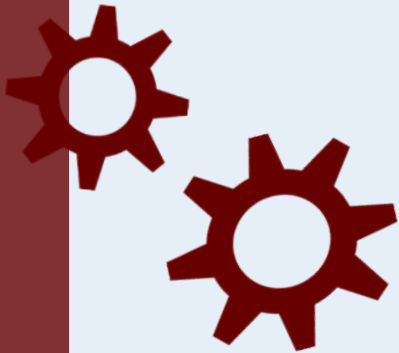


Advancing local opportunities while
DRIVING WHAT'S NEXT IN ALABAMA



2022-2026 Economic Development

PLAYBOOK

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the West Alabama Regional Commission, Inc. was formed with the objective of promoting economic development and coordination in the West Alabama District; and

WHEREAS, the West Alabama Regional Commission was designated as an Economic Development District in 1989 by the Economic Development Administration (EDA); and

WHEREAS, the EDA has been providing annual funding to the West Alabama Regional Commission to perform economic development planning tasks; and

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

WHEREAS, the WARC has prepared the West Alabama Economic Development Playbook 2022 – 2026 for the district.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the West Alabama Regional Commission, Inc. that the 2022-2026 Playbook is hereby approved by the West Alabama Regional Commission's Board of Directors.

RESOLVED this 22nd day of September, 2022.



Rob Robertson, Chairman

ATTEST:



Dennis Stripling, Executive Director

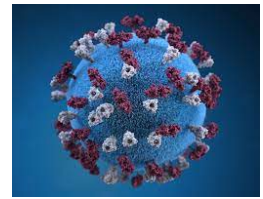
CONTENTS

Executive Summary

I	Introduction	1
II	In West Alabama	2
	Indicators	2
	Assets	10
	Labor Market	18
	Employment Sectors	24
III	The Regional Perspective	28
	Analysis of Issues and Opportunities	28
	Regional Powerhouses	29
IV	Playbook Strategy	30
	Vision and Strategic Goals	30
	Regional Targets	32
	Playbook Partners and Resources	34
	Essential Plans	35
	Disaster and Resiliency Strategy	36
V	Action Plan	39
	Action Items	39
	Performance Measures	41
	Playbook Gains	42
Appendices:		
A.	Playbook Strategy Committee	
B.	Regional Background	
C.	Region II Socio-Economic Comparisons	
D.	Transportation Goal 2 Action Maps	



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Five years ago the 2017 Playbook recognized the following top trends in West Alabama: population is shifting within the region; education and infrastructure needs are significant; unintended workforce disruptions from advances in technology were on the horizon; and, low wages threatened key sectors of our economy. The arrival of Covid-19 in early 2020 changed the course of progress being made in the region and laid bare our vulnerabilities. Many of the findings cited in the previous Playbook were swiftly exacerbated as a result of Covid and remain the top trends today, though some have increased in prominence. The next five years will require a continued focus on regional recovery as inflation and other global impacts compound the effects of ever-evolving Covid strains.

- **Workforce and Wages** The labor force – with its intertwined elements of availability and participation levels, skills and wages, has become the single-most ecosystem in peril. It is workers that provide us food; care for us when we’re ill; teach our children; educate and train us for careers; maintain and build the infrastructure upon which we rely – and the list goes on. Yet, Covid destabilized the foundations of our labor force. The Great Resignation shifted to a Great Re-shuffle, and now, the Great Regret/Reality Check as workers continue to carefully consider entering, re-entering or remaining in the workforce. The message is clear; wage levels and working conditions will need to change as a re-evaluation of work-life balance has led to shortages in key sectors including education, healthcare, and hospitality among others.
- **Emerging Technology** The advent of electric vehicles has the most potential to shape the region’s future. Mercedes-Benz U.S. International (MBUSI) vehicle production and battery plant will catalyze multiple local and state benefits. Examples include the \$16.5 million Alabama Mobility and Power (AMP) Center, a collaboration between the University of Alabama, Alabama Power and MBUSI to support Alabama’s transportation network and burgeoning electric vehicle market through world-class research and commercialization of modern mobility and power technologies. MBUSI also partners with Shelton State Community College (SSCC) to provide the Mercedes Technician Training Program and the Mercedes Mechatronics Training Program to supply the talent pipeline needed for production.
- **Education** Workers quitting their profession, or taking early retirement in droves - particularly in the field of education, leaves us deeply vulnerable and less competitive over time as the impacts may not be fully realized until years from now. Proficiency levels in K-12 education are inconsistent throughout the region and need improvement. During Covid, children suffered gaps in learning and social development that will be challenging to overcome, particularly without sufficient levels of experienced, capable teachers.
- **Infrastructure** New and expanded federal and state programs are providing unprecedented opportunities to address inadequate infrastructure in the region, including broadband; however, inflation, available labor, and supply chain issues are increasing costs to complete projects. To aid in prioritizing needs and make the most of these funding opportunities, many jurisdictions have participated in planning efforts through either WARC’s BETTER Action Plans or the I-22 Corridor Strategic Plans. Many needed projects have begun and will provide tremendous benefit to the region.
- **Population** Tuscaloosa County and its municipalities have continued to gain residents while population slips away from the majority of the surrounding counties. The region’s median age is lower than the State and U.S.; however, this is due to the counties of Tuscaloosa and Bibb offsetting the aging population in the rest of the region. Fewer residents to support infrastructure and other important investments; loss of local jobs; and the diminished ability to support local school and healthcare systems are all threats to small, rural communities as people choose to relocate to urbanized areas.



Purpose of the plan

Preparation of a regional economic development plan is a requirement of the Economic Development Administration (EDA) under its Economic Development District (EDD) program. The West Alabama area, known as the West Alabama Economic Development District II, (also referred to as “the District” or “the Region”) is composed of seven counties; Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens and Tuscaloosa. **The West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC)**, whose member counties mirror those of the EDD, serves as the planning organization that develops and maintains the regional plan.

An EDA approved plan is required in order for eligible applicants in the region to qualify for federal investments under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965. The EDA requires a new economic development plan every five years. The Playbook serves as the current five-year plan for the period of 2022 through 2026. As needed, plan amendments may be approved by the WARC Board of Directors. The plan is updated annually to highlight achievements in the region.

Playbook Strategy Committee

The Strategy Committee is responsible for developing, revising, or replacing the economic development plan for the region. The functions of the Strategy Committee also include promoting, planning and executing programs and projects that support plan goals. The West Alabama Regional Commission is responsible for assisting the committee with coordination and development of the plan and support for implementation efforts. The Strategy Committee includes at least one member from each county and includes representatives from local government, economic development, workforce development, education, minority groups, non-profit groups and private individuals. The WARC Board of Directors serves as the Strategy Committee. The membership of the Committee is listed in Appendix A.

Planning Process and Participation

The development of the Playbook was carried out by the Strategy Committee and WARC staff with assistance and public involvement from stakeholders throughout the region. Meetings were held during the months of October 2021 – July of 2022 with elected officials, individuals, and stakeholder groups to facilitate the planning process. Additionally, a survey questionnaire was used to gather input for the plan. The questionnaire was distributed at meetings held throughout the region during the update process.

Public Review

This document was made available for public review and comment by email notification to the stakeholders, placement on the WARC web page and by posted notice in the WARC offices during the period of August 1 – 30, 2022.

II: IN WEST ALABAMA



INDICATORS

The seven counties that make up the West Alabama region – Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa - have a combined area of 5,350 square miles. The region is located in the west-central area of Alabama and includes the Black Belt designated counties of Greene, Hale and Pickens.

POPULATION

After steady growth until about 1940 the district's population declined in the 1950's and 60's. During the 1970's all counties except Hale experienced growth while in the 80's only Bibb and Tuscaloosa counties grew. During the 1990's, all counties experienced gains except Greene County; however, by 2010 only Bibb and Tuscaloosa saw growth. As of the 2020 decennial Census, all counties lost population except Tuscaloosa County which posted a 16% gain in population with all but one of its seven municipalities, Coker, also seeing increases. Of these, the four towns of Brookwood, Coaling, Lake View and Vance passed the 2,000 person mark to become "cities" based on the Code of Alabama threshold for the designation. Six of the seven jurisdictions in Tuscaloosa County are now cities moving Tuscaloosa County into fourth place for population growth in the state. The 2020 population for the region stands at 321,260.

EDUCATION

The educational attainment of the population is important from an economic as well as a social aspect, in that the educational level of the people is an indication of the skills, productivity, and flexibility of the labor force. All these variables are important in attracting and expanding industry and business to the region. The educational attainment in the region as a whole continues to be higher than any individual county with the exception of Tuscaloosa. The gap between the region and the state is narrowing; yet, each still lags behind the nation. In the face of Covid, disparate achievement gaps are likely to become more evident, only adding to the complex challenges in education.

