A region where current and future generations succeed at home, at work, and in their communities
Once again, we have made it through another challenging and memorable fiscal year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this unusual situation, RVRC staff performed beyond expectations and made a great impact on the Region and its communities. The efforts put forth by the Aging team, the Workforce Development team, and the Planning team to provide crucial programs and services to the Region deserve praise and commendation. Of course, let’s not forget the Administration Team and leadership of our Executive Director, Jim Livingston, who helped keep it running smoothly. Well done all.

It is important to note the RVRC’s impact in terms of community investment by the region’s governments. During FY21, the RVRC helped secure approximately $12,441,490 for the Region. For every dollar of dues received by the RVRC from our local governments, their return on investment was $33.88 in funding, programs, and services. Funding received this year was 85.7% federal, and 14.3% state.

Something to keep in mind for May 2022 is the ten-year 1% TIA-II tax vote, which, if passed, could lead to the development of over 45 more infrastructure projects in the region. The initial TIA tax ends in 2022, with 17 of the 23 constrained list’s projects having completed construction. TIA has been great for the development of the region’s infrastructure.

An important change to note - Pops Barnes serves as the RVRC Chair for FY2022. Pops is a Columbus City Councilman and RVRC council member with many years of experience working for the Region. Pops has represented a great part of our community for years and will bring strong leadership as Chair.

Lastly, I am sincerely appreciative and thankful for the support of each community in the Region this past year. You all make the RVRC stronger. On behalf of the Council, I say thank you once again to all the RVRC staff for their dedication to serving the Region and its communities. We are so grateful and appreciative of your hard work and commitment. Together, we will make FY2022 even better.

Sincerely,

Randy Howard
MISSION
The mission of the River Valley Regional Commission is to create, promote, and foster orderly growth and economic prosperity for our region.

VISION
A region where current and future generations succeed at home, at work, and in their communities.

CORE VALUES
Accountability, Community, Diversity, Good Stewardship, Collaboration, Innovation, Integrity

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Planning .................................................. 14
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ON THE COVER: Hymenocallis coronaria, commonly known as the shoal spider lily, photographed in the region and courtesy of Chris Largent and the Chattahoochee River Conservancy.
Regional Impact

Regional Snapshot

It is the responsibility of the RVRC to be good stewards of the funds entrusted to us. We do this by being efficient and effective administrators of the local, state, and federal funds we receive or secure. For FY21, over $12.4 million in funding was secured for projects and development across the region.

Every community in the River Valley region gains access to the services provided by the RVRC through annual dues, which amount to one dollar per capita. For Fiscal Year 2021, there were an estimated 367,209 people in the region, resulting in $367,209 in annual dues paid by the communities.

RVRC calculates return on the investment for the region by dividing the number of funds received in federal, state, and other dollars by the amount of annual dues. For FY21, the ROI is $33.88 for every one dollar of dues. This means that for every one dollar paid by each community, the RVRC was able to generate $33.88 in programs and services.

Program Breakdown

- Community and Economic Development
  - Community Development Block Grants
  - Comprehensive Economic Dev. Strategy
  - Revolving Loan Funds
  - ITAD Grant Funds
- Workforce Development
  - Individual Training Accounts
  - Work Experience Services
  - General Education Diploma Plus
  - On-the-Job Training
  - WIOA Grant Awards
- Planning Services
  - Comprehensive Plans
  - Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans
  - Zoning Assistance
  - Environmental Planning
  - Historic Preservation
  - CDBG Administration
  - Transit Development
  - Mobility Management
  - Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning
  - Transportation Investment Act
  - Geographic Information Systems
- Aging Services
  - Elderly Legal Services
  - Home Delivered Meals
  - Congregate Meals
  - Homemaker
  - Senior Centers
  - Transportation
  - Caregiver Raspite
  - Case Management
  - Nursing Home Transitions

Return on Investment: Annual Dues

$33.88 per $1.00

For every $1 received in annual dues, the RVRC was able to return $33.88 in programs and services to our communities.

