenditures come at the expense of other investments. Unnecessary healthcare costs shift investments away from education, transportation, infrastructure, housing and businesses in the public and private sectors, all fundamental to economic growth, creating an unhealthy cycle.

*Source: The Effect of Health on Economic Growth: Theory and Evidence, November 2011*

## Mortality Rate per 100,000 Population (2020)



SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation's State Health Facts.

### Chronic Diseases

Chronic Diseases constitute a major public health problem in Alabama. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the combination of a population that is rapidly aging with a prevalence of unhealthy lifestyle choices will result in an epidemic of chronic disease that, "...will radically change the quality of life of our citizens and potentially bankrupt the healthcare system."

In 2020, approximately 64,779 persons died in Alabama. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts, Alabama's mortality rate ranks second highest in the country. The age-adjusted 2020 mortality rate for the state was 1,057.8 deaths per 100,000 people, substantially higher than the national rate of 835.4 deaths per 100,000 people. Deaths from chronic disease conditions accounted for a substantial portion of this mortality burden in Alabama.

The leading cause of mortality, both in Alabama and in the United States overall, was heart disease, followed by cancer.

Thus far, Alabama had more than 19,000 total deaths as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, of which 1,528 were from the Central Alabama Region. The mortality total may continue to climb as variations continue to spread, despite recent distribution of the first, second, and third rounds of the vaccine. The virus has weakened the infrastructural and staffing capacities of the state’s healthcare providers.

Total COVID-19 Related Deaths (January 22, 2020 - July 15, 2022)					
COVID-19 Death Rates Per 100,000 People					
	Autauga	Elmore	Montgomery	Region	Alabama
Cases	16,961	25,027	60,374	102,362	1,384,836
Deaths	217	352	959	1,528	19,812

## Obesity

Obesity in the Central Alabama Region continues to rise among adults and children, and is high across the state. According to “The State of Obesity” annual study by the Trust for America’s Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the percentage of obese adults in Alabama rose from 22.6% in 2000 (up from the 1990 rate of 11.2%) to 39.0% in 2021. This obesity rate places Alabama third in the country for overweight and obesity among the United States. Likewise, Alabama’s childhood overweight and obesity rates are high, with 16.2% of children 2-4 years of age; 17.3% for ages 10-17; and 17.2% for high school students.

The “Alabama State Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Profile” points out that 46% of adults in Alabama reported consuming fruit less than one time per day and 25.8% reported consuming vegetables less than one time daily. The participation in physical activity by Alabamians was reported as 45.4% of adults stated they achieved the equivalent of at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate intensity activity per week. The level of activity in adolescents was reported at 24.8% stating they were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on all seven days of the previous week. It is important to make healthy options available, accessible, and affordable and to educate citizens on how excess calorie intake and physical inactivity contributes to obesity, which is associated with the leading “preventable” chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers.

The data shows the average rate of obesity and overweight within the CARPDC region is approximately between 35-40%, according to 2018 data. Overweight and obese populations in the Central Alabama Region are potentially at higher risk for degenerative, chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular

Sources: *StateofObesity.org*; *Alabama State Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Profile*

disease, arthritis and cancer. In Alabama, combined with the rapid aging of the population, obesity has already fueled a dramatic increase in diabetes, from 6.1% in 1990 to 14.6% in 2016 and hypertension from 23.1% in 1990 to 40.4% in 2015.

According to Alabama Department of Health’s Center for Health Statistics, while the death rates from chronic disease have varied by county in the Central Alabama Region, the trends of the region are similar. From 2015-2020, Autauga, Elmore, and Montgomery Counties experienced a substantial uptick in mortality rates from diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

Central Alabama’s death rates from cancer were the biggest improvement, with most of the region experiencing a decrease in cancer-related deaths, and all three counties falling under the state’s cancer mortality rate. Improvements of 2020 mortality rates of the leading causes of death are highlighted in sage.

2015 Total Number of Reported Deaths					
Cause of Death	Autauga	Elmore	Montgomery	Region	Alabama
Cancer	128	145	458	731	10,348
Diabetes	17	12	97	126	1,253
Heart Disease	111	192	439	742	12,970
Stroke	29	38	148	215	2,937

2020 Total Number of Reported Deaths					
Cause of Death	Autauga	Elmore	Montgomery	Region	Alabama
Cancer	109	173	416	698	10,458
Diabetes	27	30	131	188	1,450
Heart Disease	155	256	456	867	14,739
Stroke	40	49	173	262	3,390

For 2020, Autauga County’s mortality rates for diabetes and stroke were above the Alabama average, while the rates for cancer and heart disease were lower than the state’s rates. Mortality rates for diabetes and heart disease in Elmore County were higher than the state average, but beat the state’s rates of death for cancer and stroke. Montgomery County’s mortality rates for diabetes and stroke were higher than the Alabama averages; Montgomery County beat the Alabama rates by having lower rates of cancer and heart disease related deaths. Overall, 2020 death rates from these diseases have remained high compared to those of the state and the nation as a whole.

Source: AL Dept. of Health: Center for Health Statistics

## Strategic Findings: Health

Several healthcare challenges must be addressed in the Central Alabama Region: the high rate of obesity and stroke-related deaths; the growing rate of chronic disease, particularly diabetes, heart disease and cancer; the disparity in access to healthcare between urban and rural populations; and the recruitment of and healthcare providers to assure sufficient supply, and access to, effective healthcare facilities and professionals throughout the region. In addition, a proactive approach to encouraging healthy eating habits needs to be developed through citizen education and supported access to healthy, local foods.

Overall, the region needs to support healthy lifestyle habits for its citizens as well as educate them on the benefits from lowered mortality, increased quality of life and local food economies.

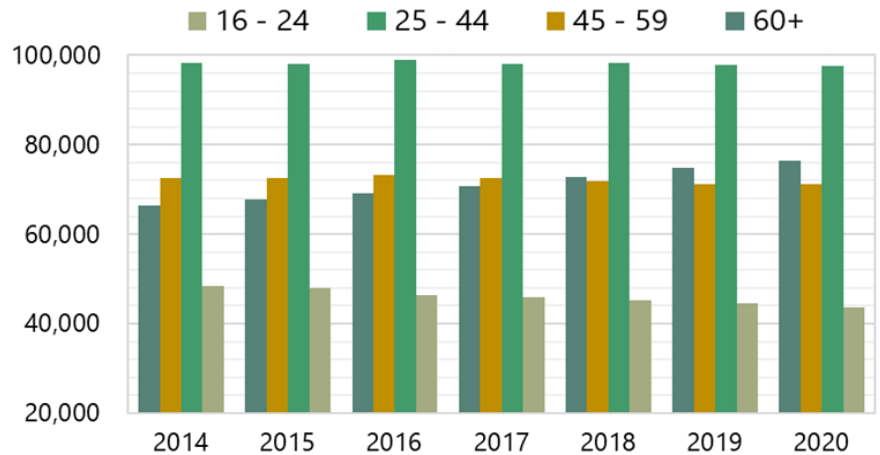


# LABOR FORCE SNAPSHOT

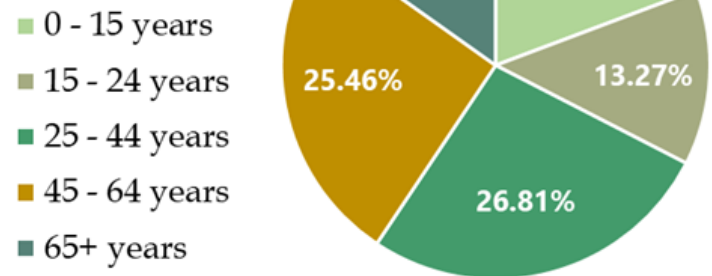
## Annual Average Employment (2020)

Industry	Region
Total, All Industries:	<b>159,152</b>
Goods Producing:	<b>26,078</b>
Service Providing:	<b>133,074</b>
Natural Resources & Mining:	<b>960</b>
Construction:	<b>7,908</b>
Manufacturing:	<b>17,210</b>
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities:	<b>30,232</b>
Information:	<b>1,876</b>
Financial Activities:	<b>8,828</b>
Professional & Business Services:	<b>16,445</b>
Educational & Health Services:	<b>36,090</b>

Working Age Population Growth in the Region (2014 - 2020)



Regional Age Distribution (2020)



**288,969**  
Population 16  
Years & Over

**(+) 14,848**  
Net Job Inflow  
(2020)

**4.47%**  
Unemployment  
Rate (2020)

**\$57,423**  
Median Household  
Income

**\$36,170**  
Per Capita  
Income

**9,003**  
Number of  
Establishments

### KEY STATISTICS

# SECTION 3: INDUSTRY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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**CENTRAL ALABAMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
2022 (CEDS)**

## SECTION III | INDUSTRY + ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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### Shifts Across the Nation

In 2021, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that national employment is projected to increase by 11.9 million over the 2020-30 decade, an increase from 153.5 million workers to 165.4 million workers. This growth, 0.7% annually, is higher than recent projections and accounts for recovery from low employment in 2020 due to COVID-19.

As the labor force continues to get older, the overall labor force participation rate is projected to decrease to 60.4% by 2030. This rate is down from 61.7% in 2020. The decline in labor force participation is due to the aging of the baby-boom generation and a declining trend in men's participation, with a slight decline in women's participation.

By 2030, all baby boomers will be at least 65 years old. The increasing share of people ages 65 and older contributes to a slower labor force growth rate and a declining labor force participation rate.

Employment in leisure and hospitality is projected to grow the fastest among all sectors over the 2020-2030 decade. Healthcare and social assistance employment is also projected to grow quickly compared to other sectors. On the other side, retail trade is projected to lose 586,800 jobs over the next decade. Part of this decline is the popularity of online shopping compared to brick-and-mortar establishments.