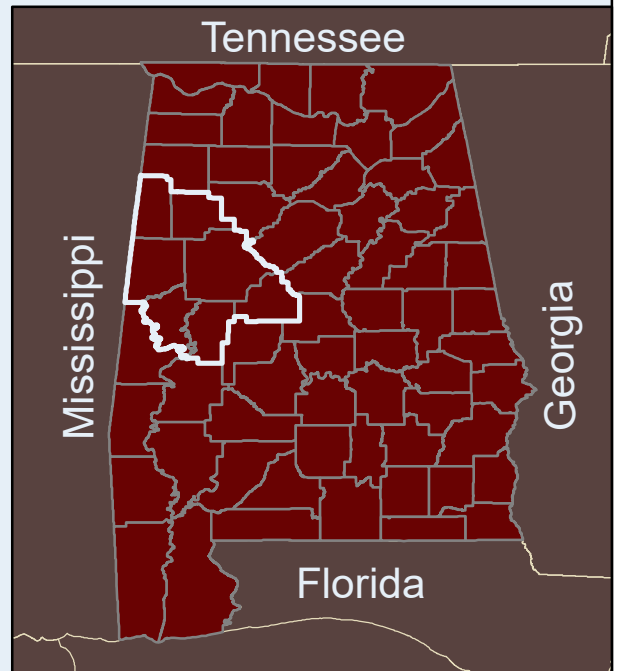
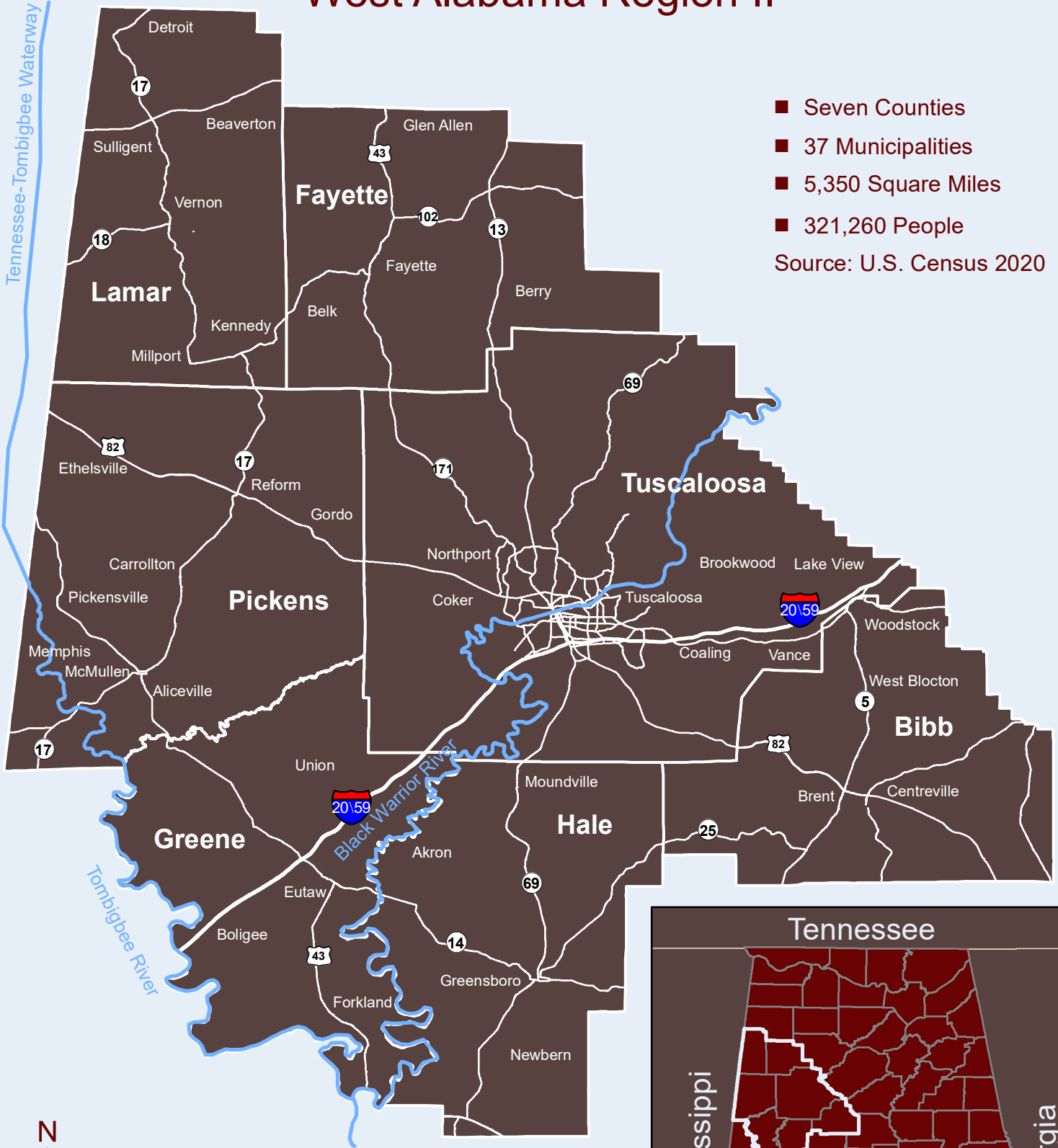
POVERTY and INCOME

All counties in the region have a higher poverty rate than the U.S. and only two counties, Lamar and Tuscaloosa, have a rate less than the state. Poverty is highest in the region in Greene County where the rate is 31.8%.

Per capita personal income in the counties has been increasing over the past decades; however, it still lags behind both the State and the Nation. Median Household Income in the counties is also lower than the state and the U.S. with the exception of Tuscaloosa County, whose income just exceeds the State.











West Alabama Region II

- Seven Counties
 - 37 Municipalities
 - 5,350 Square Miles
 - 321,260 People
- Source: U.S. Census 2020



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission June 2022. This map is not a survey product, and should not be used for conveyance. Sources: ALDOT, US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files, WARC. For more information, call (205)333-2990.

Region II Population Change 2000-2020

		2000	2010	Percent Change 2000 -2010*	2020	Percent Change 2010-2020*
	U.S	281,421,906	308,745,538	9.7	331,449,281	7.3
	Alabama	4,447,100	4,779,736	7.5	5,024,279	5.1
	Region II*	268,208	293,927	9.6	321,260	9.2
	Bibb	20,826	22,915	10.0	22,293	-2.7
	Fayette	18,495	17,241	-6.8	16,321	-5.3
	Greene	9,974	9,045	-9.3	7,730	-14.5
	Hale	17,185	15,760	-8.3	14,785	-6.2
	Lamar	15,904	14,564	-8.4	13,972	-4.1
	Pickens	20,949	19,746	-5.7	19,123	-3.2
	Tuscaloosa	164,875	194,656	18.1	227,036	16.6

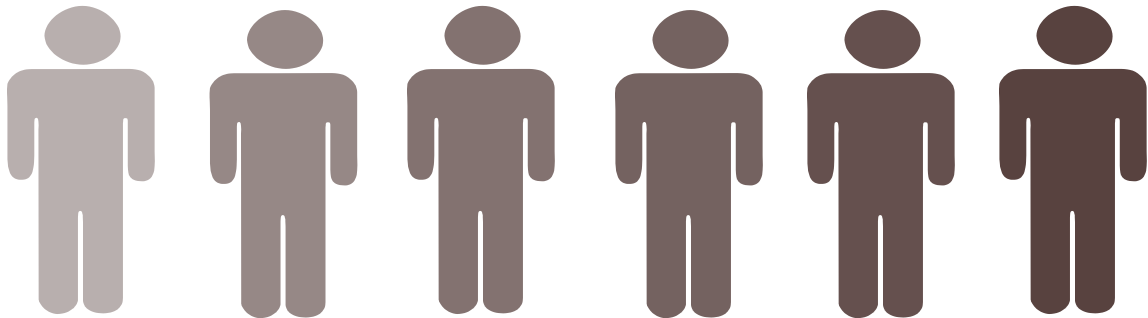
Source: Decennial U. S. Census, 2000, 2010,2020. *Calculations by WARC

REGION II POPULATION

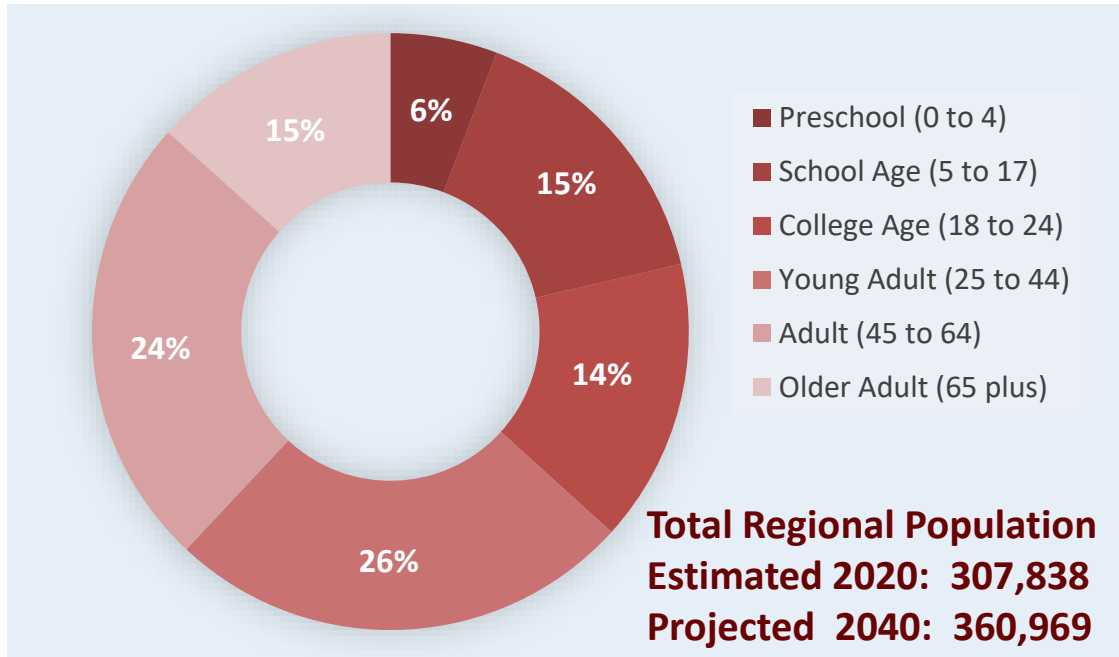
Population 2010-2020 and Projections 2025-2040

County	Census 2010	Census 2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Number	Percent	Trend
Region II	293,927	321,260	319,598	334,705	347,942	360,969	67,042	12.4%	
Bibb	22,915	22,293	30,499	31,452	32,930	34,439	11,524	54.5%	
Fayette	17,241	16,321	15,395	15,381	14,914	14,431	-2,810	-11.6%	
Greene	9,045	7,730	8,010	7,935	7,549	7,170	-1,875	-7.2%	
Hale	15,760	14,785	14,622	14,935	14,666	14,389	-1,371	-2.7%	
Lamar	14,564	13,972	12,121	12,018	11,505	11,039	-3,525	-21.0%	
Pickens	19,746	19,123	17,387	17,369	16,931	16,499	-3,247	-13.7%	
Tuscaloosa	194,656	227,036	221,562	235,615	249,445	263,002	68,346	15.8%	

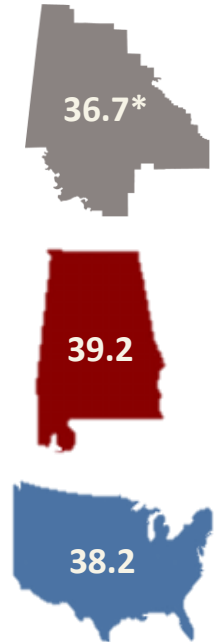
Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama, June 2022.