Breakdown of State vs. Federal Dollars Brought to the Region

- 14.3% State Funding
- 85.7% Federal Funding

Breakdown of Regional Impact

- $4,523,703 Allocated toward Community & Economic Development
- $1,464,799 Allocated toward Workforce Development
- $5,650,536 Allocated toward Planning Initiatives
- $802,452 Allocated toward Aging Services

Regional Snapshot

For FY21, over $12.4 million in funding was secured for projects and development across the region.

RVRC Staff Years of Service

Six staff members were recognized for a combined 130 years of service to the River Valley Regional Commission.

- Sarah Walls, Assistant Executive Director - 50 Years
- Katie Howard, AAA Director - 20 Years
- Franetta Miles, AAA Wellness/ Special Projects Coordinator - 20 Years
- Mariyana Kostov, GIS Specialist - 15 Years
- Kia Barrow, AAA Program Manager - 15 Years
- Eboni Morris-Key, ADRC Counselor - 5 Years
- LaCarole Lloyd, MDS-Q Options Counselor - 5 Years

Special Awards

Assistive Technology

The Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services recognized the AAA with the Excellence in Assistive Technology Award for the outstanding efforts of the ADRC to provide assistive technology to 85 clients.

NADA Awards

RVRC Staff received Three NADO Awards in 2021 for their work on the “Columbus Lift Project,” food system development, and broadband development.

CPFO Certification

RVRC Finance Officer Emily Chambers was recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association for her completion of the Certified Public Finance Officers Program. The CPFO is a broad educational self-study program designed to verify knowledge in the disciplines of government finance.

RVRC Staff Years of Service

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Area Agency on Aging

The River Valley Area Agency on Aging provides services to seniors and persons with disabilities in the 16-county region. The goal of these services is to help seniors remain in their homes for as long as possible. Because Caregiving is critical to safely keeping seniors at home, support is given to Caregivers to prevent burnout. Classes are also provided to help seniors and their caregivers improve and maintain their health. The Aging and Disability Resource Connection provides information on resources available to callers as well as screening to determine eligibility for certain programs. The staff of the River Valley Area Agency on Aging are committed to providing the information and services needed by seniors and persons with disabilities in the region.

Feeding the Region

228,669
Home Delivered Meals provided to 1,068 Clients

79,791
Meals delivered to 530 clients who normally ate at Senior Centers

2,434
Clients received two $24 vouchers for locally grown produce at Senior Farmers’ Markets - a new record for the region

17
Senior Farmers’ Markets Conducted

Senior Hunger Coalition

AAA awarded two $2,500 mini-grants to local groups addressing Senior Hunger:
- Harris County Family Connections
- Golden Events This is Love located in Macon County

Seniors Farmers’ Markets

The 2021 Senior Farmers’ Markets were held during June, July, and August of 2021 even in a Pandemic. AAA staff worked closely with Senior Center Managers, Senior Housing Managers, and community volunteers to conduct 17 Drive Thru Farmers Markets. These markets provided 2,434 people with two (2) $24 vouchers, which set a new record for the region. River Valley continues to be a leader in the state with voucher redemption.
In May of 2021, the GA Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services recognized the River Valley Area Agency on Aging with the Excellence in Assistive Technology (AT) Award for outstanding efforts of the ADRC to provide AT to clients.

### AAA Statistics and Trends

The River Valley AAA had an 18% increase in the number of meals served due primarily to the CARES Act and Families First Act funding. There was an increase of 26% in Respite Clients and a 12% increase in Caregiver Time Out Vouchers, also due to this new funding. Pilot projects with these funds include improving access to homes by installing ramps – 11 ramps were installed. Assistive Technology was given out to 85 clients to increase their independent living at home, and 778 clients received Material Aid, which allowed providers to meet “non-traditional services” such as groceries, prescriptions, purchase of eye glasses, and help with past due rent.

#### Trends

- **16,248** Units of Respite Care were provided
- **25% +** 25 percent increase in the number of Respite Care clients
- **15,655** Homemaker Aid units provided to 249 clients
- **12% +** Twelve percent increase in Caregiver Time Out Vouchers
- **1,714** Units of Case Management provided to 59 clients
- **18% +** Eighteen percent increase in the number of meals served due to CARES Act and Families First Act funding
- **6,782** Personal Care Aid units provided to 47 clients
- **85** Assistive Technology was given out to 85 clients to improve independence
- **778** Clients received Material Aid to meet non-traditional needs
- **11** Eleven “Home Ramps” were installed for limited mobility clients

### ADRC Provides Vital Resources

The Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) has provided vital information and resources to the community during the Pandemic. Referrals have more than doubled between May of 2020 and May of 2021. These referrals have been handled in a timely and professional manner with no increase in staff.

