



SURVEY COMMENTS CEDS 2018-2023

CITY OF COLUMBUS

Your County's Economic Strengths: Please select up to five (5) from the following that you think best characterize the greatest economic development strengths of your home county.

1. Close proximity to beaches, mountains, major cities, and major universities.
2. Cultural diversity
3. Philanthropy
4. Available and capable manufacturing workforce
5. Jobs
6. At least a "trainable" workforce if they do not already have the skills.

Your County's Economic Weaknesses: Please select up to five (5) from the following that you think are the most significant economic development weaknesses or deficiencies in your home county.

1. Local property taxes
2. Low paying jobs. The average income is far too low
3. Too much poverty, look at Cusseta Ave.
4. Need more career exploration of middle school students to help develop a pipeline for new and existing jobs.
5. Integrating newcomers.

Economic Threats or Limitations: Please select up to five (5) from the following that you think most threaten or limit the economic development potential of your home county.

1. Local property taxes.
2. Hiring outside of the community. We say we want to keep local talent here, but often people are hired from outside of Columbus for higher paying jobs.
3. Too much fear.
4. Property tax freeze that limits business growth.
5. Flight of established businesses.
6. More opportunities for compact/denser living; mix of housing and employers in walking distance.
7. Inability or lack of desire by community factions to come together, identify a goal, design a plan, and actually work together to implement the plan and bring success.

Economic Opportunities: Please identify the economic opportunities that provide the most potential for your county. Please select the top five (5) opportunities.

1. Barophilic and biomimicry potentials
2. Fort Benning; both as employer, spouses of military; airstrip for add'l use
3. Great hospitals for the aging population and physicians.
4. CSU & Columbus Tech can craft programs for companies.
5. Convergence of demographics, i.e., in Uptown.

Economic Development Goals: What should be your home county's top measurable goals or strategies for economic development? (What would the county like to achieve?) Please select up to five (5) strategies.

Efforts to end 'brain drain' and bring educated and skilled young people back to their communities.

1. Higher paying jobs. groom local talent
2. Slow food and slow money movements, transition network, and more meaningful, place-based jobs
3. Diversity in the workforce and leadership
4. College & Career Academy; MOWR with Tech College (not English with Universities)

Public/Private Partnerships: Partnerships between business and government can be important to improve the economic climate. To your knowledge, what partnerships have formed in your county to work together to solve economic development issues? Check all that apply.

1. Local food movement
2. Friends of the Dragonfly Trail
3. Everything helps
4. Community Foundation and Knight-Ridder opportunities
5. ColumbusGa2025
6. Seems to be a lot of information sharing among solid originations; not sure there is enough of the problem solving and solution generating collaboration.
7. Exist, but wide range of actual "partnership".

State of Georgia Economic Development Resources: What resources/actions from the State of Georgia would be most helpful to your home county in order to implement a plan? Please select up to five (5) resources.

1. Support sustainability and wellness initiatives
2. Better alignment of all workforce related organizations and better leadership in WOIA.
3. Focus on career pathways of HS students, into pipelines.

One action that the State Could Undertake: If there were ONE action that the State could undertake to help advance economic development in your home county, what would it be?

1. Grants
2. Job development
3. Better infrastructure
4. Offer local grants for community growth
5. Assist to ensure equality in all areas of a community
6. Target assistance to rural areas
7. Major job training
8. Talk to school principals since educating the youth is essential
9. Continue to promote the film industry and other related fields
10. Shut down strip clubs and adult entertainment completely
11. Helping the homeless, create better paying jobs, increase education with regards to starting/maintaining a successful business
12. Better Chamber
13. Make sure that it's not unfairly taking money or resources from local government job training for the disabled , education
14. Audit the Federal Reserve and return to a commodity based currency
15. REDUCE welfare / put people to work
16. Job growth with higher wages
17. Assist with business growth in underdeveloped areas for women & minorities

How do you translate what you learn into action?