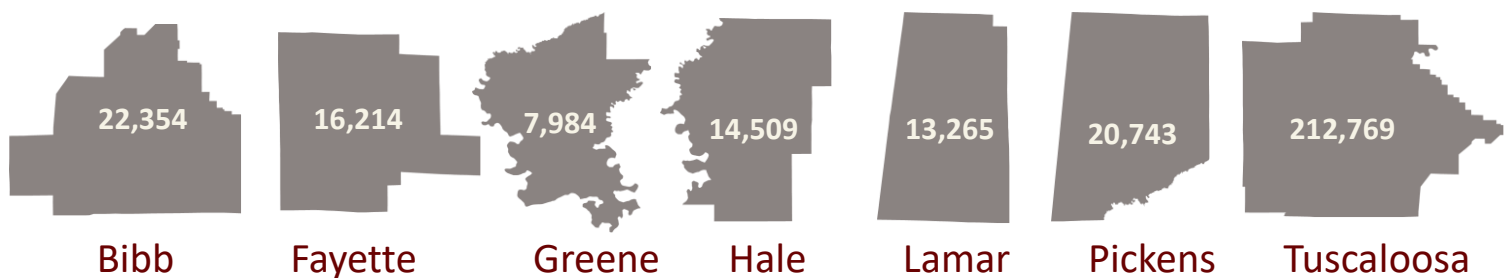
Population by Age 2020



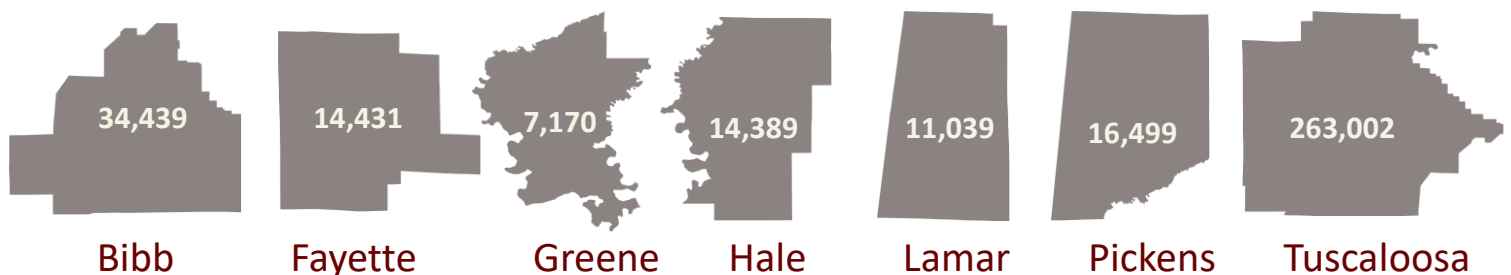
Median Age



Estimated 2020 Population by County



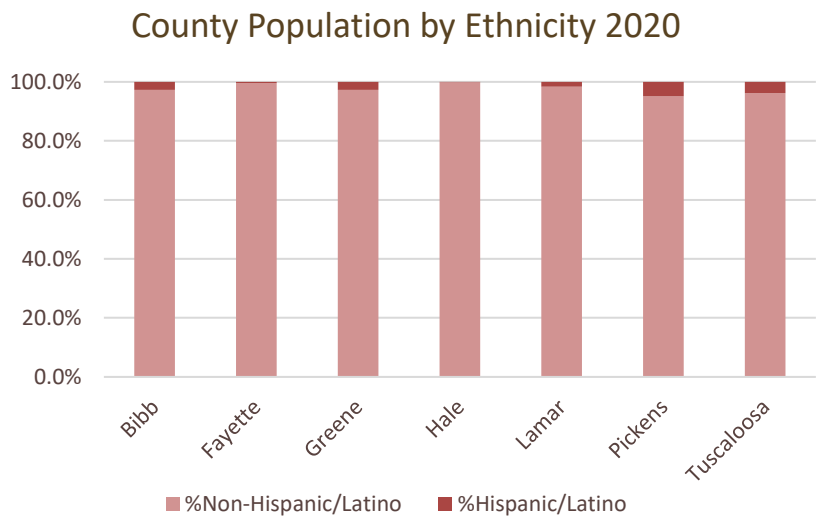
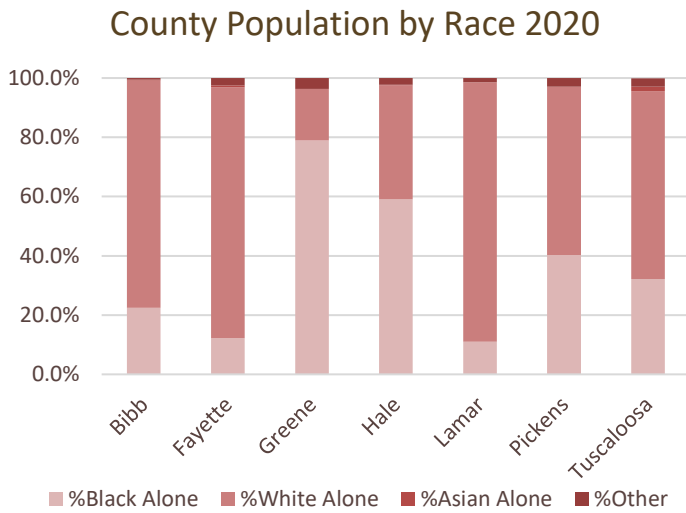
Projected 2040 Population by County



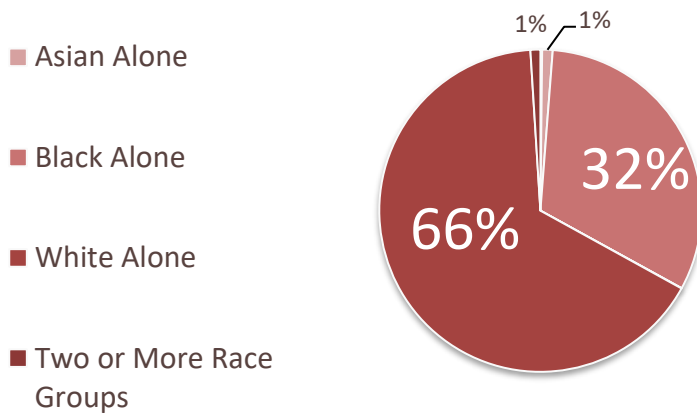
Source: StatsAmerica, U.S. Census ACS 2016-2020, University of Alabama Center for Business and Economic Research. *Calculations by WARC

REGION II POPULATION

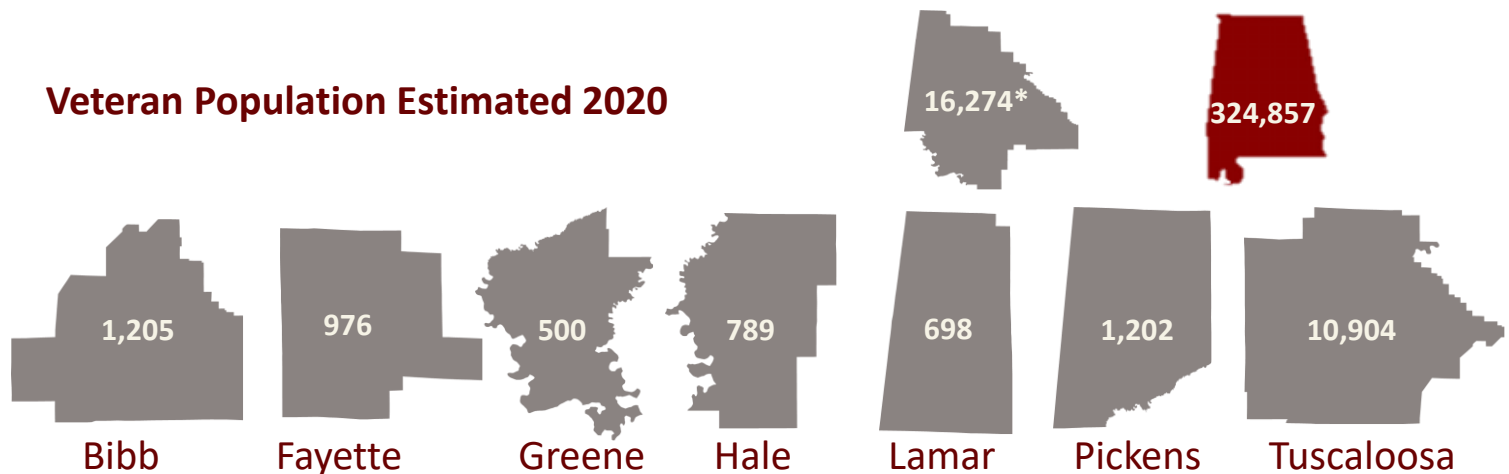
County Population by Race and Ethnicity 2020



Regional Population by Race 2020

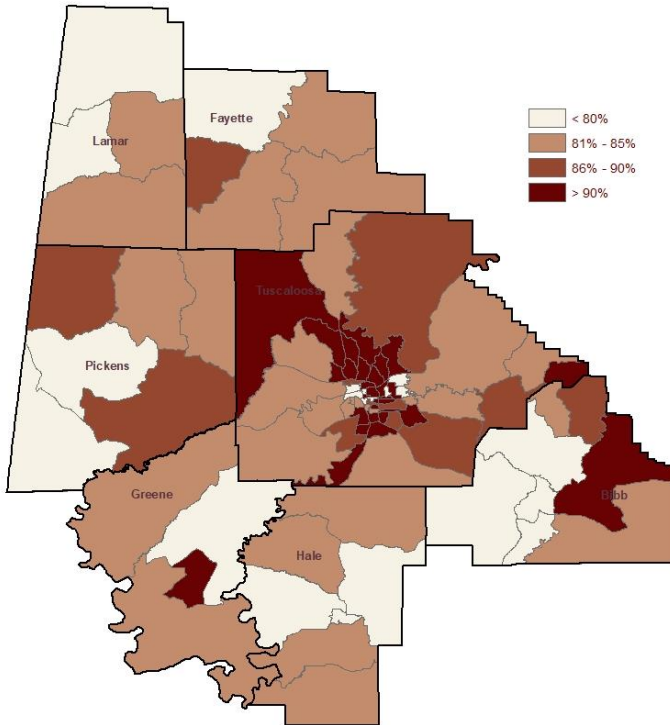


Veteran Population Estimated 2020

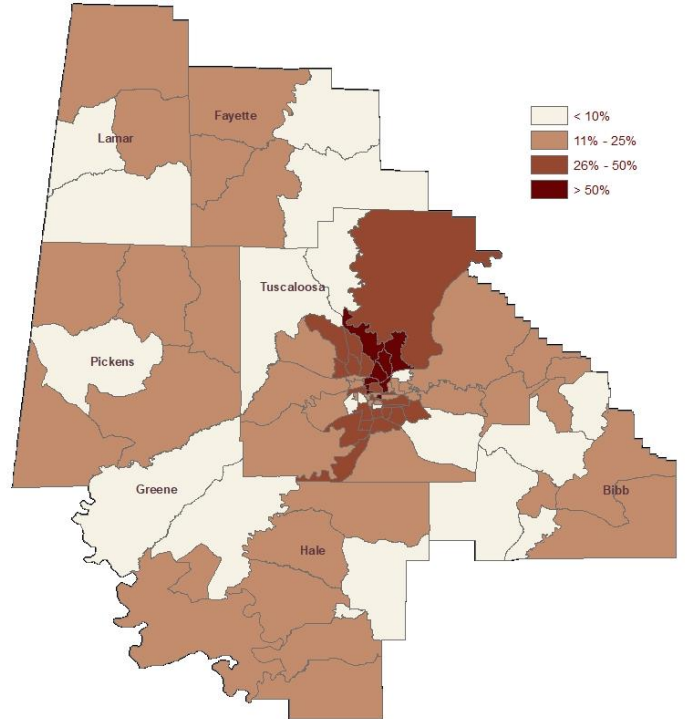


Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2016-2020 ACS, *Calculations by WARC