### Assistive Technology

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WORKFORCE INNOVATION OPPORTUNITY ACT

Workforce Development

The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a federally funded job training program providing education and training opportunities to eligible individuals to assist them with employment, employment retention, and self-sufficiency. WIOA Staff provide assistance to the workforce through a number of programs including the GED Plus Program, the Work Experience Program, the Individual Training Accounts Program, the On-The-Job Training Program, Rapid Response Services, and other training services.

154 Total WIOA Enrollments

For PY2021, 154 individuals were enrolled in WIOA’s services

- Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) 69 Enrollments
- On-The-Job Training (OJT) 17 Enrollments
- Work Experience 21 Enrollments
- Youth Services 47 Enrollments

84 Businesses

A total of 84 businesses and employers benefited from serving as a worksite or hiring WIOA participants, including private and public employers, city/county governments, charitable and community organizations.

WIOA Success Story

Haley Foy dropped out of school in 9th grade due to being a single parent. As a stay-at-home mom, she decided to go back to school as soon as her daughter started school. She decided she wanted a better future for her and her daughter. Haley overcame her barriers and achieved her goal of getting her GED in October.

Haley’s future plan is to be a paraprofessional. Eckerd Staff plan to assist Haley with connecting with RESA to help her reach her goal.

Haley’s training was made possible by WIOA through the River Valley Regional Commission and Middle Flint Workforce Georgia.

PY20 Performance Outcomes

WIOA has 12 Performance Measures reporting standards. The Middle Flint Workforce Area Board negotiates performance measures annually with the State Workforce Division.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADULTS</th>
<th>MEASURE</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Rate Q2</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment Rate Q4</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credential Rate</td>
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<td>Skills Gains</td>
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<tr>
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<th>OUTCOME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q2</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q4</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credential Rate</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>Exceeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Gains</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOUTH</th>
<th>MEASURE</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q2</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>Exceeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entered Employment Rate Q4</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credential Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills Gains</td>
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</table>

*Exceeding Outcomes* mean the Performance Measures either met or exceeded expectations for the performance year.

South Georgia Technical College Nursing Program has 100% pass rate despite COVID challenges.

What We Do

- Administer the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act services on behalf of the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board.
- Provide assistance to Trade Act impacted customers with training applications, assessments, career advisement, case management, and referral to training activities.
- Provide Rapid Response services for companies and individuals affected by layoffs and closures.
Regional Planning

Our sixteen-county region is a diverse and remarkable place home to approximately 367,209 people during FY21. To help our communities and the region continue to grow, develop, and thrive, we provide professional planning assistance across several programs. These efforts work toward attaining our regional goals outlined in our comprehensive and strategic plans.

4 Comprehensive Plans

Staff completed four comprehensive plans for regional governments in FY2021.

2 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans

Staff completed two pre-disaster mitigation plans for regional governments in FY2021. Three other plans were begun or progressed.

What We Do

Comprehensive Planning

- Coordinate planning and implementation of Service Delivery Strategies
- Prepare and update the RVRC Regional Plan
- Review and solicit comments from affected parties on Developments of Regional Impact
- Prepare Pre-Disaster plans, Urban Redevelopment Plans, and other plans

Zoning

RVRC provides zoning services for communities located within the region. Zoning services have been available to our communities for 30 years. Currently, staff provide zoning and subdivision review services to five communities.

Lending

RVRC provides low-interest loans up to $250,000 for regional businesses looking to grow and expand. CARES Act lending is also available for businesses affected by the pandemic.