1. Develop more areas than just downtown.
2. Build buildings with interesting architecture that will make people want to visit.
3. Place the buildings in places that people will notice on their way to Ft Benning and Panama City.
4. It doesn't have to be a skyscraper, just big and interesting enough to be noticed
5. Create a large tourist attraction, some kind of amusement park, water park, etc. whitewater is nice but it's not enough.

6. Promote Columbus to be favorably featured in movies, pop culture
7. We need to decentralize our food system, energy system, healthcare and more. The old paradigm and ways of doing business/governance are over. The sooner we all acknowledge this, the sooner we can all establish a new reality with reduced pain and suffering for all.
8. Far too many welfare babies and females having babies out of wedlock.
9. Food stamp program appears to be a joke in terms of limiting to those in true need.
10. Support CSU Business School growth, as our next generation of leaders should come from them. More intern programs- promote Columbus at university job fairs- great companies AFLAC, Pratt & Whitney, TSYS, CSU, WCBradley, etc.
11. A better job needs to be done to employ young people.
12. Over all Muscogee County, Columbus, is a pretty good place to live, looking forward to the rapid rail system,
13. This is a quality survey.
14. Columbus spends too much money on architecture and not enough on their children and streets. The streets in Columbus are filled with holes. The children don't have enough resources to get them out of the streets and in places where they could become productive.
15. I think our Mayor is fantastic!
16. We need more opportunities for youth in order to keep them out of trouble.
17. We have a strong solid line between the haves and have-nots. Our city is run by a few families that hold wages down and limit job opportunity because they are afraid of bigger fish from outside taking their spot. Someone needs to rattle a few feathers in this town if we are ever going to have REAL progress.
18. We should also look at repairing the roads in the city.
19. IMPORTANT SURVEY
20. I would like to see more strategic alignment of all Economic Development and Workforce Development initiatives and organizations at all levels. Don't drop them just because we have a new Governor!
21. This region has a wide variance of haves/have nots. The vast rural/agrarian/low population/job areas are most in need of guidance/ resources/focus.

CRISP AND SUMTER COUNTIES

Your County's Economic Strengths: Please select up to five (5) from the following that you think best characterize the greatest economic development strengths of your home county.

1. Historical appearance
2. Two post-secondary satellite campus
3. Technical College/University

Your County's Economic Weaknesses: Please select up to five (5) from the following that you think are the most significant economic development weaknesses or deficiencies in your home county.

1. No answers

Economic Threats or Limitations: Please select up to five (5) from the following that you think most threaten or limit the economic development potential of your home county.

1. The economic leadership in this community tends to rely too much on past practices and appears unwilling to listen to new ideas if they come from those beneath them.

Economic Opportunities: Please identify the economic opportunities that provide the most potential for your county. Please select the top five (5) opportunities.

1. No answers

Economic Development Goals: What should be your home county's top measurable goals or strategies for economic development? (What would the county like to achieve?) Please select up to five (5) strategies.

1. Improve schools and provide more child care options
2. Increase communication and technology. We need better access and competition for communication and high speed internet.

Public/Private Partnerships: Partnerships between business and government can be important to improve the economic climate. To your knowledge, what partnerships have formed in your county to work together to solve economic development issues? Check all that apply.

1. Our local boards lack diversity - mainly women members
2. I am not involved in this county/community much; I work in Dougherty County mostly.
3. Until the "old boy" leadership either leaves or changes to be more accepting to newer ideas from those affected stakeholders, I do not see sustainable economic growth in Sumter County.

Local Partners in Economic Development: The RVRC is responsible for the creation and implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). What other key community organizations should be involved in the development of the CEDS? Check all that apply.

1. Realtors and young families
2. Again, our local boards lack female members
3. Family Connection Agencies; Other nonprofits & Authorities

State of Georgia Economic Development Resources: What resources/actions from the State of Georgia would be most helpful to your home county in order to implement a plan? Please select up to five (5) resources.

1. Coordination of programs

One action that the State Could Undertake: If there was ONE action that the State could undertake to help advance economic development in your home county, what would it be?