Percentages of Persons Age 25 and Older with a High School Education or Higher by Census Tract

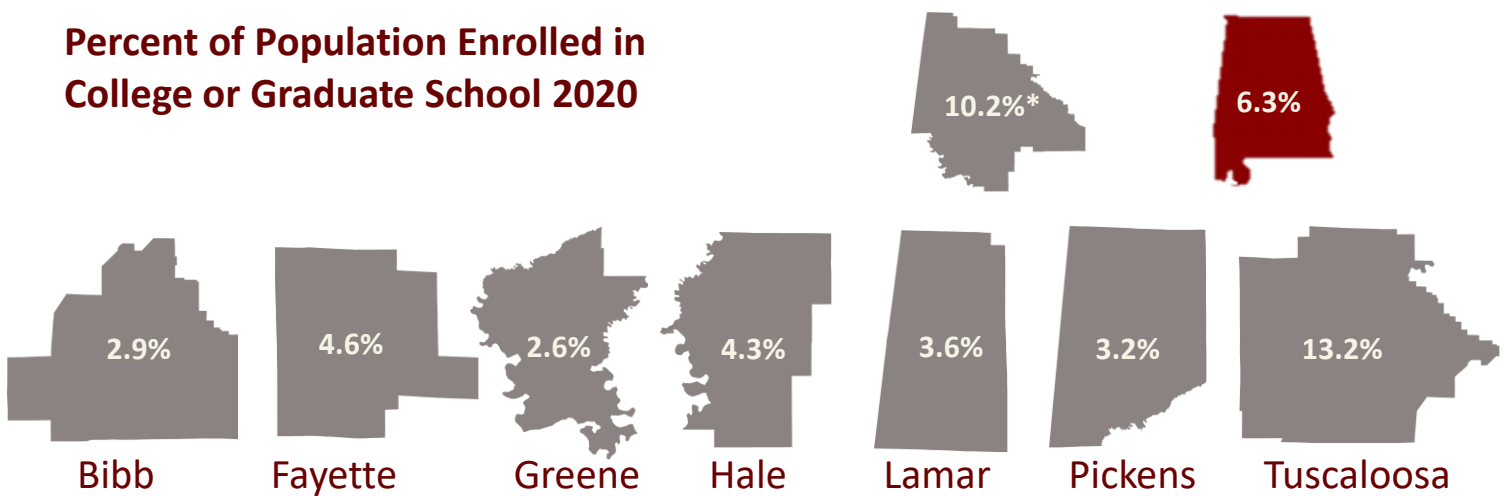


Percentages of Persons Age 25 and Older with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher by Census Tract



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission July 2022. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance. Sources: US Census Bureau Data Table ACS_16_5YR_B15003 (2016-2020). For more information, call (205)333-2990.

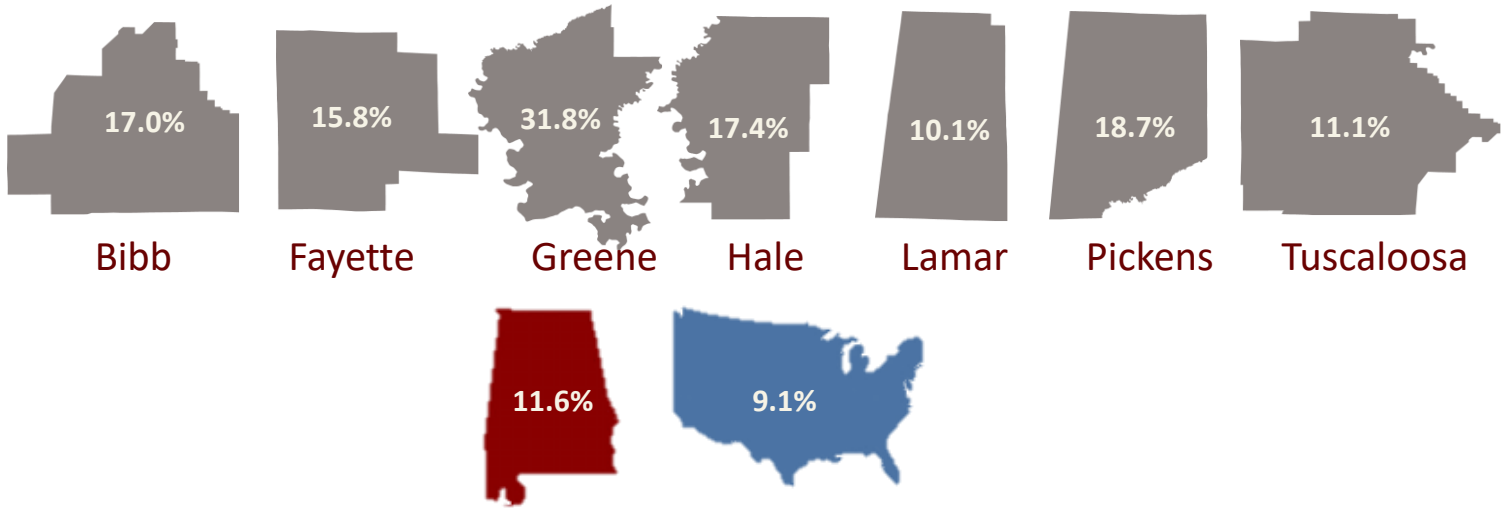
Percent of Population Enrolled in College or Graduate School 2020



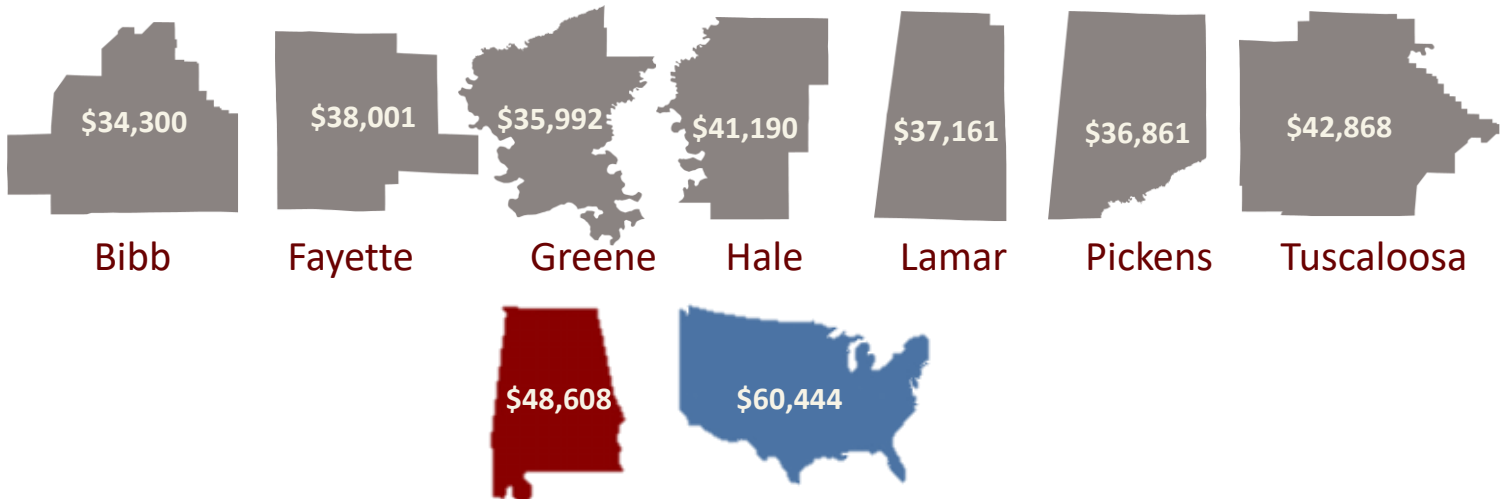
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2016-2020 ACS , *Calculations by WARC

REGION II POVERTY AND INCOME

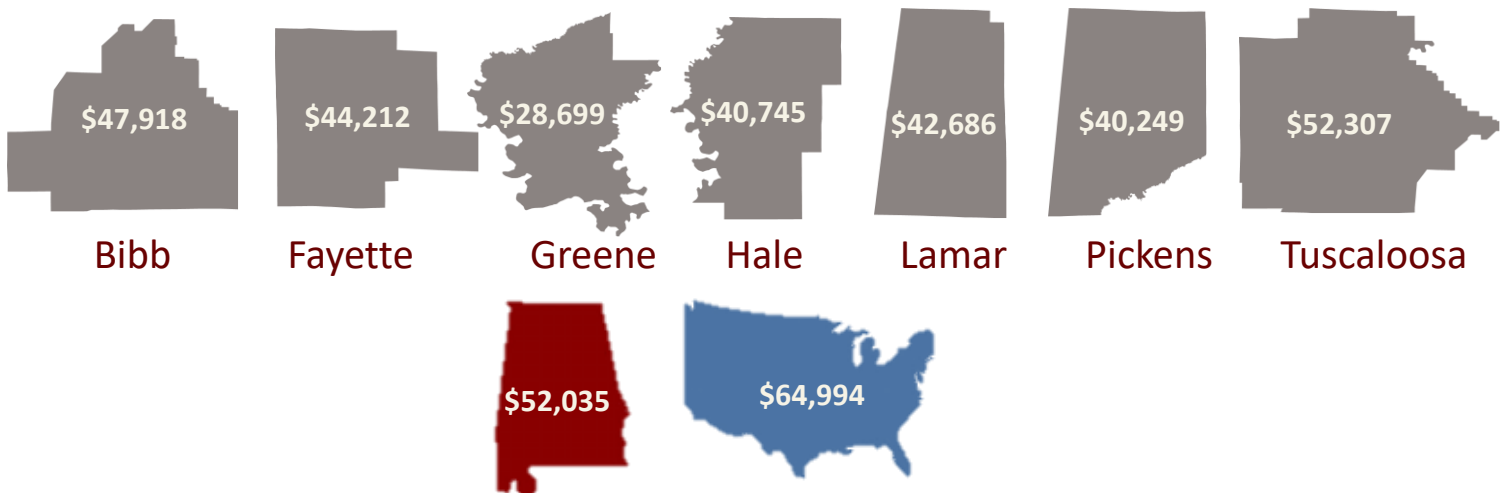
Poverty Compared to State and U.S. 2020



Per Capita Personal Income Compared to State and U.S. 2020



Median Household Income Compared to State and U.S. 2020



ASSETS

Available land and buildings along with programs and facilities offering career education and training assistance are vital assets in economic development. Targeted incentives through designated Opportunity Zones is a new addition to assets at the region’s disposal to support, promote and enhance business and industry development opportunities and is supported by a multi-modal transportation network.