Economic Development

- Develop the Comprehensive Economic Strategy
- Provide staffing assistance to regional economic development groups
- Assist small businesses and entrepreneurs with applications for Revolving Loan Funds
- Provide staff assistance to cities, counties, and regional organizations for the Revolving Loan Funds
- Assist local governments and others with downtown redevelopment efforts
- Work with EPA and GA partners to help address the redevelopment of Brownfields

CDBG

$4.5 Million: CDBG $4,518,543 from DCA’s Community Development Block Grant Program was awarded to seven infrastructure projects in the region during Fiscal Year 2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>PROJECT</th>
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<tr>
<td>CORDELE</td>
<td>$750,000</td>
<td>SEWER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESOTO</td>
<td>$736,119</td>
<td>WATER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHELLMAN</td>
<td>$303,600</td>
<td>WATER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUTHBERT</td>
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<td>WATER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONTEZUMA</td>
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<td>WATER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAY COUNTY</td>
<td>$481,261</td>
<td>STREET/DRAINAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORT GAINES</td>
<td>$748,563</td>
<td>WATER/SEWER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environmental Planning

Environmental Planning

The term “River Valley Region” refers to a geographic area between the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers. This 16-county territory is abundant with natural resources that must be cared for and maintained to ensure a healthy regional ecosystem. These two river systems are used to meet many needs including power generation, agriculture, aquaculture, drinking water, navigation, and recreation. Through several programs, RVRC’s environmental planners work to ensure that these resources remain healthy and safeguarded.

Grant Close-Out
Staff closed out a seed grant for Long Cane Creek Watershed and a 319(h) grant for Mountain Oak Creek Watershed

Adopt-A-Stream
Two Adopt-A-Stream monitoring workshops offered

20 Samples for E. coli analysis collected

20 Samples for chemical analysis collected

Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation

The RVRC’s Historic Preservationists work with local governments as well as federal and state entities in a number of ways to help preserve the region’s historical resources and assets. Currently, the region is home to 34 historic districts and hundreds of significant historic locations. Some of these organizations include the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service’s State Historic Preservation Office. Our efforts include grant writing, technical assistance, surveying, and consultation, just to name a few.

Historic Preservation Planning

Historic Preservation Planning

- Prepare applications for and administer preservation grants
- Provide technical assistance to private businesses and individuals with nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and historic preservation tax credits
- Coordinate with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and perform historic resource surveys
- Perform Section 106 Reviews
- Provide technical assistance to Historic Preservation Commissions
- Develop design guidelines

Historic Surveys

Historic Surveys

- Staff completed a Historic Resource Survey for the City of Vienna

Section 106

Section 106

- Staff conducted 14 Section 106 Project Consultations, commented on three projects, and conducted reviews for two projects.

Columbus HPC

Columbus HPC

- Staff reviewed 42 cases for the City of Columbus’ Historic Preservation Commission

Benevolence Baptist Church, Randolph County - one of the many historic places in our region.
BROADBAND

- Assisted Macon County with siting routers in suitable public areas near student homes using the Broadband Initiative’s availability map and earned National Association of Development Organizations’ 2021 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award for the project.
- Drafted Broadband Elements for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plans and Broadband Ordinances for six counties and their municipalities.
- Provided research assistance and technical support for communities and providers applying for Broadband American Rescue Plan recovery grants.
- Georgia Tech’s Center for Economic Research conducted an extensive analysis of three broadband surveys and produced a detailed analytical report of the region’s digital economy and use of the internet.

INFRARED

Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning

The Bicycle and Pedestrian program enhances quality of life for community residents by encouraging active transportation, promoting bicycle pedestrian safety, and planning and developing bicycle pedestrian infrastructure. In addition to the accomplishments below, RVRC Bike-Ped planners progressed on a Bike-Ped Plan for Midtown Columbus, collaborated with engineers on bike infrastructure improvements for Americus, and collaborated with GDOT on mitigating negative impacts of rumble strips along cycling routes. Planners also partnered with UGA to develop plans for Bike-Ped improvements to benefit communities in the CDC’s high obesity program.

What We Do

Transportation Planning
- Member of the Technical Advisory Committee for the Columbus Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization
- Provide electronic data adhering to all format quality measures specified by GDOT
- Assist with development of pedestrian and bikeway facilities planning
- Coordinate with GDOT in the development of Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian plan and website
- Assist with the development and administration of Transportation Enhancement Projects
- Provide staff to the Citizens Review Panel for implementation of the Transportation Investment Act
- Plan, develop, and execute bicycle events and programs that focus on bike education and connectivity

RVRC Annual Report 2020-2021
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