1. Grant assistance and incentives to bring large employers in.
2. More jobs
3. Increase funding for school based mental health programs and partnerships to strengthen families
4. Jobs
5. Presence--come in with boots on the ground and walk the community through the process and then follow-up

6. Help bring industry through South Georgia
7. Small business loans
8. Help Sumter County attract and keep industry providing real jobs.
9. More money for educational programs
10. Better information about existing state programs
11. Provide more money for infrastructure development
12. Complete upgrades/repairs on HOG rail line; Site control of macro-economic site on Hwy 41/I-75
13. Bring B and I prospects to our area!
14. Dissemination of information and technical assistance
15. More involvement in promoting our local counties for economic development projects
16. In my 25+ years of living here, I have seen the leadership change. The culture, however did not. As a result, we've lost a lot of industry and hurt our citizens economically.

OTHER COUNTIES

Your County's Economic Strengths: Please select up to five (5) from the following that you think best characterize the greatest economic development strengths of your home county

1. Artistic Opportunities
2. Decent University opportunity; poor elementary/high school selection
3. Small rural town/community
4. None of the above ...
5. Nothing
6. Need improvements
7. We are so small but would love to see restaurants or growth
8. Notice the lack of resources!
9. Fort Benning
10. Location is good
11. STRONG DESIRE TO WORK WITH BUSINESSES BY EDA
12. Need several some economic development
13. Educational choices- strong head start, 2 great charter schools, technical school, college
14. Natural scenic views, ample public parks/recreation
15. Low cost real estate
16. Working toward the future
17. Agriculture
18. Potential for Agri-tourism

Your County's Economic Weaknesses: Please select up to five (5) from the following that you think are the most significant economic development weaknesses or deficiencies in your home county.

1. Community unity
2. Need an improved Chamber of Commerce
3. We live in the small town of Cusseta and we need improvement and growth
4. Weakness in communication assets. Newspaper, TV coverage.

Economic Threats or Limitations: Please select up to five (5) from the following that you think most threaten or limit the economic development potential of your home county.

1. Sewage system would improve our growth. Most small busts eases have left in last few years. (two restaurants)
2. Our school system is in process of a college and career academy to train students and prepare for college. However we have to partner with the region as we have no business or industry local
3. We have raised 2 generations of entitlement mentality. When they get a job their subsidies are immediately cut off and they decide it is easier to just not to work than it is to work and it take all they make to pay bills
4. Limited support (serious) from state agencies
5. Lack of Retail Stores
6. Poor work ethic of many in the workforce.
7. Lack of thinking ahead

Economic Opportunities: Please identify the economic opportunities that provide the most potential for your county. Please select the top five (5) opportunities.

1. Ft. Benning
2. There are not any at all.
3. We could be a much prettier town if business could prosper here
4. School system and leadership who are working diligently to better prepare for college or workforce ready
5. New leadership with growth in mind

Economic Development Goals: What should be your home county's top measurable goals or strategies for economic development? (What would the county like to achieve?) Please select up to five (5) strategies.

1. Tourist Attractions

2. Work to clean up corruption in local government
3. We are working on beautifying the community...
4. reduce the number of trailer parks/uninhabited houses
5. Create decent housing opportunities.
6. Affordable housing
7. Spend our dollars at home. This is by far our greatest challenge and we do not understand its importance
8. Attract Industry/Manufacture Jobs
9. Improve school system
10. New or outside leadership training to existing legacy leaders
11. Have a stronger economic development focus that is unified and energetic
12. Small business support by tax exemption, as done for big companies

Public/Private Partnerships: Partnerships between business and government can be important to improve the economic climate. To your knowledge, what partnerships have formed in your county to work together to solve economic development issues? Check all that apply.