Industrial Sites

Each county in the region has at least one available industrial site or park and most have identified available buildings. The West Alabama Industrial Parks map and table data outlines the locations of industrial parks and sites. The data was gathered from local economic developers and the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA). More detailed information on the majority of these sites, as well as data on available buildings, can be found on the **EDPA** website. The website provides acreage, available utilities, zoning, building size and eave height, and accessibility to transportation. The information also indicates if a site has achieved the designation of an Advantage Site. The Advantage Site program is a voluntary vetting process that ensures that accurate information and documentation are readily available for site searches. The program requires that certain criteria be met in areas such as ownership, zoning, accessibility, and environmental and geotechnical due diligence. In Region II, the Lamar County Industrial Park has achieved Advantage Site designation.

Career Education and Training

The ability to ensure a skilled workforce is paramount to the success of the region. **West AlabamaWorks**, which covers the district’s seven counties and the counties of Sumter and Marengo, provides coordination of programs that bring industry and education together to meet area needs. Numerous programs are offered that provide pathways to education, training and employment. Education and training facilities are present in each county.

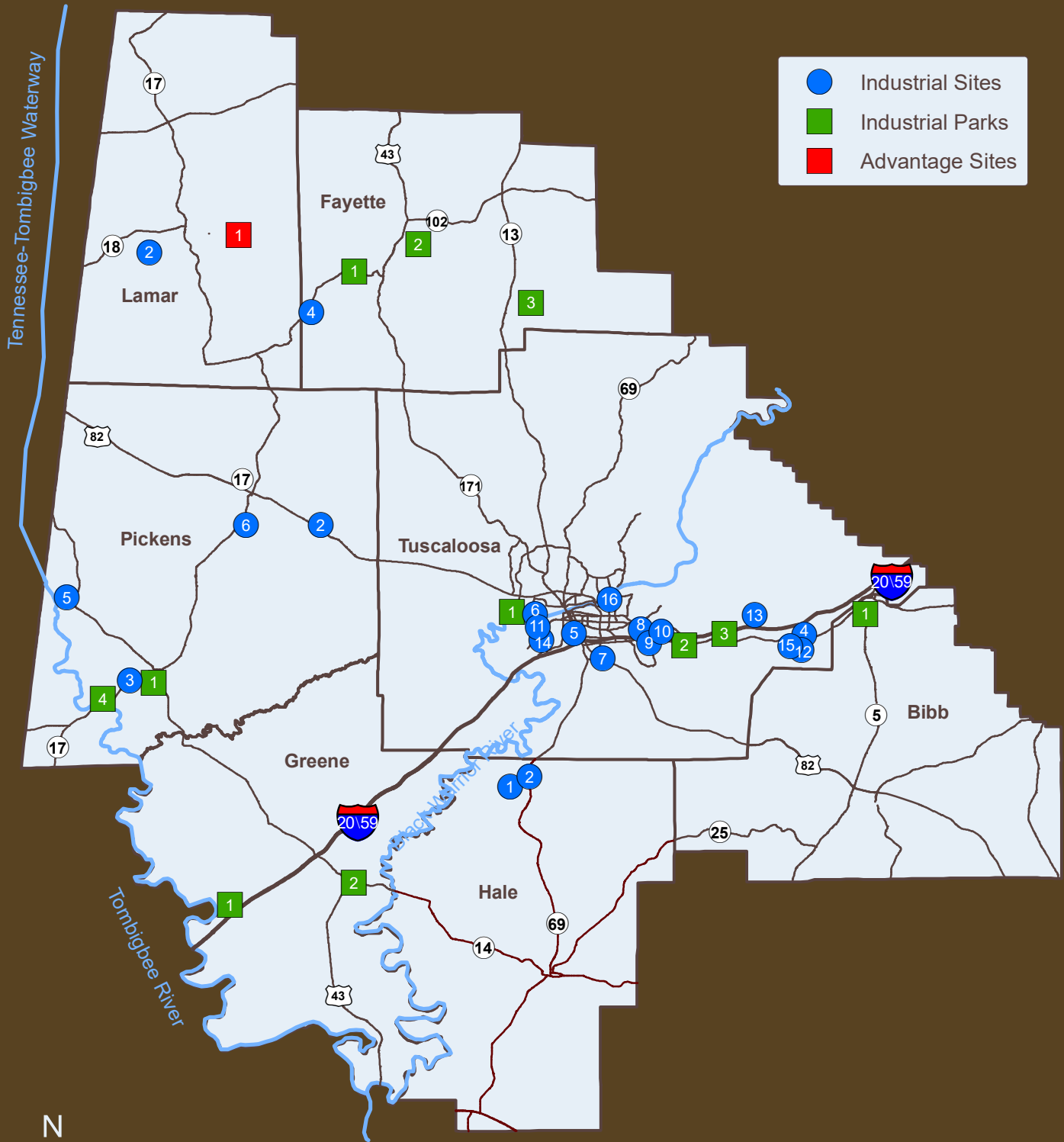
Opportunity Zones

The EDD has a total of 16 census tracts designated as opportunity zones; one in each county except for Tuscaloosa, which has 10 tracts concentrated closely to the municipal areas of the cities of Northport and Tuscaloosa. Key metrics about the West Alabama OZ’s is provided by StatsAmerica, along with a list and map of the OZ tracts in the district.

Transportation

The region is well-connected by multiple modes of available transportation infrastructure as shown on the West Alabama Transportation Systems map. Additionally, major road improvements to add capacity and aid the flow of traffic in and out of the region continue to be carried out. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Rural Planning Organization maintain plans that outline needs and priority projects in the region. Additionally, the formation of the Tuscaloosa County Road Improvement Commission has identified priority transportation investments in the county. Links to these plans and projects are shown in Section IV.

West Alabama Industrial Parks



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission April 2022. This map is not a survey product, and should not be used for conveyance. Sources: EDPA, Local economic developers, US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files, WARC. For more information, call (205)333-2990.

0 10 20 Miles

INDUSTRIAL PARKS AND SITES

REGION II INDUSTRIAL PARKS/SITES			
Location	Map#	Available Acres	Designation
Bibb			
Scott G. Davis Industrial Park	1	217	Park
Fayette			
Fayette Industrial Park South	1	200	Park
Fayette Industrial Park North	2	43	Park
Town of Berry Industrial Park	3	40	Park
Belk Property	4	102	Site
Greene			
Crossroads of America	1	1240	Park
Eutaw City Industrial Park	2	450	Park
Hale			
County Road 46 Site	1	90	Site
Tucker Property	2	395	Site
Lamar			
Lamar County Industrial Park*	1	170	Park
Vernon Industrial Site	2	122	Site
Pickens			
Aliceville Industrial Park	1	50	Park
Gordo Site	2	68	Site
Marine & Sons Chip Mill Site	3	25	Site
Bevill-Hook Port	4	20	Park
Pickensville Site	5	20	Site
Westinghouse Site	6	50	Site
Tuscaloosa			
TCEDA Airport Industrial Park	1	450	Park
Cottdale Industrial Park	2	59	Park
TCEDA Cedar Cove Tech Park	3	400	Park
Blackberry Road Site	4	56	Site
Hinton Lot	5	3	Site
Tuscaloosa Regional Airport	6	61	Site
Hwy 82E	7	92	Site
Old Morrison Dairy Farm #1	8	40	Site
Old Morrison Dairy Farm #2	9	20	Site
TCEDA Interstate Site JVC	10	35	Site
Joe Mallisham Outparcels	11	5	Site
Hall Property #1	12	33	Site
Brookwood Truck Stop Site	13	165	Site
Joe Mallisham / Fosters Ferry	14	15	Site
Hall Property #2	15	28	Site
Lake Tamaha Town Center	16	230	Site

***Advantage Site**

Source: EDPA, Local Economic Developers, 2022

Education, Career and Training Centers of West Alabama

- 1 University of Alabama
- 2 Stillman College
- 3 Bevill State Community College
- 4 Bevill State Community College
- 5 Shelton State Community College
- 6 Vernon Career Center
- 7 Fayette Career Center
- 8 Tuscaloosa Area Career Center
- 9 Bibb County Career Academy
- 10 Lamar County School of Technology
- 11 Greene County College and Career Academy
- 12 Hale County College and Career Academy
- 13 Tuscaloosa Career & Technology Academy
- 14 Pickens County College and Career Center
- 15 Brookwood Workforce Center
- 16 University of Alabama Career Center
- 17 Daycrest Training Center
- 18 Bill Taylor Institute
- 19 Brookwood Career Tech Annex
- 20 Technical Training Center (Fredd Campus)
- 21 Northport Career Tech Annex
- 22 Aliceville Career Center



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission June 2022. This map is not a survey product, and should not be used for conveyance. Sources: ALDOT, US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files, WARC. For more information, call (205)333-2990.

WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

West AlabamaWorks carries out numerous projects to address the demand for trained, skilled workers. This is accomplished through the process of engaging industry clusters, implementing education and training programs, advocating for policy and budget priorities, and securing funding to support new programs.