### Occupational Employment

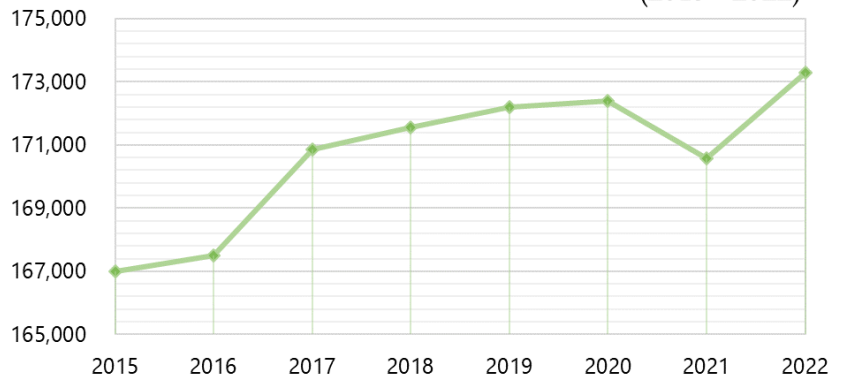
Healthcare support occupations are projected to have the fastest employment growth among all occupational groups. Healthcare occupations account for 7 of the 30 fastest growing occupations over the next decade. Demand for healthcare services, especially from aging baby boomers, will drive the projected employment growth.

### Workforce Overview

Central Alabama's civilian labor force rose by 6,307 persons (3.8%) between 2015 to 2022. At the same time, regional employment increased from 157,385 to 171,065 (8.7%). From 2010 to 2020, both the labor force and employed populations fluctuated, with COVID-19 skewing the 2020 numbers slightly. Labor force participation fluctuations paralleled activity at the state level, but employment trends have not increased within the region as they have within the state.

Regional Civilian Labor Force Over Time  
(2015 - 2022)

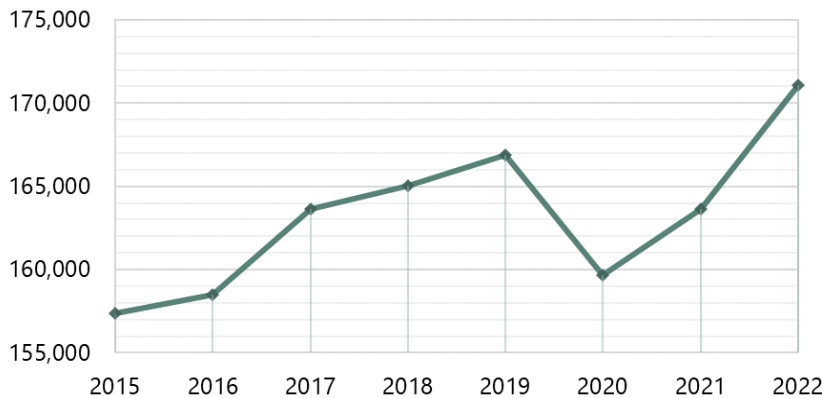
Central Alabama’s labor force increased 3.8% over since 2015. The 2022 increase helps illustrate that Central Alabama is recovering from the pandemic, even though there was a decline in 2021.



Changes in Labor Force Over Time (2015-2022)					
Year	Autauga	Elmore	Montgomery	Region	Alabama
(May) 2022	26,893	38,437	107,972	173,302	2,287,561
2021	26,341	37,582	106,663	170,586	2,247,001
2020	26,405	37,662	108,329	172,396	2,268,312
2019	26,684	37,806	107,721	172,211	2,271,898
2018	26,475	37,993	107,096	171,564	2,240,486
2017	26,269	37,642	106,956	170,867	2,203,466
2016	25,710	36,921	104,883	167,514	2,155,731
2015	25,541	36,655	104,799	166,995	2,152,304

Regional Employment Over Time  
(2015 - 2022)

Source: AL Dept. of Labor, LMI Division. Civilian Labor Force by County (2015-May 2022)



Employment (the number of employed persons in the region), on the other hand, increased by 8.7% over the last seven years, peaking at 171,065 employed persons as of May 2022.

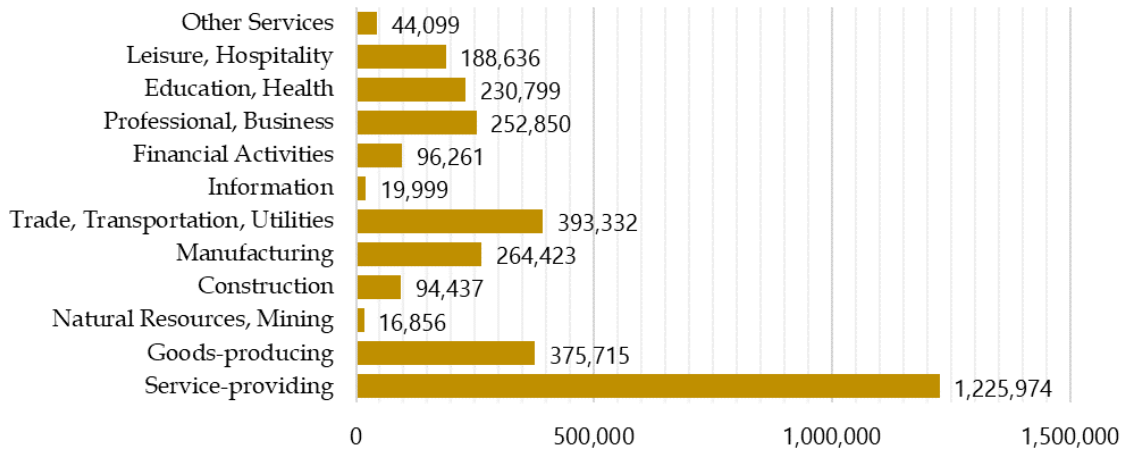
Changes in Employment Over Time (2015-2022)					
Year	Autauga	Elmore	Montgomery	Region	Alabama
(May) 2022	26,336	38,075	106,654	171,065	2,231,978
2021	25,599	36,560	101,486	163,645	2,169,726
2020	24,985	35,657	99,047	159,689	2,121,149
2019	25,920	36,767	104,224	166,911	2,199,872
2018	25,524	36,692	102,844	165,060	2,153,085
2017	25,224	36,222	102,209	163,655	2,103,876
2016	24,395	35,161	98,929	158,485	2,029,159
2015	24,206	34,803	98,376	157,385	2,020,451

Inflow and outflow figures collected on the region’s labor market size indicate that there were 163,020 persons employed within Central Alabama Region in 2019. 109,836 people live and work in the region. However, approximately 26% of residents go outside of the region for employment. Also, approximately 33% of employees in the region do not live in the region. Affordable and quality housing could help bring some workers from outside to live in the region, while quality jobs could help keep residents working in the region.

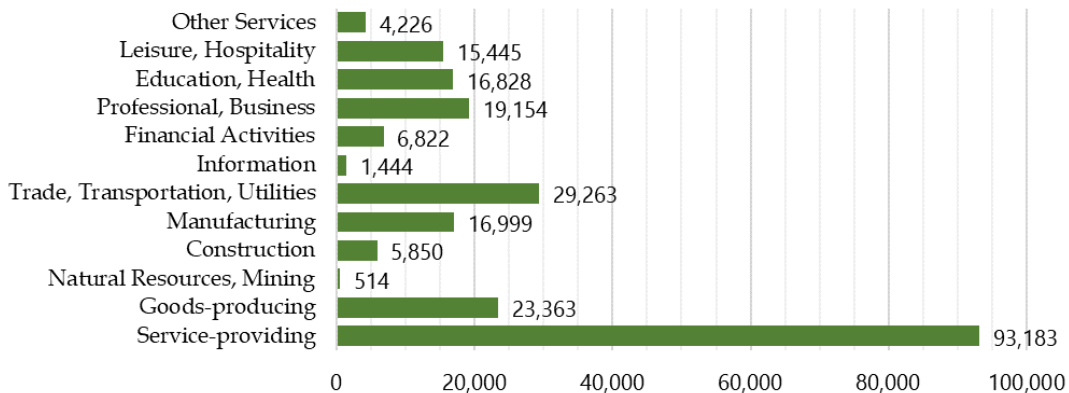
Inflow/Outflow Report (2019)	
Selection Area Labor Market Size (All Jobs)	
Employed in the Region	163,020
Living in the Region	148,172
Net Job Inflow (+)	14,848
In-Area Labor Force Efficiency	
Living & Employed Inside Region	109,836
Living Inside Region, Employed Outside	38,336
Living Outside of Region, Employed Inside	53,184
Outflow Job Characteristics	
Workers Aged 29 or younger	10,457
Workers Aged 30 to 54	19,945
Workers Aged 55 or older	7,934
Inflow Job Characteristics	
Workers Aged 29 or younger	13,051
Workers Aged 30 to 54	28,268
Workers Aged 55 or older	11,865

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

Alabama Industry Aggregations by Annual Average Employment (2021)



Regional Industry Aggregations by Annual Average Employment (2021)



Source: 2021 Annual Averages, All est. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages - Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Economic Development

### Critical Issues

The following issues and barriers have been identified as the most critical to be addressed:

- Need to revitalize the region's downtowns and neighborhoods
- Need for improved workforce development, especially in healthcare and in preparation for industry growth
- Aging population, with growing demand for healthcare services
- Growing population with chronic diseases
- Resiliency of economy during times of natural disaster/pandemic

### Challenges of Vibrant Downtowns/Municipal Cores

Vibrant downtowns or town centers are at the heart of healthy communities and provide social and cultural experiences for residents in surrounding areas. Healthy downtowns have architectural and historical resources, including commercial buildings and traditional, time-honored geographic community centers with walkable pedestrian-based venues that represent the tenets of smart growth. Downtowns that offer quality, upper-story housing provide an opportunity to attract talent and investment.

It is a national and local trend that a talent-based workforce desires downtown housing options, diverse services, cultural experiences, and a legitimate "quality of place." There is an increasing interest for downtown living within the ranks of young professionals, families, and retirees.

The downtowns and community centers in the Central Alabama Region have unique and historically significant buildings; however, there is a large stock of buildings that require significant rehabilitation to make them viable for both commercial and residential tenants.

Revitalizing the Central Alabama Region's downtown centers will provide opportunities for smart and sustainable community development and growth, increased tax bases and ancillary economic benefits. A movement to revitalize the downtowns and community cores of the region is already underway in places like Prattville and Wetumpka and should be a priority of other communities in the region. Such a movement in the region's town centers would not only improve a community's "sense of place", and economic base, but would also play a role in recapturing the value of surrounding neighborhoods that have underused or deteriorated public assets.

## Workforce Development

### Workforce Development Councils of Alabama

Prior to October 2016 there were ten (10) regional Workforce Development Councils (WDCA) established to provide a direct link to the workforce needs of business and industry at the local level. After October 2016 the WDCAs were reconfigured into seven (7) regions. In both their forms, the Councils are business-driven and business-led and work with their member counties to develop a regional strategic plan and comprehensive workforce development system that supports local economic and job development activities. Additionally, the Councils make funding recommendations for grant applications submitted, based on the documented needs of the region as identified in their strategic plans. Autauga, Elmore, and Montgomery Counties are all in region 5, known as Central AlabamaWorks!