1. Randolph Arts Council
2. Family connections
3. We have tourism money being used to improve our community and make others desire to come here
4. Chattahoochee county school district is working on a new strategic plan with input from local government and citizens to form an alliance of goals that coincide with the needs of the county and desire of its citizens. In addition to the new college and career academy being built
5. Career Academy at high school
6. Our EDC needs review from external sources...they don't know what they don't know
7. Chamber not active in pursuing industry/businesses
8. The negative attitude of so many citizens is a big problem with development. They can change the atmosphere quickly.
9. Georgia Grown Trail
10. Council of Governments

Local Partners in Economic Development: The RVRC is responsible for the creation and implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). What other key community organizations should be involved in the development of the CEDS? Check all that apply.

1. Railroads
2. regular citizens
3. Cultural & Artistic Focus
4. Churches
5. Non-profit human service organizations that focus on poverty eradication, education, youth development, and workforce development
6. Leadership Columbus
7. Family Connection
8. Local Family Connection Partnerships
9. Local Family Connection Collaborative, Faith Based Community
10. In small towns and communities... it takes everyone
11. No comment
12. The Valley Partnership
13. Regional Dev. Authorities
14. UGA Cooperative Extension
15. Historical Commission

State of Georgia Economic Development Resources: What resources/actions from the State of Georgia would be most helpful to your home county in order to implement a plan? Please select up to five (5) resources.

1. Cultural & Artistic development
2. State economic development department involvement at local level
3. Georgia Initiative for Community Housing

4. Encourage the Governor to visit or send entourage to comprehend "disconnect" between entities based on subliminal dysfunction based on unspoken social issues
5. Red carpet tour type events to showcase what a community has to offer

One action that the State Could Undertake: If there was ONE action that the State could undertake to help advance economic development in your home county, what would it be?

1. Economic support
2. Assistance developing local action plans
3. Economic development grants
4. Reduce property taxes.
5. Soft skill/job training
6. MAKE SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS RECOGNIZABLE TO ALL RESIDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY
7. Healthy monetary grants
8. Focus on Cultural and Artistic Development/Tourism
9. Worker Training programs
10. More jobs
11. Grants to help develop property in areas needed
12. Recognize the declining, truly rural communities
13. Channeling funds, incentive considerations for counties with low economic bases...
14. Not sure!
15. Tax breaks for those who make Georgia better (be open to ideas)
16. Assist local elected official to develop economic development strategies and plans to implement
17. Place more businesses in our community for job opportunities
18. Incentives for job growth
19. Provide transportation
20. More homes for families
21. Build a hospital or other medical facility
22. More grants
23. Allowing industries to come into my community
24. Small business support.
25. More training on how to write grants to help develop an infrastructure that supports industries.
26. Grants to assist us in rural counties in Georgia
27. Program to help unemployed and underemployed with skill development and conquering of obstacles to employability.
28. Grants to leverage economic development that are open to all.
29. Industry that could provide on the job training
30. Provide monetary resources to help Dooly County
31. Get the powers that be to understand the importance of economic development
32. More jobs
33. Local Jobs/Training/Transportation
34. Help bring new jobs to the county.
35. Probably grants for improvement
36. Removing the Ft. Benning population from Census counts to get an accurate demographic and a true economic reading. It is highly skewed by soldier income
37. Update utilities and sewer lines so the county can grow
38. Training public officials
39. Give businesses tax incentives or monetary incentives to move to this region
40. Allow new businesses
41. Funding to address the infrastructure needed to bring in new businesses
42. Provide funding for a utility infrastructure.
43. To assist with developing a stronger school system
44. Reduce regulations
45. Take over our school system.
46. Help improve schools