PATHWAYS PROGRAM:

Delivering essential job skills to at-risk individuals. Sectors include: Advanced Manufacturing; Automotive; Construction; Healthcare; Hospitality; Modern Manufacturing
***Over \$24 mil since 2017 for support and training**

Coming soon: Development of Second Chance Employment program

CAREER CONNECT:

Linking at-risk individuals with job training and support services
***19,184 served**

JOB CONNECT:

Linking employers to job seekers in career connect

IGNITE:

Student Employment Program linking youth to summer, after-school, co-op jobs and Apprenticeships



WOW (Worlds of Work):

Expo for ninth-grade students to explore career options

WOW 2.0:
For Seniors

Mini WOW:
For elementary students

***27,650 participants since 2015**

ACT Work Ready Communities :

National certification program to align community economic, workforce and education needs
***All counties in region have achieved designation**

Educator Workforce Academy:
Annual teacher cohorts

A+ Education Partnership
Professional development for teachers

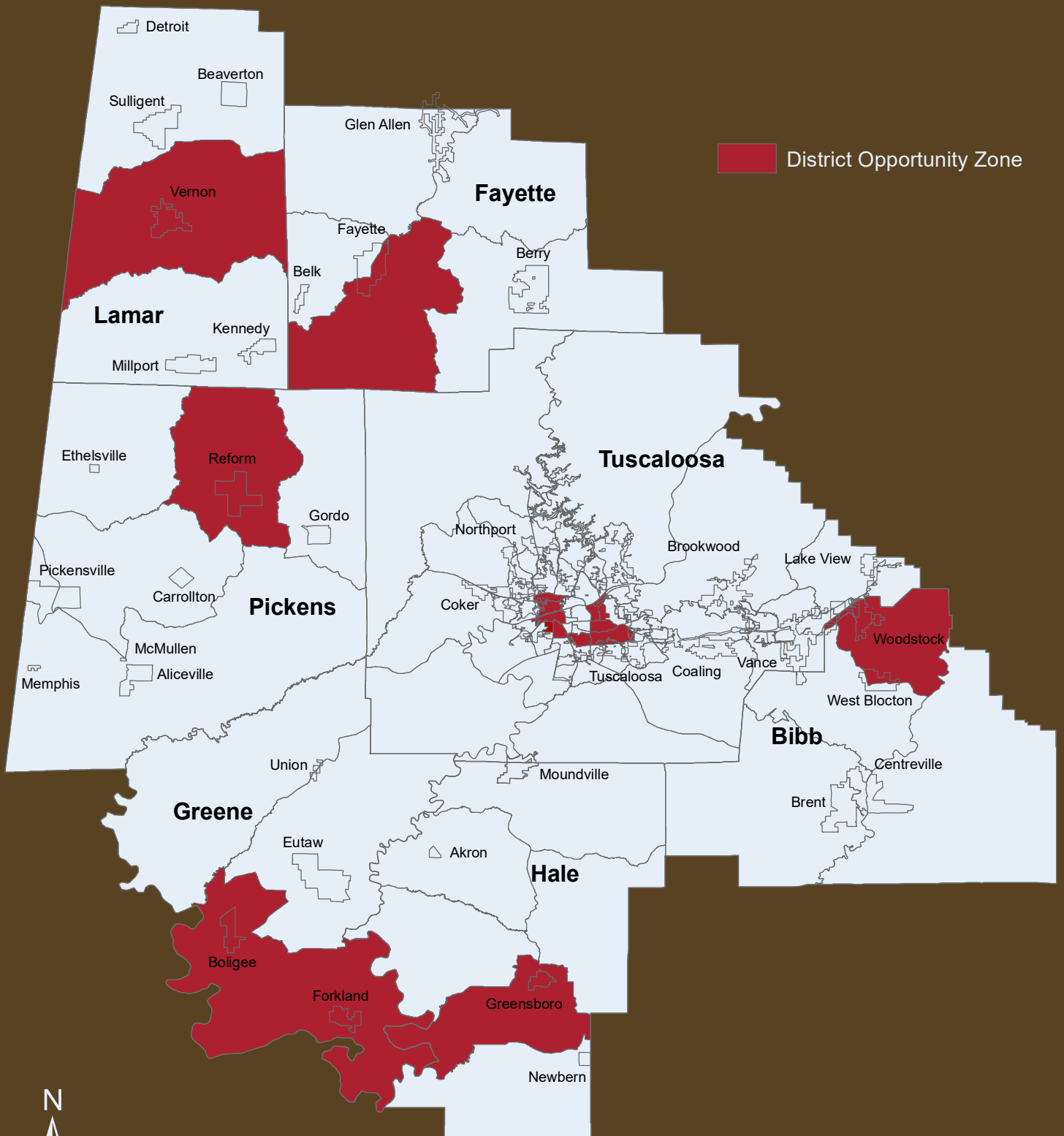


Learn more at:

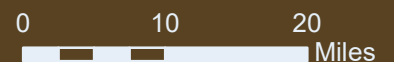


[Region 3 Regional Workforce Council Profile](#)

West Alabama Economic Development District Opportunity Zones



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission September 2020. This map is not a survey product, and should not be used for conveyance. Source: ACRE



OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Opportunity Zones (OZ's) are defined as “economically-distressed areas wherein new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment.” As of April of 2018, OZ plans are now in place for communities in all 50 states. Each state nominated blocks of low-income areas by census tract that were then certified by the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. Through the IRS, investors can file a Form 8896 to create a **Qualified Opportunity Fund** structured as either a partnership or corporation for the purpose of investing in an OZ census track, whether in real estate or directly in businesses through equity. The fund is required to hold at least 90 percent of its assets in that qualifying OZ area.

The non-profit organization in Alabama acting to advance projects within the opportunity zones in the state is **Opportunity Alabama**.

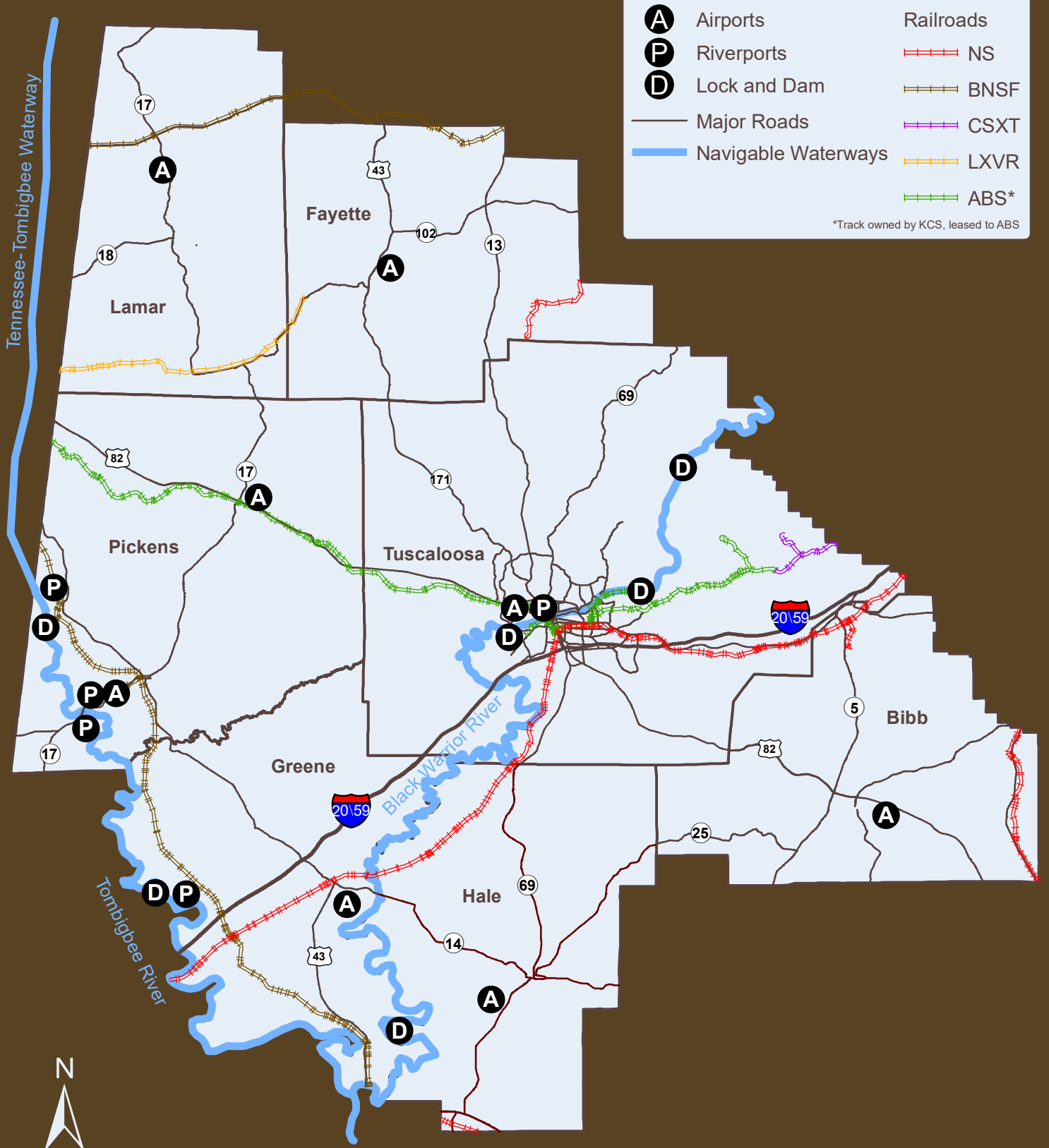
Region II Opportunity Zones

County	Tract	Tract type	Population	Labor Force	Land Area	Unemployment Rate	Per Capita Money Income	Poverty Rate
Bibb	1007010002	Low-Income Community	6,041	2,609	70	7.2	\$23,232	19.9
Fayette	1057020300	Low-Income Community	3,853	1,442	140	10.8	\$19,498	26.1
Greene	1063060200	Low-Income Community	3,018	777	220	17.2	\$12,268	46.5
Hale	1065040400	Low-Income Community	4,956	1,783	88	18.6	\$16,500	34.6
Lamar	1075030100	Low-Income Community	5,251	2,168	190	9.3	\$19,461	20.4
Pickens	1107050100	Low-Income Community	3,706	1,464	123	9.5	\$20,838	23
Tuscaloosa	1125010403	Low-Income Community	3,968	1,793	2	3.8	\$21,186	23.5
Tuscaloosa	1125010404	Low-Income Community	2,618	1,220	2	10.4	\$17,160	32.4
Tuscaloosa	1125011600	Low-Income Community	3,470	1,307	2	11.5	\$20,657	36.3
Tuscaloosa	1125011701	Low-Income Community	2,768	1,051	1	13.4	\$14,952	27.9
Tuscaloosa	1125011800	Low-Income Community	3,194	1,157	1	16.4	\$11,033	45.8
Tuscaloosa	1125012100	Low-Income Community	6,425	4,007	2	4.3	\$26,918	22.6
Tuscaloosa	1125012303	Non-LIC Contiguous	7,571	3,787	5	6.1	\$28,659	18.9
Tuscaloosa	1125012405	Low-Income Community	6,984	3,171	2	8.7	\$18,314	33.2
Tuscaloosa	1125012600	Low-Income Community	1,766	969	2	7.4	\$31,760	45.5
Tuscaloosa	1125012800	Low-Income Community	2,577	1,102	1	3.8	\$14,351	39.9

Source: <https://www.statsamerica.org/opportunity/map.aspx>

ACS 5-year average data included here is for the 2014-2018 period.