The following information is based on the “State of the Workforce Report XIV: Central AlabamaWorks” published in November 2020 with a partnership through the University of Alabama.

### Employment

Central AlabamaWorks had an unemployment rate of 3.1% in 2019, with about 10,585 persons being unemployed. There was an underemployment rate of 24.5% in 2019, meaning that the region has an available labor pool of 91,342, including 79,666 underemployed workers who are looking for better jobs and are willing to commute farther and longer for such jobs.

Top Regional Employers	Business Type	Employees
<b>Aerotek</b>	Employment Agencies & Opportunities	3,000
<b>Hyundai Motor Manufacturing</b>	Automobile Body-Repairing & Painting	3,000
<b>Baptist Medical Center South</b>	Hospitals	1,791
<b>AL Public Safety</b>	Gov. Offices - State	1,500
<b>Auburn University at Montgomery</b>	University-College Dept./Facility	1,200
<b>Transportation Department</b>	Federal Gov. Transportation Programs	1,000
<b>GKN Aerospace AL</b>	Aerospace Industries (manufacturers)	1,000
<b>Alfa Health</b>	Insurance	900
<b>Maxwell Air Force Base</b>	Federal Gov. National Security	900
<b>Revenue Department</b>	Gov. Offices - State	900
<b>Baptist Medical Center East</b>	Hospitals	819
<b>Montgomery Police Juvenile Division</b>	Police Departments	734
<b>Montgomery County Finance</b>	County Gov. Finance & Taxation	700

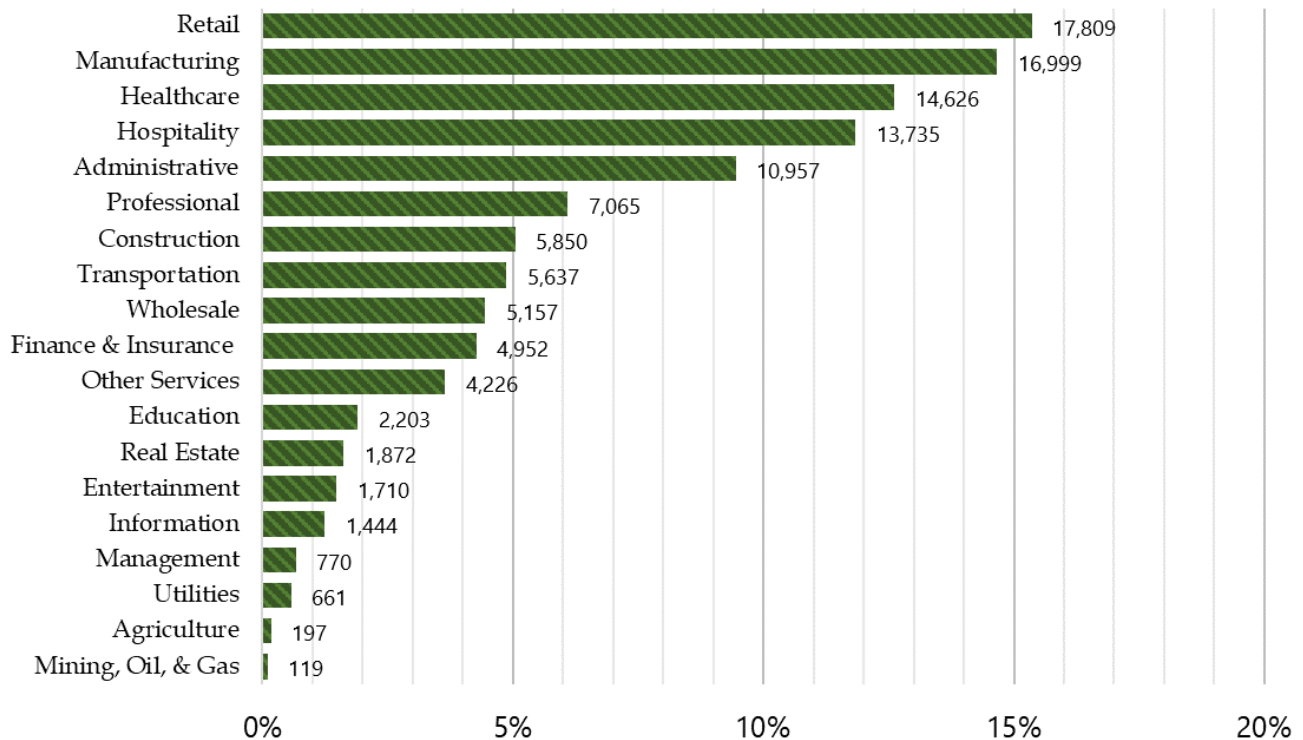
Source: (2022) 150 Largest Employers in Alabama. CareerOneStop

## Commuting Impacts

For the year 2017 in Central AlabamaWorks counties, more employees were leaving the region for work than coming into the region. For Autauga, Elmore and Montgomery counties, the exact opposite is true. Between 2015 and 2019, employees live further away from their job and thus their commute times have increased. Persistent congestion can slow the pace of economic development and therefore continuous maintenance and development of transportation infrastructure and systems will be important.

According to the report, the commuting numbers breakdown are as follows: Autauga County has 6,963 employees commuting into the county for work and 16,808 commuting out; Elmore County has 10,970 employees commuting in and 24,115 commuting out for work and Montgomery County has 63,046 workers commuting into the county and 24,663 commuting out for employment.

Regional NAICS Sectors by Annual Average Employment (2021)



Source: 2021 Annual Averages, All establishment sizes, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages - Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Manufacturing

Six industry sectors employ a majority of people in Central AlabamaWorks counties, which are: manufacturing, healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, accommodation and food services, educational services, and public administration. These six industries provided approximately 67.1% percent of the region's total for the first quarter of 2019.



The large percentage of public administration jobs can be explained by the location of the State Capitol located in Montgomery, which attracts a lot of governmental jobs. Manufacturing appears in concentrated in pockets dispersed throughout Autauga, Elmore, and Montgomery counties. Major pockets appear in Prattville, Tallassee, and the city of Montgomery.

## Shovel Ready Sites

For the purposes of this document a site is considered shovel ready if it has undergone the various permitting, engineering and expansion of basic infrastructure required for new construction based on a community's desired development plan. By their nature and definition, shovel ready sites are equipped with the infrastructure needed for development including natural gas, electric services, broadband fiber, and municipal water and sewer. Rail service is also becoming critical infrastructure.

Site certification remains one of the most effective site marketing tools for economic development professionals desiring to create a competitive advantage in successfully locating significant manufacturing operations. Certifying sites confirms site readiness to a point that creates a benefit in the site selection process, leverages job creation, and attracts capital investment.

For corporations desiring to locate manufacturing facilities, access to certified sites presents a unique site screening advantage that reduces overall site location risk, saves time, and reduces site development costs.

To meet the needs of industry, Alabama's economic development community is working to designate an inventory of industrial sites with key documentation for accurate, timely project evaluation.

AdvantageSite is a voluntary program that allows communities to demonstrate due diligence has been done. This does not imply that other properties in Alabama do not meet the same criteria. It does mean designated sites have undergone a vetting process to show that important information about a site is readily available. A site awarded AdvantageSite designation has met certain standards related to ownership, accessibility, infrastructure, planning and zoning, and environmental and geotechnical due diligence.

There are fifty-five (55) Certified Advantage Sites across Alabama; the Central Alabama Region is fortunate to have six (6) of those within its borders. Four (4) are located in Montgomery County, and two (2) are located in Autauga county. While these sites certainly provide industries wishing to locate in this region a step up in the location process, these are not the only sites available across the region and it may well be that other sites are more suited to certain industries location or market needs. In Montgomery County there are a total of ten (10) industrial sites with more than 4,000 available acres.

The Montgomery Chamber is working to identify additional development-ready industrial sites in an effort to increase available site inventory. In Elmore County there are a total of six (6) industrial sites with more than 782 available acres. Autauga County has three (3) industrial sites and one (1) business park with approximately 696 available acres.

## Broadband Communications

The information technology industry is expanding across the country, and Alabama has dialed into that progress. The state's IT companies generate almost \$1 billion annually and employ tens of thousands. As other notable Alabama industries such as automotive, aerospace and life sciences continue to develop, so will the need for cutting-edge technology. The minds trained to create those solutions are right here in Alabama.

More than merely a support system, information technology serves as a major stand-alone sector of Alabama's economy. The Alabama IT sector employs over 15,000 Alabamians and generates greater than \$1 billion in annual revenue across industries like banking and finance, government, education, consumer products, GIS and utilities.

In the Central Alabama Region internet access is widespread, with Montgomery County having 98.0% access to 25 mbps, Elmore County is at 96.0% access to 25mbps, and Autauga County is at 90.3% access to 25mbps. The rural areas of all three counties suffer due to their distance from major metropolitan hubs which restricts business development, affects quality of life and limits opportunities.

Residents and businesses in these rural areas of the region who are without access to basic high-speed internet service cannot participate effectively and fully in today's economy, limiting economic growth and educational opportunities. The lack of high-speed service often means that (1) potential employees do not want to relocate to the area; (2) current employees are unable to telecommute; (3) healthcare providers are unable to extend telemedicine to remote areas; (4) large companies and the universities cannot transfer or exchange large volumes of data; (5) farmers are unable to start new value-added enterprises to enhance their earnings; and (6) residential property values are depressed where internet is unavailable or prohibitively expensive.

In early 2016 the City of Montgomery announced the formation of a partnership to establish the Montgomery Internet Exchange, known as MGMix. It was the state's first Internet Exchange, a facility where Internet service providers and networks of proxy servers exchange Internet traffic. A few months later, officials announced a cyber strategy for Montgomery that would involve collaboration between business, military, government, and universities. The 100 Gig benchmark is seen as crucial to attracting companies that handle large amounts of data, such as Netflix, Amazon, Microsoft, and Apple. In addition, Auburn University at Montgomery has signed a peering agreement

to become the first university to join MG Mix. This Internet Exchange has the potential to not only change the economic outlook for the City of Montgomery and Montgomery County but for the Central Alabama Region as a whole.