47. Require State economic development department to become involved at the local level in rural counties. They need to focus on placing small manufacturing businesses or call centers (15-50 jobs) in rural areas. Most of our infrastructures will not support much than that. We have a mobile rural workforce that can provide the workers.
48. Work hard with local government!
49. Help improve the management and performance results of our school system.
50. Take note of actual population outside of the military base to open up more grant opportunities
51. Promote our county's positive attributes at the State level.
52. Encourage businesses to locate in this area
53. Affordable housing to attract people here.
54. Incentives for job growth
55. Work training in the community
56. Pave county dirt roads.
57. Small-scale industry based job creation
58. Encourage the Economic Development Authority to make land and money available for new businesses.
59. Training for jobs, necessary job skills, creating work ethics
60. Better fund the local school system
61. Understand Quitman County
62. Offer grants
63. Bring us jobs.
64. Tax credits for new jobs created in the county
65. Require IDA, DDA, and Development Authority members to undergo annual training or be removed.
66. Improve local school system
67. Develop plan that citizens and leaders embrace for long term.
68. Rural internet
69. Job growth
70. Take over the public school. Legislation passed in favor, in the county
71. BRICK & MORTOR LOAN OR GRANT
72. Public transportation tax credits, any assistance with transportation
73. Improve local educational system
74. Develop weaknesses in the county to improve industrial growth
75. Grocery store
76. Recognize Southwest Georgia as a growth region
77. More worker training programs
78. Step in on local public school failure
79. Hard to nail down to 1 action. We need a comprehensive approach to lure infrastructure (restaurants, grocery stores, medical centers, etc., improve schools, create jobs, and more).
80. Be more proactive in recognizing each rural county's individual assets
81. Hands-on technical assistance
82. More capitol
83. Strategic grants for specific initiatives
84. Tax incentives
85. Stop giving all the growth to Atlanta and let the rural communities have some of that growth. We have a lot to offer.
86. Rail revitalization to promote industrial jobs
87. Grant money
88. Repurpose the old Western Detention Center into a low risk drug and mental health center
89. Promote rural communities to large employers
90. Build a theme park for kids and families
91. Coordinate tourism with other areas
92. Route potential businesses here
93. Help with Infrastructure improvements
94. Strengthen Health Care alternatives
95. Attract and support local businesses
96. Make sure the school system reaches it's highest potential

97. Better educational opportunities
98. Play up very rural, declining communities
99. Push businesses to more rural areas not Atlanta.
100. Jobs
101. Help with a new hospital
102. Improved internet connectivity for personal and business use
103. Recruit small business that are looking for a place to locate for small counties
104. Rail, utilities and local groups with economic grants from state gov. Could improve local job structure
105. None
106. Schools should implement art related programming and education
107. The community needs to come together and stop being separate when trying to make the community better
108. A place for the kids to go on weekends and talk to in need of help feed give them more knowledge a since of belonging
109. Macon County has dilapidated residential and commercial buildings that degrade the property values of taxpayers and make it impossible to obtain the appraised values for property sales. Although the school system has improved in recent years, it is still not producing enough graduates with the skill sets needed to attract new industry. The image of the system is so poor that management of existing industries and the majority of the public school employees choose to commute rather than become property owners and taxpayers in Macon County.
110. Be realistic about what rural counties can support. Be serious about State support to rural counties. The Region 8 project manager position was vacant for an extended period of time and was filled only a few weeks ago.
111. Well done, do this again in 6 months
112. People should have local jobs so they don't have to travel every day and can get a better life in their home town and same money rotation happen in own town that helps other local businesses too
113. Contact me
114. Randolph County is a goal mine that has not been discovered.
115. We need some affordable housing for the elderly. We lose population because of that. Some type of industry to help out the tax base.
116. I have lived here for 80 years and witnessed better times for the community when we had a large businesses in place that gave unskilled workers an opportunity to learn.
117. Regional Commission not very helpful to us. Seems to have "pet areas"
118. The City of Vienna has a new and visionary strategic plan. I would love to see funds put in place over time by a variety of sources to help them realize the goals that were established.
119. Dooly County is rich in resources. Big box warehouses would be a great business for our county with I-75. Great sources of water and utilities
120. Chamber of Commerce here is a social organization instead of a commercial one. It could help if they focus on getting more business than asking every time for donations.
121. All the programs available are not worth a hoot if Georgia Economic Development doesn't expose us to opportunities!
122. The State of Georgia needs a robust program to assist struggling small towns in this state. They heavily rely on GMA, ACCG and even Georgia Power to spur economic development. If there are robust programs from the State, they should be better branded and communicated proactive to small town GA. Thanks!