West Alabama Transportation Systems



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission June 2022. This map is not a survey product, and should not be used for conveyance. Sources: ALDOT, US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files, WARC. For more information, call (205)333-2990.

0 10 20 Miles

LABOR MARKET

Employment

Unemployment rates have been dropping alongside state and national levels for most counties in the region. Year to date 2022 estimate averages (through March, not seasonally adjusted) range from the lowest in Lamar County at 2.7 percent to the highest in Greene County of 5.9 percent. Greene and Hale exceed both the U. S. rate of 4.1 percent and State rate of 3.0 percent. Pickens County's rate of 3.5 percent is above the state rate; all other counties are below that of the State and U.S. rate.

Labor Force

Approximately 73.5 percent of the region's labor force is provided by Tuscaloosa County residents. Bibb, Pickens and Fayette have the majority of the remaining share, while Lamar and then Greene have the least. Tuscaloosa County has the highest rate of underemployment in the region at 35.4 percent; at 22.5 percent, Lamar has the least. Underemployment indicates that worker's skills or education are underutilized, that discouraged workers have left the workforce due to lack of suitable jobs, or that there is simply excessive unemployment in the area.

How many people actually participating in the workforce is another important consideration. The workforce participation rate is expressed as those within the noninstitutionalized population, age 16 and over that have jobs, compared against the combined rate of those unemployed (looking for work) and those not looking for work. Non-participation can be due to discouragement in job seeking, or attending school, being a homemaker, retired, or being in an employment-free economically stable situation.

Worker shortfall projected for the coming decades is a concern for the region. The problem reflects the consequences of declining population in parts of the region and the need to increase worker numbers and their skills and abilities. Data show that a steadily increasing shortfall is expected through 2040 that could top 31,464 workers.

Commuting Patterns

Region-wide, more people commute out of the region than come in. However, out-commuting has continued to slowly decline over the past five years. The in-area labor force efficiency, those living and employed in the region, is just under 70 percent. Within the region itself, much of the commuting activity consists of workers coming in to Tuscaloosa County.

Wages

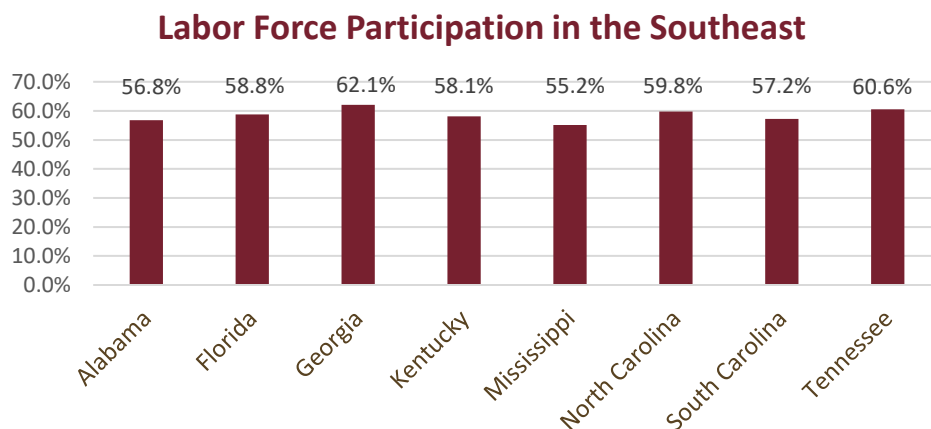
The average wage per job in the region and its counties has been steadily rising yet has not caught up to the State. Tuscaloosa County leads the region but just misses reaching the State's average wage. Fayette and Greene counties have the lowest average wage per job in the region. Alabama's average weekly earnings grew to a record high of \$1,004.65 in May of 2022 up from \$978.06 a year ago.

Occupation Projections

Projected employment by major occupations for 2028 indicates the highest growth in architectural and engineering, yet the healthcare sector as a whole, particularly in Healthcare Support, will see the most substantial increases. This includes the associated occupations of Life, Physical, and Social Science and Personal Care and Service. The most decline is anticipated in Farming, Fishing and Forestry and Office and Administrative Support.

REGION II LABOR FORCE

Labor Force Participation and Employment					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
United States					
Total Population	318,558,162	321,004,407	322,903,030	324,697,795	331,449,281
16 years and over	253,323,709	255,797,692	257,754,872	259,662,880	261,649,873
Civilian labor force	159,807,099	161,159,470	162,248,196	163,555,585	160,742,000
Labor force participation rate	63.1%	63.0%	62.9%	63.0%	60.6%
Employment	151,436,000	153,337,000	155,761,000	157,538,000	147,795,000
Jobs to Population Ratio	59.8%	59.9%	60.4%	60.7%	55.8%
Alabama					
Total Population	4,841,164	4,850,771	4,864,680	4,876,250	5,024,279
16 years and over	3,864,302	3,876,136	3,894,696	3,907,144	3,926,842
Civilian labor force	2,226,504	2,220,900	2,224,606	2,229,479	2,230,118
Labor force participation rate	57.6%	57.3%	57.1%	57.1%	55.4%
Employment	2,029,157	2,073,396	2,120,704	2,169,395	2,099,062
Jobs to Population Ratio	52.5%	53.5%	54.5%	55.5%	52.1%
West Alabama					
Total Population	299,680	301,380	302,869	303,553	304,684
16 years and over	243,177	244,354	246,087	246,304	247,221
Civilian labor force	134,981	135,768	137,496	137,547	139,904
Labor force participation rate	55.5%	55.6%	55.9%	55.8%	56.6%
Employment	127,488	130,612	133,996	138,650	130,579
Jobs to Population Ratio	52.4%	53.5%	54.5%	56.3%	52.8%



Source: U.S. Census, 2020 ACS 5-year Estimates Data Profiles. Southeast LFP: Alabama LMI Division March 2022 preliminary data.

REGION II EMPLOYMENT

Employment and Underemployment 2020

	Alabama	Region II*	Bibb	Fayette	Greene	Hale	Lamar	Pickens	Tuscaloosa
Labor Force	2,205,479	141,912	8,524	6,452	2,844	6,060	5,741	7,911	104,380
Employed	2,131,621	137,415	8,228	6,241	2,669	5,773	5,547	7,554	101,403
Underemployment	22.40%	33.40%	32.60%	26.70%	26.20%	34.80%	22.50%	23.40%	35.40%
Underemployed	477,696	46,003	2,679	1,664	699	2,008	1,248	1,768	35,937
Unemployed	73,858	4,497	296	211	175	287	194	357	2,977
Available labor pool	551,554	50,500	2,975	1,875	874	2,295	1,442	2,125	38,914

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Labor.

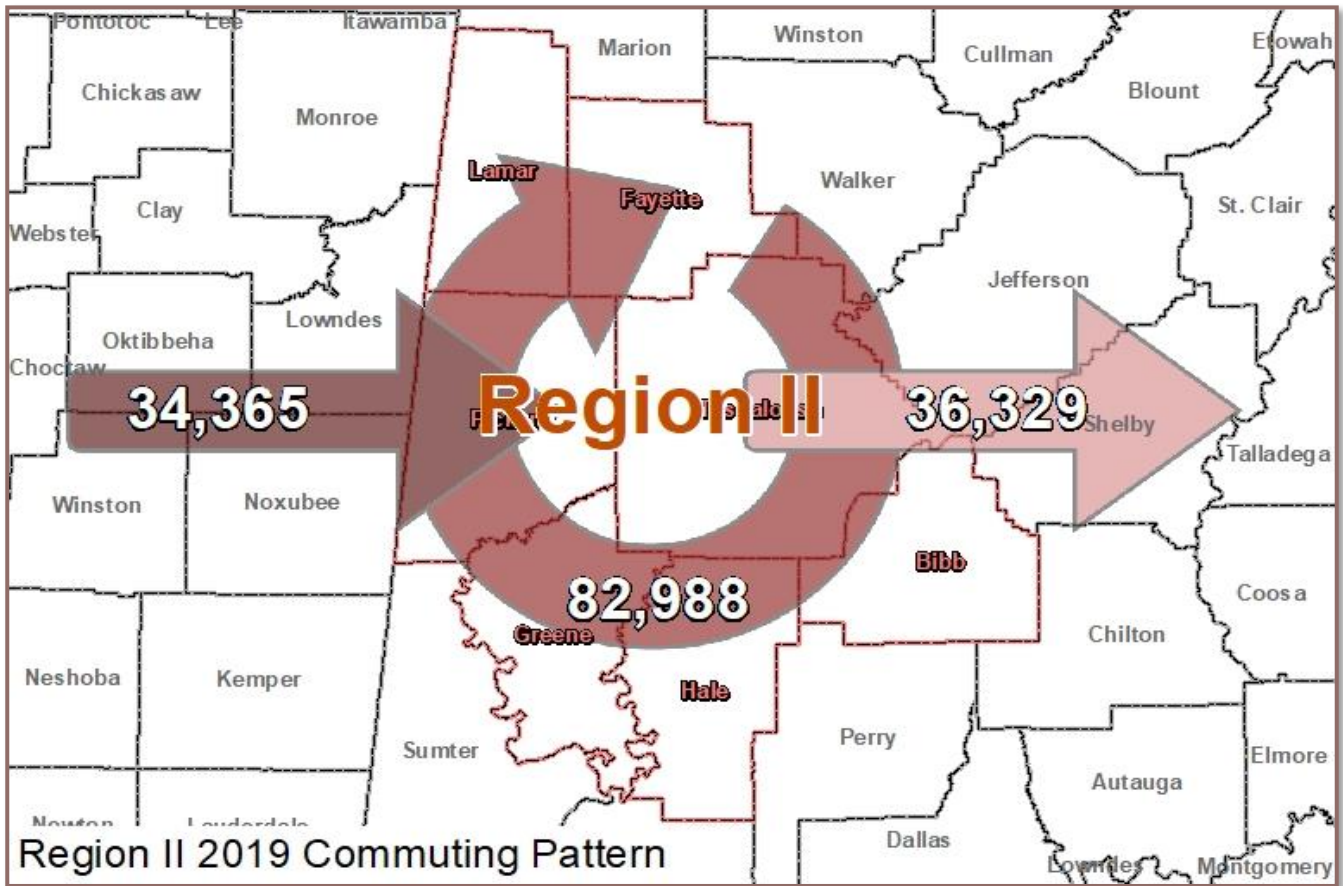
Note: Rounding errors may be present. Combined county totals may not equal district figures due to rounding and calculation methods. Based on March 2020 labor force data and 2019/2020 underemployment rates.