In the long term there is a need to extend broadband to the rural areas of our region in response to the need for greater access to high-speed data. Doing so will increase our global competitiveness and advance our strategic economic development priorities, including:

- Seamless healthcare information exchange, which requires equitable digital transmission of patient records, telemedicine, and creation of virtual rural clinics
- Regional entrepreneurial business development, including the needed strategies to retain college and university student talent in the region
- Attraction of new business development, especially those reliant on data processing and transmission and open-access fiber networks
- Partnerships between universities and the private sector to bring about advancements in technology and encourage research and development collaboration among the region's colleges and universities.
- Promotion of the region as a tourism destination, as well as increased support for other visitor-related businesses in the more rural areas of the region.
- Telecommuting for employees living in rural areas and/or for organizations that have embraced green initiatives to reduce mass commuting in single-occupancy vehicles

## Healthcare

As mentioned earlier, the healthcare industry is one of the top employers in the Central Alabama Region.

Attracting and retaining highly skilled health care professionals, together with integration of new technology, are fundamental in assuring effective and efficient delivery of healthcare services in the region.

Increases in chronic diseases, and costs associated with managing them, will be major factors affecting economic growth. It is believed that chronic disease prevention and chronic care improvement will be two of the fastest growing fields in healthcare.

Healthcare occupational projections for the Central AlabamaWorks region for the period 2018-2028 reflect significant opportunities for growth. Nurse practitioners are projected to have a 2.43% annual growth rate and a 27.18% change for the 10-year period; occupational therapy assistants are projected to have the largest increase, a 3.99% annual

growth rate and a 47.83% percent change for the period; physician assistants are projected to have a 3.00% annual growth rate and a 34.41% change for the period; and home health aides are projected to have a 2.53% annual growth rate and a 28.37% change for the period.

In Central Alabama, the challenge is the anticipated shortages. Average job openings during the period are estimated at 9,940 while potential projected replacements are projected at only 7,310. Workforce shortages, predicted in healthcare occupations also provide opportunities for collaboration at several levels. The region's colleges and community colleges currently collaborate with healthcare providers and offer a full range of education programs to support the sector.

### Aging Population

The Center for Demographic Research at Auburn University Montgomery estimates that that the Central Alabama population, age 65 and over, will increase by some 82% during the two decades between 2015-2035. By county this increase breaks down as follows: Autauga = 107%; Elmore = 108%; and Montgomery = 65%. Overall, the increase in our region's senior populations will be 24% of the total Central Alabama population by 2035.

American Community Survey 2020 data estimates that, at present, some 52,154 Central Alabama households include at least one person over the age of 60, or 37.1% of all households in the region. Of those households, an estimated 15,194 are one-person households where the resident is 65 or older and living alone, or some 10.8% of Central Alabama households. As these individuals age over the coming two decades, it is likely that their need for proximity to medical services, and resources required for daily living, will increase and that generally their ability to live independently may be compromised.

Genworth Financial, source of an annual "cost of care" survey, which canvasses long-term care providers nationally, predicts two thirds of individuals over 65 will require home or institutionally-based long-term care during their remaining lifetimes. Genworth's Alabama State-Specific Data from the 2021 Cost of Care Survey reports the median annual cost of institutional nursing home care in the Montgomery area is approximately \$91,652 per year, while annual median costs for assisted living in the region are about half as much. Home health aides or licensed housekeepers delivering services in a home-based environment can cost nearly \$44,000 annually. Clearly, these expenses can be a burden to families making difficult decisions in the future.

There are a variety of living options for aging individuals in Central Alabama ranging from Assisted Living and Retirement Communities to Nursing Homes and Alzheimer's care facilities. While these facilities may be adequate for current needs, with the projected growth rates and the increasing rate of retirement for baby-boomers, it is important that attention be given to maintaining an adequate level of service. As baby-boomers age

many may seek housing in age-friendly communities where transitions from levels of need are not accompanied by relocation from known communities and friends.

## **Economic Resiliency**

The SWOT Analysis conducted by the CEDS committee identified a variety of vulnerabilities that have caused or could potentially cause major economic problems, both locally and regionally.

According to EDA, “in the context of economic development, economic resilience becomes inclusive of three primary attributes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether.” EDA further states that these shocks or disruptions can often be categorized in the following ways:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending;
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region’s economic activity; and/or
- Other external shocks (a natural or man-made disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, the impacts of climate change, pandemic etc.)

In the past, the Central Alabama Region has experienced several shocks to the economy, among them are: flooding of residential and business districts, an economic recession, and the closing of several major employers across the region. Most recently the region, along with rest of the Country, is still suffering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Flooding and residual damage from coastal storms have been the primary causes of property damage in the region. Additionally, like the experiences of other regions such as West Alabama, it is clear how devastating a major storm event can be in terms of loss of life, property damage and the destruction of major economic generators. While most of our counties Hazard Mitigation Plans comprehensively address mitigation of casualties and property damage, there is little if any discussion of economic resiliency. In other words, how will we address the expeditious recovery of the major tax generating businesses and industries in our communities?

Economic resiliency efforts need to be developed and put in place in our region in order to quickly put our local governments back on their feet financially in order that they may reestablish services to their citizens.

Further, the impacts of COVID-19 are still being felt, and recovery is ongoing. The pandemic has dramatically highlighted the deep and systemic economic and social

inequities that plague our region. As a region now is the time to take advantage of an opportunity to build more robust economic future, one that is locally rooted, inclusive, as well as good for human lives and for nature.

Economic Resiliency is not only discussed in this section of the CEDS, but is woven throughout the entire document. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how resiliency is a multi- faceted issue with many different components. However, the overall purpose of economic resiliency is to save and create as many jobs as possible, so that when a shock occurs, which is inevitable, the community, region, and people have options.

### **Economic vs Physical Shocks**

When examining the types of shocks that a community needs to plan for, most can be categorized in one of two ways: economic shocks and physical shocks. Economic shocks are those which are caused primarily by economic forces such as the closing of a major factory that results in great loss in employment, a national recession, or a change in regulations that affect importing and exporting. Physical shocks are those which cause harm to either the built or natural environment, or both, such as flooding, tornadoes, or a hurricane. Physical shocks are economic in nature as well, so the issue is not just repairing the physical damage, but repairing the economic damage caused by destroyed property and loss of income and businesses.

### **Combating Economic and Physical Shocks**

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

### **Hazard Mitigation**

Economic resiliency is important for both economic shocks and physical shocks, but hazard mitigation is a tool that is mainly focuses on physical shocks. Hazard mitigation planning is focused primarily on natural disasters in which there is usually a warning in advance, but hazard mitigation should also focus on physical shocks that come with no warning. Each county in the region has adopted a hazard mitigation plan which outlines how to prepare for and react to hazards and the resources available in the event of a disaster. These plans can be found by visiting the appropriate county’s website. The Alabama Emergency Management Agency website ([www.ema.alabama.gov](http://www.ema.alabama.gov)), and [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) offer information about planning for and responding to many different types of disasters.

## Creating Resilient People

- Education – In order to have a resilient workforce, training and education should support local industry and should be adaptable and flexible enough to change as new industries emerge, or as existing industries grow and evolve over time.
- Communication – The region should strive for excellent communication, whether it involves communication about jobs and training opportunities, or advance warning for storms and disaster preparedness.
- Quality of Life – Healthy, happy people tend to be more adaptable and resilient in times of hardship and an excellent quality of life can make an area marketable and appealing to new industry.
- Safety – Providing a safe environment, either daily through good building and infrastructure, or during a time of physical crisis, such as the availability of shelters and efficient evacuation routes during a storm.
- Pandemic - The COVID-19 pandemic was an extraordinary shock to much of the U.S. and exposed deep vulnerabilities across our fragmented health care system. It has also added uncertainty and deprivation to the lives of millions who were let go and left unemployed. When we look at employment status during COVID-19, we find that virtually all changes in status are worse for well-being and mental health than they are for keeping one’s employment. This returns us to the need for improvements to quality of life and support of a robust healthcare system.

## Creating Resilient Environments

- Structures – Implementing building codes that result in strong construction create a built environment that is less vulnerable to natural disasters, and will sustain the test of time.
- Infrastructure – New and up to date infrastructure that is stronger and more resilient, that can withstand a natural disaster, is a marketable feature for recruiting new industry.
- Land suitability – Building on land that is most suitable for development reduces vulnerability to natural disasters.
- Site Redevelopment – Redevelopment of an existing or underutilized site is often more efficient and cost effective than developing a new site.

## Creating Resilient Industry

- Diversity – The region should strive to have a diverse industrial base. The old saying, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket,” applies here. For example, a textile plant closing will not impact tourism or automotive industries.

- Adaptability – As technologies changes and economies wax and wane, industry needs to be adaptable to the current market and the workforce should be adaptable to meet those changing needs.
- Innovation – Industry innovation often goes hand in hand with diversity and adaptability and often occurs as a response to a physical or economic shock.

### Opportunity Zones

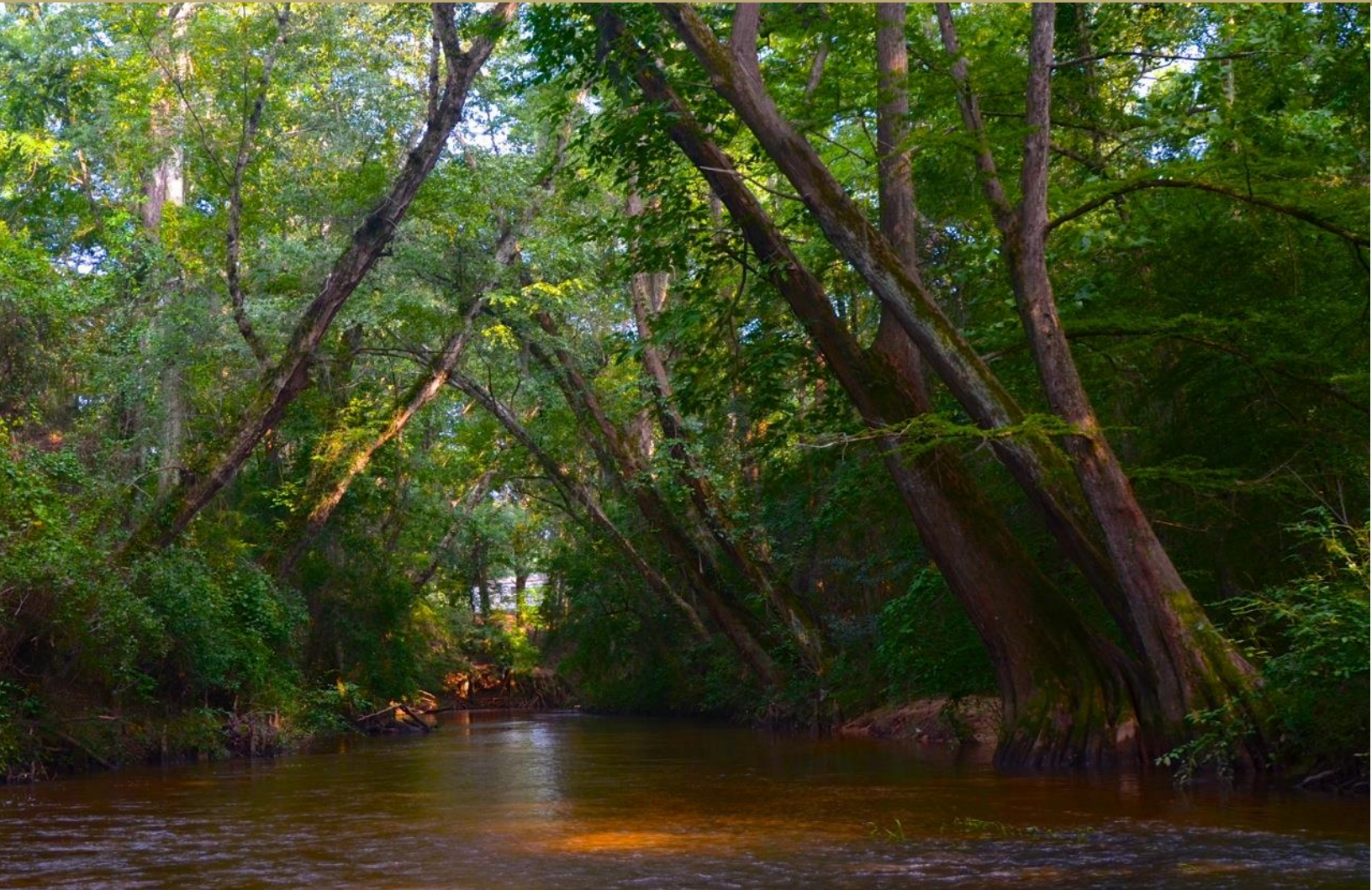
Opportunity zones are a federal economic development tool focused on improving the outcomes of communities that have suffered from disinvestment over the years. They are designated low-income census tracts where tax incentives are available to groups or individuals. In Central Alabama, there are 15 opportunity zones: 12 in Montgomery County, 2 in Elmore County, and 1 in Autauga County. These are areas in Central Alabama that can be used to spur development, and they are generally located along transportation routes. Opportunity zones can be used to strengthen the region's economy and can be a driver of economic development.

Opportunity zones also help lay the groundwork for strategies that can evolve over time from collaborative thinking, risk-taking and an aggressive entrepreneurial spirit. The Committee believes the Central Alabama Region has the potential to be a leading, business-friendly climate, with an exceptionally trained workforce that assists employers of every size, from major universities to small rural-based business operations.



# SECTION 4: NATURAL AND RECREATIONAL ASSETS

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**CENTRAL ALABAMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
2022 (CEDDS)**

## SECTION IV | NATURAL + RECREATIONAL ASSETS

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### Natural Resources

The Central Alabama Region has an abundant supply of natural resources including rivers, creeks, lakes, and forestland. Many residents in the region often refer to the area as the “River Region” due to its number of rivers. The region features the headwater of the Alabama River, formed at the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers in Elmore County, four miles southwest of Wetumpka, and ten miles north of Montgomery. The area also features two large lakes, Lake Martin, and Lake Jordan. These lakes offer area residents and tourists recreational opportunities including fishing, water sports, and boating. These lakes also provide essential power to the region through hydropower generation.

Autauga County features the Alabama River, which forms its boundary with Lowndes and Montgomery Counties. In addition to the river, there are a few significant creeks including Autauga Creek, Mulberry Creek, Little Mulberry Creek, and Swift Creek.

North Autauga County is the site of numerous spring water sources. The springs in this area are rare in Alabama and produce very pure water. This natural resource has prompted investment by a water bottling production company for in Autaugaville.

Elmore County is the site of four large man-made lakes: Lake Martin, Lake Jordan, Yates Lake, and Thurlow Reservoir. Alabama Power, the state’s largest utility company, owns and manages the lakes. These lakes offer many forms of recreation and generate significant property and sales tax revenue for Elmore County and its municipalities.



### Lake Martin

Lake Martin is a large reservoir formed by the Martin Dam and Tallapoosa River. When Alabama Power created the lake in 1926, it was the world’s largest man-made lake at the time. Lake Martin’s shoreline equals 880 miles, second only to Lake Guntersville. Elmore County’s portion of

the lake's shoreline equals 201 miles, or 23% of the lake. The far northeastern section of the county borders the lake. Only Tallapoosa County has more Lake Martin shoreline. Alabama Power's Martin Dam has produced hydropower on this lake since 1926. The lake is one of the largest recreational sites in the state, and is an ideal natural playground for boating, sailing, fishing, skiing, wake boarding, and camping.

### Lake Jordan

Lake Jordan is a reservoir on the Coosa River that covers 4,480 acres in Elmore County. Like Lake Martin, it also produces hydropower for Alabama Power Company. Although much smaller than Lake Martin at just 118 miles of shoreline, Lake Jordan is also used recreationally for boating, fishing, camping, and water sports. Lake Jordan is just north of the City of Wetumpka and has two Alabama Power Company dams, Jordan and Bouldin Dams, completed in 1928-1932.



### Yates Lake/Thurlow Reservoir

Yates Lake (2,000 acres) and Thurlow Reservoir (574 acres), also known as Lake Tallassee, are located downstream from Lake Martin in Elmore County. These are small lakes formed by the Yates and Thurlow Dams, with Thurlow Dam lying adjacent to downtown Tallassee. These lakes are small impounded sections of the Tallapoosa River, without the sloughs that Martin and Jordan have. Alabama Power Company built Yates Dam in 1928, and Thurlow Dam began operation in 1930.



## Montgomery County

Montgomery County does not have a lake of significant size, but features the Alabama River and Catoma Creek, a sizeable creek just south of the Alabama River. Much of the City of Montgomery’s north side borders the river. The city has a riverwalk and amphitheater on the banks of the river downtown. The county has 6,000 acres of water area in stocked fish ponds and other ponds suitable for livestock and crop irrigation.

The river system of the region consists of the Alabama River, Coosa River, and Tallapoosa River. The Coosa River in Elmore County has the most whitewater rapids of the three rivers, and attracts thousands of whitewater kayakers to its fast-flowing waters. The Alabama River forms the northern border of Montgomery County and flows adjacent to downtown Montgomery. The Tallapoosa River flows just east of downtown Tallahassee. All three rivers are used for recreational purposes such as boating, fishing, and water sports.

## Tourism and Recreation

The region’s tourism is best viewed through the lens of its rich history and natural resources of lakes and rivers. Much of our nation’s Civil Rights struggle unfolded in Montgomery, and this history has been largely preserved for tourists and students. The Alabama Tourism Department estimates that Alabama’s tourism industry equated to \$19.7 billion of spending by 28.2 million visitors in 2021, generating about \$1.2 billion in state and local tax revenues. Montgomery County is the 5th most visited county in Alabama, with 1,460,646 visitors in 2021.

Total Travel-Related Employment				
County	2019	2020	2021	2020-2021 Growth Rate
Autauga	452	349	435	24.60%
Elmore	3,065	2,359	3,089	30.90%
Montgomery	14,438	8,904	11,904	33.70%
Travel-Related Earnings (Direct and Indirect)				
	2019	2020	2021	2020-2021 Growth Rate
Autauga	\$13,796,816	\$10,497,108	\$13,136,003	25.10%
Elmore	\$79,054,863	\$60,558,059	\$82,187,127	35.70%
Montgomery	\$394,512,617	\$245,037,050	\$340,249,815	38.90%
Travel Related Expenditures				
	2019	2020	2021	2020-2021 Growth Rate
Autauga	\$38,049,277	\$29,599,273	\$37,068,002	25.20%
Elmore	\$229,432,872	\$175,313,286	\$236,478,625	34.90%
Montgomery	\$1,025,957,307	\$640,420,857	\$889,930,671	39.00%
Lodging Tax Revenue				
	2019	2020	2021	2020-2021 Growth Rate
Autauga	\$184,203	\$143,295	\$179,453	25.23%
Elmore	\$1,153,444	\$881,365	\$1,188,866	34.89%
Montgomery	\$4,653,311	\$2,904,680	\$4,036,352	38.96%

All three counties in Central Alabama are benefiting from tourism and are growing. While Montgomery County is the driver of tourism, Autauga and Elmore counties are contributing to the tourism industry and attracting visitors as well. There is also a lot of room for continued growth in regards to lodging tax revenue. Visitors need a place to stay while they are here, and attractive options can increase that revenue.

Recreation also is a driver of tourism and enhances the quality of life for residents in the Central Alabama Region. Central Alabama offers many forms of recreation for visitors and residents. Whether it is golfing, boating, kayaking, sailing on Lake Martin, or paddling down Autauga Creek through downtown Prattville, there are numerous outdoor adventures to a tourist can experience. The City of Montgomery hosts an annual Division-1 college football game and is the home of the AA minor league Montgomery Biscuits baseball team. The team's home field, Riverwalk Stadium, built around a historic train station, provided a much-needed economic catalyst for downtown revitalization when it was constructed in 2004.



Dexter Avenue Baptist Church

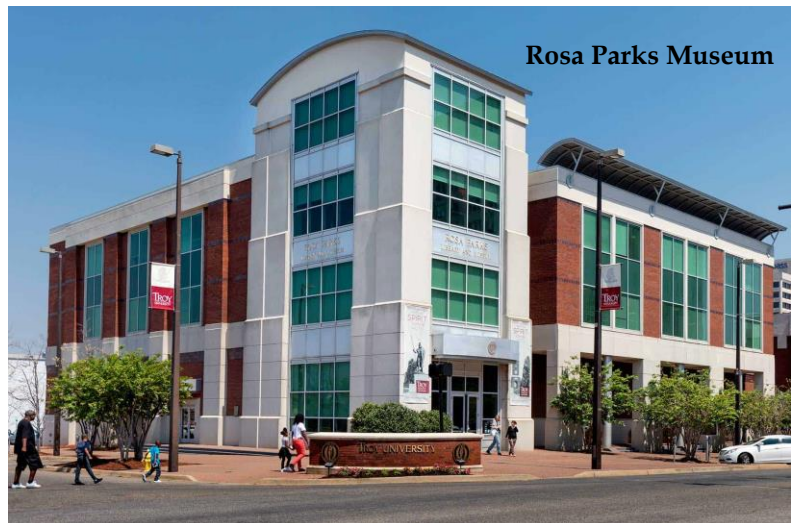
## Heritage Tourism

The Central Alabama Region is full of historic sites that are popular stops for tourists. There are 38 National Historic Landmarks (NHL) in Alabama, and five of these are in the region. Four of these are in the City of Montgomery, and one NHL site is in Elmore County. These five sites comprise 13% of the state's NHL sites.



Dexter Parsonage Museum

The City of Montgomery was recently recognized as the best history city in the country by USA Today. From Civil Rights to Civil War history, there is something for every history enthusiast in the city.



Rosa Parks Museum

## Civil Rights Tourism

The City of Montgomery is home to numerous Civil Rights sites that draw thousands of tourists annually. From the Freedom Rides Museum at the Montgomery Greyhound Bus Station to the Dexter Parsonage Museum, Montgomery offers tourists ample opportunities to explore our country's civil rights history.

Perhaps the most popular civil rights site is the **Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church** in downtown Montgomery. Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1974, this church served as the focal point for the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Dr. Martin Luther King preached here during his time in Montgomery, and is the only church where he served as a senior pastor. Visitors to the **Dexter Parsonage Museum** can learn how Dr. King and his family lived from 1954 – 1960. Much of the home's furnishings featured in the museum were used by Dr. King's family during their stay here. The museum is located just a few blocks from the King Memorial Baptist Church.

The **Rosa Parks Museum** is a public history museum focusing on the Montgomery Bus Boycott, while also serving as an active memorial to the life of Civil Rights pioneer Rosa Parks. Troy University operates the museum which includes permanent exhibits, a time machine, significant civil rights archives, classrooms, and an auditorium for educational events.

Other significant civil rights sites in Montgomery include:

- **City of Saint Jude**, final campsite of the Selma-to-Montgomery March
- **First Baptist Church** (Ripley Street)
- **Civil Rights Memorial and Center**
- **National Center for the Study of Civil Rights & African American Culture** at Alabama State University
- **Montgomery Interpretive Center** at Alabama State University, part of the Selma-to-Montgomery National Historic Trail
- **Freedom Rides Museum** at the historic Greyhound Bus Station

## Other Heritage Tourism

### Fort Toulouse – Fort Jackson

**Fort Toulouse – Fort Jackson** historic park in Wetumpka attracts 56,230 visitors annually, and is designated by the National Park Service as a National Historic Landmark. This site was the home for the French Fort Toulouse, and Fort Jackson, named for President Andrew Jackson. The park offers visitors walking trails where they can explore scenic views of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers.

### Alabama State Capitol

The **Alabama State Capitol** in Montgomery draws 152,847 annually and host many events both inside the Capitol and on the grounds. The State Capitol is generally a must-see for tourists visiting Montgomery, with guided tours available for groups.

### Museum of Alabama

The **Museum of Alabama**, inside the Alabama Department of Archives and History in Montgomery, is the state's premier Alabama history museum. This museum attracts 49,000 visitors a year and hosts hundreds of field trips from schools across the state.

### Arts and Culture

The region also has many cultural venues that bring in tourists. Attracting more than 300,000 visitors a year, the **Alabama Shakespeare Festival** is a performing arts venue located in Montgomery's 250-acre Blount Cultural Park. It offers year-round plays, musicals, and concerts. Blount Cultural Park is also the home to the **Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts**, owned and operated by the City of Montgomery. The Park is the cultural center of the three-county region due to being the home of these two arts venues. It is also a recreational asset for the region, with miles of walking trails, picnic pavilions, and a dog park.

The **Montgomery Zoo** and **Mann Museum** draws almost a quarter million visitors annually, and is a unique asset for a City of Montgomery's size. The City of Montgomery owns and operates the 42- acre zoo, one of only three zoos in the state. The zoo generates significant sales tax revenue for the city through its gift shop and food purchases. It is also used as a recruitment tool for the city, as it is a significant cultural and educational attraction that contributes to the quality of life in the region.

Millbrook in Elmore County is home to the scenic **Alabama Nature Center**, an outdoor recreation and destination center on 350 acres just two miles from Millbrook's City Hall. The Center includes the 23,000 square foot NaturePlex, which has a hands-on museum, theater, and a classroom. Visitors can see live animal programming, explore the gardens, or take a hike led by a center naturalist. The nonprofit Alabama Wildlife Federation owns and operates the center, which welcomes 50,000 students annually for educational field trips.

To spur tourism and interest in its downtown, Main Street Wetumpka recently launched the **Tulotoma Snail Trail**, a cultivated place project named for the rare snail species indigenous to the Coosa River. The City of Wetumpka is partnering with Main Street to create the trail and the Elmore County Museum is the first stop on the trail. Future stops will connect through downtown and provide a unique insight for residents and tourists alike. Each stop will contain an artistic element created by local artists.

Montgomery and Elmore Counties both have casinos operated by the Porch Band of Creek Indians. **Wind Creek Casino and Hotel in Montgomery County** is a full-service casino featuring live music nightly and a resort-style hotel that sits just near the Montgomery-Elmore County line. A larger **Wind Creek Hotel and Casino in Wetumpka** features a high-rise hotel overlooking the Coosa River, with multiple restaurants and gaming venues. These Vegas-style casinos attract many tourists from outside of the region and the state and generate significant tax revenue for the region.

## Recreational Tourism and Sports

The region's two large lakes, **Lake Martin** and **Lake Jordan**, provide a massive outdoor playground for residents and tourists alike. These lakes are both located in Elmore County and provide a tourism boost for the county.



**Lake Martin**, perhaps the state's most travelled lake, has 201 miles of its shoreline in Elmore County. Lake Martin draws many visitors from outside of the state as they are drawn to the lake's size, clean water, fishing, and campgrounds. Water sports such as skiing, wakeboarding, and jet-skiing are popular during the summer vacation season when the water levels are highest. This recreation impacts the local economy by supporting large scale marinas, restaurants, boat rental companies, fishing guides, hotels/condos, gas stations, and grocery stores. The lake also is big enough to support large sailboats, so there are a few sailing and yacht clubs. Lake Martin has the largest economic impact in the region of the area's lakes.

Also in Elmore County is **Lake Jordan**, just north of Wetumpka. It is smaller than Lake Martin but offers all the same recreational activities of boating, fishing, camping, and water sports. On a much smaller scale, **Yates Lake** and **Thurlow Reservoir** both add to the recreational assets in Elmore County.

The **Coosa River** in Elmore County also is a significant recreational asset. The Coosa offers paddlers challenging whitewater rapids not found anywhere else in central Alabama. The river hosts a few professional whitewater kayaking competitions annually, as well as attracting novice paddlers from across the state. The popularity of whitewater kayaking on the Coosa generates local sales tax revenues from outfitters, convenience stores, and restaurants.





Riverwalk Stadium,  
Montgomery Biscuits

**Autauga Creek Canoe Trail** in Prattville is a recreational draw and brings paddlers into downtown Prattville as the creek runs right through the heart of the downtown historic district. This is a well-marked trail that features a map of take-ins and take-outs for boaters.

Elmore County’s most visited tourist attraction is Prattville’s **Capitol Hill Golf Course on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail**. This site features three 18-hole courses and has hosted a professional LPGA golf tournament. Every year golfers from across the country play 80,000 rounds of golf at this facility, making it the most popular course on Alabama’s Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. This golf facility has a significant impact on sales and lodging tax revenue not just in Prattville, but the entire region.

Sports are also a tourism driver in the region. Every year baseball fans flock to downtown Montgomery to see the AA minor league **Montgomery Biscuits** baseball team play. Biscuits baseball brought in 230,742 fans in the 2016 season. Since 2014, the City of Montgomery has hosted an annual college football bowl game, the **Camellia Bowl**, which has a significant economic impact for the region. The game is held in **Cramton Bowl**, a city-owned facility, and Raycom Media is the event’s corporate sponsor.

Other notable Montgomery events:

- **Bassmaster** professional fishing tournaments
- **NAIA Men’s Soccer** National Championship Tournament

- **NCAA Blue Gray National Tennis Classis** – annual men and women’s Division 1 tennis tournament featuring 16 teams, held at the City of Montgomery’s tennis parks
- **Alabama State University** collegiate sporting events
- **Auburn University Montgomery** collegiate sporting events

### Local Recreational Events and Assets

The City of Montgomery hosts many high school sports championships, including baseball, softball, and tennis. The city is the site of the annual USTA state junior tennis tournament, held at the City’s two main tennis facilities. The city has also hosted the Alabama High School All-Star Week, which includes 350 athletes representing six sports in a week-long completion. These events bring families from across the state to Montgomery for periods of a few days to a week. Amateur sporting events generate sales and lodging tax revenue for the city and the entire region. The region offers sizeable recreational assets, including:



- **Multiplex at Cramton Bowl:** multi-use 70,000 SF indoor facility operated by City of Montgomery that has space for 15 volleyball courts, gymnastics, 6 tennis courts, indoor track, and 2 soccer fields
- **Emory Folmar YMCA Soccer Complex:** seating capacity of 4,000, 10 lighted fields, indoor practice field
- **Lagoon Park Golf Course:** the region’s premier municipal golf course, operated by City of Montgomery
- **Swayback Bridge Trail:** Mountain biking and hiking trails north of Wetumpka bordering Lake Jordan, maintained by a local trail association. Site of the annual Coosa River Challenge race, which brings in hundreds of adventure racers from all across the state.
- **David Whetstone Jr. Sports Complex, Prattville:** 7 baseball fields, youth tournaments
- **Mill Creek Sports Complex, Millbrook:** 6 baseball fields, 2 batting cages, youth tournaments
- **Pike Road Ball Fields:** 2 lighted diamond fields, bathrooms, pavilion, youth tournaments. *(Pictured)*



- **Wetumpka Sports Complex**, Coosa River Parkway, Wetumpka: 4 catch and release fishing ponds, archery range with 2 towers and 16 shooting targets, 10 lighted diamond ball fields, 10 batting cages, and a state-of-the-art football stadium featuring a college level track



- **Montgomery Whitewater**, Montgomery: development currently underway, but when complete will have an Olympic-standard whitewater and outdoor activities center, whitewater rafting and kayaking, flatwater activities, zip-lining, mountain biking, ropes courses, climbing, and more with a grand opening of summer 2023.
- **The Fields at 17 Springs Multi-Sport Complex**, Millbrook, Elmore County: development currently underway, but when complete will have 5 rectangular fields, 6 tennis courts, 3 pickle ball courts, 3 ponds, 1 large multipurpose building, 4 baseball/softball diamond fields for youth and YMCA programming, 1 championship diamond field with stadium seating, and 1 turf rectangular field with stadium seating (*Pictured below*)



# SECTION 5: INFRASTRUCTURE

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**CENTRAL ALABAMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
2022 (CEDDS)**

## SECTION V | INFRASTRUCTURE

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### Transportation

#### Roadways + Rails

The region is served by two interstates, I-65 and I-85. I-65 provides access to Birmingham and Huntsville to the north, and Mobile to the south. I-85 provides access to Auburn and Atlanta, but does not travel further south or west of Montgomery, as it ends at the intersection of I-65 just south of downtown Montgomery. U.S. Highways 331, 231, 31, 82, and 80 are the five major US Highways in the region. Major State Highways include 14, 110, 229, and 143. There are two private toll roads, both connecting Montgomery County to Elmore County in the northern and northeastern portions of Montgomery County.

Alabama River is the home for the Port of Montgomery, a small port located just north of downtown Montgomery. This navigable river converges with the Tombigbee River just north of Mobile Bay.

CSX and Norfolk Southern provide service throughout the region, providing ample rail infrastructure for existing and future industry.

#### Airports

Montgomery regional Airport is located just six miles southwest of Montgomery's downtown. The airport serves 16 counties in Central Alabama, with 129,033 enplanements in FY 2021. The Montgomery Airport Authority estimates the airport has a \$125 million economic impact.

American Airlines and Delta Airlines provide daily nonstop flights from Montgomery to Atlanta, Charlotte, and Dallas. Beginning in 2018, the airport offered nonstop flights to Reagan National Airport in Washington D.C. The airport is also an asset for large companies like Hyundai that have a need for international flights connecting out of Atlanta. The Hyundai manufacturing facility is located just a few miles south of the airport. The airport's parking area was recently upgraded, as well as other minor improvements to the terminal.

Prattville and Wetumpka have municipal airports serving individuals and corporate clients. These small airports are a recruiting tool for economic development, as many prospective companies want to fly directly into the city that they are considering for an expansion.

## Utilities

### Water and Sewer Service

Autauga County: There are 6 water systems total, covering 3 municipalities and unincorporated areas. The Town of Billingsley's Water System extends well outside their town limits into Chilton County.

Elmore County: There are 10 water systems total, covering 7 municipalities and unincorporated areas.

Montgomery County: The municipalities of Montgomery and Pike Road and some unincorporated portions of east Montgomery County are served by the Montgomery Water Works and Sewer Board. Outside of the Montgomery Water Works service area there are 8 community water systems.

### IT Infrastructure

The Montgomery Internet Exchange (MGMix) is a cooperative alliance established in 2016. This high-speed data exchange is the first of its kind in Alabama, and just the fourth internet exchange in the Southeast. The City of Montgomery partnered with Montgomery County Commission, the State of Alabama, Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, and Cyber College of the Air Force to launch MGMix. It is located in downtown Montgomery's RSA Data Center and is connected to 18 companies, including global technology giants Verisign, Akamai Technologies, and Hurricane Electric. Auburn University Montgomery joined MGMix June 2017. The Air Force's Air University is also connected to MGMix. The exchange recently upgraded to 100-gigabyte capacity which could help attract major technology companies to the region, as well as benefiting existing companies.

# SECTION 6: SWOT ANALYSIS

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**CENTRAL ALABAMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
2022 (CEDDS)**

## SECTION VI | SWOT ANALYSIS

### Strengths

<b>Central Location</b>	Centrally located with nearby interstates Logistically close to mobile port Proximity to state capitol and government offices
<b>Extensive Existing Transportation Network</b>	CSX Rail hub I65 and I85 Interstates Commercial airport and planned future expansions Two 8,000+ foot runways Montgomery selected as an Air National Guard F-35A Lightning II location, arrival expected in 2023
<b>Access to Rivers and Lakes</b>	Three (3) rivers: the Alabama, Coosa, and Tallapoosa Rivers Four (4) man-made lakes: Lake Martin, Lake Jordan, Yates Lake, and Thurlow Reservoir Attractive assets for eco-tourism and quality of life Good water quality, natural clean water supply Dams create power supply/energy generation
<b>Fresh Water Quality and Supply</b>	Plentiful supply of freshwater and water treatment centers Improving water quality supported by local efforts to improve run-off handling, which improves health of watersheds MS-4 permitting standards focused on improving water quality Growing interest in public education efforts regarding conservation, water quality, and supply
<b>Educational Resources</b>	Wide range of accessible educational opportunities Public and private institutions for K-12 and Higher Education Attractive and plentiful quality city/county school systems Utilized workforce development programs in high schools Community college and high school CareerTech. opportunities Entrepreneurship/Agricultural Innovation Centers Vocational-Technical Center (old Montgomery Mall) Montgomery regional Workforce Training Center Dual-enrollment partnerships between Montgomery City, County, and AIDT's "Total Workforce Delivery System" Restructuring of Head Start Pre-K, early childhood education Charter Programs Higher Quality Measurement Standards
<b>Recreation &amp; Tourism Economies</b>	3 Rivers/4 Lakes supporting watersports, kayaking, fishing, etc. Robert Trent Jones Golf Course Alabama Wildlife Federation and nature preserves Statewide histories and educational/cultural tourism



	<p>Minor League Baseball</p> <p>Casinos (near Wetumpka and Montgomery)</p> <p>Historic Lanark - Alabama Wildlife Federation Headquarters</p> <p>Wetumpka: Impact Crater, Telatoma Snail Trail</p> <p>Alabama Birding Trail</p> <p>Sports Tourism: Central Alabama Sports Commission</p> <p>Fields at 17 Springs (development ongoing)</p> <p>Agri-Tourism</p>
<b>Available Land</b>	<p>Plentiful sites with developable land (green and brown sites)</p> <p>Affordable land costs</p> <p>Pre-established access to critical infrastructure (water/power)</p>
<b>Federal Military Base</b>	<p>Generates millions of dollars in economic impact</p> <p>Attracts foreign citizens</p> <p>Local exposure to national-level diversity</p> <p>Home to officer training school</p> <p>Brain-center for Air Force, with massive DOD Data-Center</p> <p>Conduit for recruitment of high-level professionals</p> <p>Increased prestige for area</p> <p>Joint Land Use Study- City of Montgomery/Maxwell AFB</p>
<b>Diversity in Area</b>	<p>Global perspective as a state capitol</p> <p>Open for businesses</p> <p>Increase in foreign held industry</p>
<b>Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail</b>	<p>Hosting LPGA, College, and youth tournaments</p> <p>Generates local economic impacts</p> <p>90,000 rounds of golf played per year</p>
<b>Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA)</b>	<p>One of the best funded retirement systems in nation</p> <p>RSA investments incentivize companies to relocate here</p> <p>Assists in recruiting sponsorships for region</p> <p>Has existing relationships with industries</p> <p>Contributes to built environment with real estate investments</p>
<b>Strong Existing Industry</b>	<p>Key national and internal industry, which attracts new industry</p> <p>Strong Labor Force and low unemployment rate</p> <p>Internet Exchange: the sole one in the state, out of four in the US</p> <p>Key to attracting big business</p> <p>Hyundai and suppliers</p> <p>Small Business Groups - in both metro and outlying areas</p> <p>GKN</p> <p>Hospital System</p>
<b>Reliable Energy Supply</b>	<p>Lack of downtime helps industry production</p> <p>Helps in recruitment of businesses</p> <p>Affordable energy and connection with Alabama Power</p>

<b>Historic Assets</b>	<p>Many assets for film industry</p> <p>State Archives</p> <p>Community walking tours</p> <p>Wright Brothers/ Aerospace Industry</p> <p>Civil Rights Trail &amp; Heritage Museum</p> <p>Fort Toulouse</p> <p>Tuskegee Airmen’s Museum</p> <p>City of St. Jude</p> <p>Confederate Trail</p>
<b>Trained Workforce</b>	<p>Sector specific (healthcare, IT)</p> <p>Expansion of Medical</p>
<b>Low Cost of Living</b>	<p>Affordable real-estate options across region</p> <p>Lower tax rates</p>
<b>Low Cost of Doing Business</b>	<p>Dollar will go further</p> <p>Start-up costs are lower,</p> <p>More accessible for small businesses</p> <p>Affects companies’ bottom line positively</p>
<b>Medical Care Facilities</b>	<p>Baptist was ranked in Top 15 Health Systems (Thomson Reuters)</p> <p>Hospital located in each regional county</p> <p>Jackson Hospital Heart &amp; Robotics</p> <p>UAB Hospital Medical School Campus</p> <p>Major employer for the region</p>
<b>Prison Program</b>	<p>Local community college provides job training programs at the prisons to inmates</p>
<b>Seat of State Government</b>	<p>The State of Alabama is a major employer</p> <p>Region hosts state leadership offices and elected officials</p>

## **Weaknesses**

<b>Under-Employment</b>	<p>Fluctuating employment rates strains available social services</p> <p>Consistent underemployment correlates to higher rates of crime</p> <p>Less money being spent in local economy</p>
<b>Lower Participation in Vocational Training</b>	<p>Cultural stigma against vocational training programs</p> <p>Lack of promotion and/or public knowledge of resources</p> <p>Challenges of providing individual access, funding and transportation to take advantage of training opportunities</p> <p>Limited program capacity to accept interested participants</p>

<b>Public Education</b>	<p>Poor historic performance of school systems</p> <p>Negative perception of public education system</p> <p>Statewide funding of education system</p> <p>State takeover of Montgomery Schools</p> <p>Temporary shutdown of Head Start Program</p>
<b>Social Media</b>	<p>Underutilized social media presence, and lack of consistency across community attractions</p> <p>Lack of visibility of regional assets: Historic, Tourism, Career Opportunities, Industrial development, Etc.</p> <p>Government Access to popular social media is still new</p>
<b>Access to Medical Care</b>	<p>Shortage of Specialists in area</p> <p>Limited number of trauma centers</p> <p>Low rates of physician retention</p> <p>Concentration of chronic diseases (heart disease/diabetes)</p> <p>Shortage of nurses and need for more certified nursing assistants</p> <p>Shortage of nurse practitioners</p> <p>Lack of mental health resources - especially in rural areas</p>
<b>Highway 14</b>	<p>Needed bridge improvements in Elmore and Tallassee</p> <p>Alignment issues in Prattville</p> <p>Need for traffic signalization and street lighting on both 14 and Cobbs Ford Road</p> <p>Drainage issues and necessary infrastructural improvements</p> <p>Needs to be widened in places</p>
<b>Reactive Long-Range Planning</b>	<p>Implementation difficulties</p> <p>Lack of cohesive executive support for funding plan elements</p> <p>Lack of continuity between administrations</p> <p>Avoidance of regulation enforcement</p> <p>No formal meeting structure for cross-jurisdictional planning</p> <p>Low valuation and disinterest in Comprehensive Planning</p>
<b>I-65 Corridor</b>	<p>Lack of access and interchanges that can handle industrial traffic</p> <p>I-65/I-85 interchange needs renovation and safety improvements</p>
<b>I-85 Corridor in Montgomery</b>	<p>Needs widening between Montgomery and Atlanta</p> <p>Lack of funding for improvements</p> <p>Need for improved truck routes to take some traffic off I-85</p>
<b>HWY 82 and Troy HWY 231</b>	<p>Need for widening and/or shoulder improvements</p> <p>Need for enforcement of speed limits, particularly for truck traffic</p> <p>Need for installation of traffic signals and street lighting</p>
<b>Drug Screening Failure</b>	<p>Prevalence of failing drug tests, contributing to underemployment</p> <p>Higher turnover rates and sunk training costs after each failure</p> <p>Local businesses and industries concern regarding their inability to recruit qualified workers locally</p>

<b>Technological Advancements</b>	<p>Current procedures and traditional approaches to employment are becoming obsolete</p> <p>Evolving technology and rise of social distancing/teleworking</p> <p>Employers must adjust approaches to perceived work ethic and accommodate needs while maintaining productivity</p>
<b>Lack of Public Transportation</b>	<p>Need for alternative transportation modes in rural areas</p> <p>Higher pollution due to car dependency</p> <p>Lack of accessibility to public transportation</p> <p>Need for integration of public transit with automobile traffic</p> <p>Need to expansion of public transit routes to include third shift and late-night workers</p>

## Opportunities

<b>I-65 Corridor and I-85</b>	<p>Access to the Port of Mobile</p> <p>Aerospace and automotive access</p> <p>Extension of I-85 to MS to promote tourism and product delivery</p> <p>Passenger rail feasibility study completed</p> <p>Improvements of industrial park access</p>
<b>Tourism Industry</b>	<p>Continued investment in cultural, historic, and natural assets</p> <p>Revitalization of attractions</p> <p>Consideration of entertainment industry as opportunity for economic development</p> <p>Improvements to marketing of entertainment and tourism activities like aquatic resources and recreation activities</p> <p>Develop wayfinding plan to allow ease of access to region's tourism resources</p> <p>Waterway tourism</p>
<b>Improvements to Alternative Transportation System</b>	<p>Multi-use trails, bike lanes, sidewalks, share the road programs</p> <p>Establish more Park and Ride Programs/facilities</p> <p>Improve perception of alternative modes of transportation</p> <p>Look into opportunities for ride-sharing and partnerships with private businesses.</p> <p>Carbon Reduction program recently passed may provide funds for improvements</p>
<b>Better Use of Educational Resources</b>	<p>Promotion of workforce development opportunities</p> <p>Public awareness program for available resources</p> <p>Increasing opportunities for Pre-K Programs and child care</p>

<b>Improvement in Education</b>	<p>High school as opportunity to ready graduates for the workforce</p> <p>Improve Vocational Education and rebranding of program</p> <p>Co-ops and opportunities for Virtual Learning</p> <p>2-Year College (Dual enrollment)</p> <p>Increasing interest in teaching life skills to students</p> <p>Focus on rural communities' access to various forms of education</p> <p>Engagement of technical workforce instructors</p>
<b>Comprehensive Plans</b>	<p>Combats piecemeal development</p> <p>Unites beneficial partnerships during the planning process</p> <p>Provide training on how communities can develop and implement their plans</p> <p>Investment and maintenance of comprehensive plans strengthen applications for grant funding and</p>
<b>Partnerships</b>	<p>Better use of public-private partnerships</p> <p>Better use of joint public partnerships</p> <p>Cross City/County Interactions strengthens communities</p>
<b>Develop International Relationships</b>	<p>Capital investment and jobs, more than industrial development</p> <p>Development of sister-city programs</p> <p>Education: High School Exchange</p> <p>Foreign Officers School</p>
<b>Nearby Black Belt Counties</b>	<p>Black Belt Commission</p> <p>Interstate 85 improvements</p>
<b>Marketing of Region</b>	<p>Joint marketing for economic development/tourism for region</p> <p>Improvements to social media presence and online information</p> <p>Improve visibility of communities along interstate highways</p> <p>Increase awareness of regional airports and their services</p> <p>Airport - improved customer service and expansion of destinations. Availability of land around the airport.</p> <p>Improve signage along interstate system for what municipalities are off each exit and distance signs to Montgomery.</p> <p>Regional way-finding system for tourism doubles as marketing</p>
<b>Base Closure - Redevelopment</b>	<p>Gain additional military programs from other closed bases.</p> <p>Increased State involvement - National Guard</p>

## Threats

<p><b>Unplanned Growth and Closures</b></p>	<p>Increased stress on infrastructure and other services            Loss of jobs and revenue            Blighting caused by abandoned buildings            Sprawling uncontrolled growth; unadvisable utility extensions into unincorporated areas            Code deficiencies</p>
<p><b>Decrease in Industrial Diversity</b></p>	<p>Potential dependency on only one or two types of industrial development            Recruitment of 'mega' projects threatens availability of developable industrial lands</p>
<p><b>Flight of Industry</b></p>	<p>Need for more Research and Development companies            Weakened industry programs and relationships            Need for more funding and retention programs to support small business and industries            Loss of education dollars, population/workforce, and general fund revenue</p>
<p><b>Stresses on Public Safety Providers</b></p>	<p>Need for additional resources to support public safety in rural areas: sheriff's department, volunteer fire, etc.            Loss of trained volunteer firefighters due to job constraints and relocations            Revenue streams</p>
<p><b>Loss of Quality of Life</b></p>	<p>Planning process seen as unnecessary, creates constraints and lack of funding appropriation            Need for long-range planning measures to protect against loss of identity, historic character, sense of place as communities grow            Loss of quality-of-life amenities leads to increases in crime rates</p>
<p><b>Ability to Meet Needs of Aging Population</b></p>	<p>Transitioning of resources to provide needed services            Lack of access to healthcare            Lack of access to transportation            Need for appropriate and inclusive Senior Programs            Housing &amp; Housing Styles/Sizes: Handicap accessible single family, senior living neighborhoods, etc.</p>
<p><b>Poor Sewer/Water Infrastructure in Some Areas</b></p>	<p>Need for on-going plans for maintenance of infrastructure            Capacities over/under create strain on local government finances            Lack of sanitary sewer and deteriorated infrastructure            ADEM violations and threats to pollution of our natural resources</p>

# SECTION 7: DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

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**CENTRAL ALABAMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT  
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
2022 (CEDS)**

## SECTION VII | DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

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### Vision Statement

*“The Central Alabama Region will be a cooperative and unified region offering facilities, services and opportunities that can maintain a stable and prosperous population through a diverse economy while becoming a destination for visitors.”*

### Goals and Strategies

The recommended goals and strategies for regional economic development in the Central Alabama Region include:

#### **Goal 1: Create a cooperative system of regional economic development with strong regional markets**

##### Strategies

- Promote I-65 and I-85 corridors as prime transportation corridors and locations for industrial recruitment and development.
- Seek out sources of funding for recruitment and retention of business and industry.
- Support the planning and development of new industrial and commercial parks and sites in the region.
- Train public officials on the economic development process to help them attain better marketing skills.
- Establish an Economic Development Training Program – see Auburn University & EDAA
- Increase marketing of the region as a destination for businesses, visitors, and new residents.
- Market region as an information technology hub to include fiber optics, broadband, GIS, etc.



## Goal 2: Coordinate a seamless education and training system that meets the needs of business and industry

### Strategies

- Increase the region's participation in, and support of, a workforce development strategy.
- Seek out sources of funding for recruitment and retention of business and industry.
- Continuously improve educational facilities and programs for pre-K-12, higher education, and workforce development.
- Forge diverse partnerships between schools and regional businesses through apprenticeships, mentoring programs and other programs.
- Provide parents with materials and learning opportunities on the value of early childhood education and keeping their children in school.

## Goal 3: Provide cost-effective multi-modal transportation and public infrastructure systems in an effort to promote quality economic development for the region

### Strategies

- Develop and maintain a regional transportation plan that identifies and prioritizes transportation needs.
- Encourage development of job and healthcare access transportation.
- Enhance recreation and tourism through the continued development and expansion of regional trail systems, to include blue-ways and greenways, as well as other forms of recreational trails.
- Develop regional broadband communication plans.
- Develop a regional water & sewer study to identify water supply needs and capacities.
- Work with local providers to develop long range water service plans which include planning for additional water production facilities, enhancing water storage capacity and planning for future water capacity needs.
- Work with local providers on long term maintenance plans for existing sanitary sewer facilities and develop plans to determine future sewer needs and capacities.

## Goal 4: Develop strong local and regional leadership skills

### Strategies

- Encourage collaboration and cooperation among local and regional leaders.
- Sponsor leadership training programs to support capacity building among leaders.
- Encourage leaders to exert the political will needed to implement plans and achieve long term progress through mutual collaboration.

## Goal 5: Expand the availability and promotion of healthy food

### Strategies

- Develop and equip healthy food retail and wholesale markets within the Central Alabama Region.
- Stimulate demand for and reducing critical barriers to food access.
- Cut food waste by preventing food waster losses through the donation of unused food to feed hungry people.
- Supporting market development opportunities for composting and animal feed.
- Encourage local governments to preserve active farmland through their regulatory processes.
- Work with regional organizations in the development of local healthy food policies.