Projected Worker Shortfall – Region II*

	2018-2028	2018-2030	2018-2035	2018-2040
Total Population Growth	3.60%	4.40%	6.00%	7.70%
Age 20-64 Population Growth	-1.20%	-1.00%	1.00%	3.10%
Job Growth	13.60%	15.50%	22.40%	27.60%
Worker Shortfall	14.8%%	16.50%	21.40%	24.60%
Worker Shortfall (Number)	18,928	21,135	27,402	31,464

Source: University of Alabama Center for Business and Economic Research, West AlabamaWorks Region 3 State of the Workforce Report XIV
 Note 1: A positive (+) worker shortfall implies that the county will have a worker shortfall and negative (-) means worker surplus. *Calculations made by WARC Note 2: West Alabama Works Region 3 includes the additional counties of Sumter and Marengo.

REGION II COMMUTING PATTERNS












Selection Area Labor Market Size	Count (2019)	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	117,353	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area	119,317	101.7%
Net Job Inflow (+) or Outflow (-)	-1,964	-
In-Area Labor Force Efficiency		
Living in the Selection Area	119,317	100.0%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	82,988	69.6%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	36,329	30.4%
In-Area Employment Efficiency		
Employed in the Selection Area	117,353	100.0%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	82,988	70.7%
Employed in the Selection Area but living Outside	34,365	29.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap Application

REGION II WAGES

Region II Jobs and Wages by County

	2020 Annual Covered Employment and Wages Over Time (NAICS)	Establishments	Jobs	Average Wage Per Job	Rank in State	Pct of State Avg Wage
	Bibb	370	4,653	\$45,974	21	71.80%
	10-Year Change	25	623	\$12,851		
	10-Year Percent Change	7.20%	15.50%	38.80%		
	Fayette	346	3,891	\$35,845	65	56.00%
	10-Year Change	-12	-91	\$7,806		
	10-Year Percent Change	-3.40%	-2.30%	27.80%		
	Greene	165	1,833	\$36,280	63	56.70%
	10-Year Change	6	-116	\$3,827		
	10-Year Percent Change	3.80%	-6%	11.80%		
	Hale	288	2,529	\$41,200	36	64.40%
	10-Year Change	14	-376	\$10,454		
	10-Year Percent Change	5.10%	-12.90%	34%		
	Lamar	280	3,321	\$42,537	32	66.40%
	10-Year Change	-7	197	\$11,118		
	10-Year Percent Change	-2.40%	6.30%	35.40%		
	Pickens	340	3,561	\$41,926	34	65.50%
	10-Year Change	-12	-249	\$11,287		
	10-Year Percent Change	-3.40%	-6.50%	36.80%		
	Tuscaloosa	4,680	90,084	\$49,881	11	77.90%
	10-Year Change	397	7,746	\$9,683		
	10-Year Percent Change	9.30%	9.40%	24.10%		
	State of Alabama	132,126	1,909,146	\$52,210		
	10-Year Change	15,298	95,990	- \$4,391		
	10-Year Percent Change	13.10%	5.30%	9.20%		

Source: StatsAmerica, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

REGION II OCCUPATIONS

Occupational Employment Projections West Alabama Works Region 3*

Occupations	2018 Estimated Employment	2028 Projected Employment	Total Change	Percent Change	Annual Median Wage (2019)	Annual Avg Openings Total	Annual Avg Growth Rate
Total, All Occupations	141,320	145,970	4,650	3.29%	\$34,499	17,060	0.32%
Architecture and Engineering	1,940	2,200	260	13.58%	\$79,112	185	1.28%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	1,840	1,870	30	1.30%	\$35,565	215	0.13%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	5,130	5,380	250	5.01%	\$25,456	710	0.49%
Business and Financial Operations	3,500	3,670	170	4.97%	\$60,286	355	0.49%
Community and Social Service	2,220	2,360	140	6.35%	\$38,451	260	0.62%
Computer and Mathematical	1,730	1,810	80	4.39%	\$68,873	140	0.43%
Construction and Extraction	7,000	7,430	430	6.19%	\$41,302	855	0.60%
Education, Training, and Library	8,520	8,940	420	4.93%	\$51,767	785	0.48%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	2,760	2,660	-100	-3.48%	\$34,567	435	-0.35%
Food Preparation and Serving Related	12,110	12,470	360	2.95%	\$19,270	2,125	0.29%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	9,320	9,940	620	6.60%	\$51,029	620	0.64%
Healthcare Support	4,180	4,560	380	9.01%	\$22,662	535	0.87%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	6,860	7,290	430	6.22%	\$44,716	730	0.61%
Legal	650	670	20	2.91%	\$38,664	45	0.29%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	600	650	50	6.97%	\$58,796	70	0.68%
Management	6,590	6,890	300	4.62%	\$84,392	600	0.45%
Office and Administrative Support	17,680	17,070	-610	-3.41%	\$32,875	2,025	-0.35%
Personal Care and Service	4,460	4,760	300	6.91%	\$20,298	700	0.67%
Production	19,210	20,020	810	4.22%	\$35,467	2,365	0.41%
Protective Service	2,630	2,650	20	0.84%	\$43,494	260	0.08%
Sales and Related	12,640	12,620	-20	-0.17%	\$24,062	1,885	-0.02%
Transportation and Material Moving	9,700	10,000	300	3.05%	\$28,089	1,245	0.30%

Source: Alabama Department of Labor, Labor Market Information Division
[Http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/projections/ProjectionsTAB.aspx](http://www2.labor.alabama.gov/projections/ProjectionsTAB.aspx)

*West Alabama Works Region3 also includes Marengo and Sumter counties.

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Major employment groups in the region are; **Manufacturing, Health Care, Education Services, Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food Services**. These top sectors have remained constant in the region for over a decade.

Forestry and agriculture still play a role, as do mining and tourism. The main sources of agricultural income in the region are from timber, beef cattle, dairy products, poultry and eggs, and aquaculture. The region continues to have land for farming and an abundance of natural resources that support jobs and are attractive to several industrial groups. Water, timber, coal, methane gas, and oil are available in varying quantities and add to the competitive advantages the region has to offer.

The manufacturing sector has continued to grow and provide good paying, quality jobs that attract new residents to the area. Numerous expansions by Mercedes and its suppliers are spurring job creation in other parts of the west Alabama region besides Tuscaloosa. New electric vehicles, and battery production at the Bibb County plant present the next evolution in our manufacturing sector, and our overall economy. The impacts of this transition are tremendous and will reach far into the future.

MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing is present in all counties but has experienced the most vigorous growth and strongest presence in Tuscaloosa County. The area is home to many international companies. Fueled by Mercedes' arrival in the region in 1997, manufacturing has brought many Tier 1 and 2 suppliers in the automotive industry. Data collected during 2021 by WARC for the **West Alabama Mining and Manufacturing Directory** indicates there are over 180 manufacturers and 22,995 manufacturing jobs in the region. The report highlights each county's manufacturing companies providing the number of employees at that location, contact information, products, and raw materials used. A summary of the top five employers and manufacturers in each county is highlighted in the Playbook.

HEALTH CARE

The healthcare industry represents a significant number of jobs in the region. Each county, except in Lamar and Pickens, operates at least one hospital which is typically a major employer in the area. Due to factors such as an aging population and increasing trends in obesity, this sector will likely continue to grow. Yet, rural county healthcare providers often struggle to remain profitable due to overall declining populations coupled with the State's decision not to expand Medicaid. A number of large facilities are located in the region such as the DCH Healthcare System and the Veterans Administration Medical Hospital. Additionally, numerous clinics and private practice offices provide a wide range of services to address needs in all health-related areas.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Four higher education facilities are located in the region; the University of Alabama, Stillman College, Beville State and Shelton State community colleges. Growth and increased enrollment at the University of Alabama, the area's Community Colleges, and other institutions have provided a strong base for stable jobs in the region.

The University of Alabama, located in Tuscaloosa County, provides numerous resources to the region and the State in the areas of advanced research and outreach. Founded in 1831, U of A is a student-centered research institution. The area economy benefits from student's residency, sports tourism, and a host of programs that promote economic development such as the Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute (AEI), Alabama Industrial Trade Center (AITC), Alabama Small Business Development Center Network, the Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) which houses the Alabama State Data Center (ASDC), the University Center for Economic Development (UACED), and the Southwest Community Development Institute (SCDI).



Stillman College is a private historically black liberal arts college founded in 1876. The college provides a liberal arts curriculum and renowned choir and sports program. The Campus is located in the City of Tuscaloosa. Renovations to historic Winsborough Hall on the campus will develop a new "Living & Learning Center" to include apartments for seniors.



Bevill State Community College operates five sites, two of which are in Region II at Fayette and Carrollton. The Division of Workforce Solutions provides many training opportunities such as Business and Industry Education and Training, Mining Technology/AMTC Program, Adult Education/GED, SOS: Second Opportunity System, and Ready to Work.



Shelton State Community College operates the MBUSI Mechatronics program and offers customized educational and apprenticeship programs to assist in skill training and professional development for business and industry. Programs include: Ready to Work, WorkKeys, Adult education and customized training. Shelton State also operates a Career Services Center and a truck driving program.



RETAIL TRADE

Retail in the region has seen an interesting mix of activity due to impacts from the pandemic. While numerous businesses closed in the urbanized area of Tuscaloosa, many of the rural areas saw increased demand as residents spent more time close to home during lockdowns. Some business shut down initially; but, in most of the region's downtown areas, new businesses have been replacing those that were lost. Overall, the opening of new businesses has been steadily improving especially in the City of Northport and in some rural communities where the opening of Family Dollar/Dollar Tree stores has been on the rise.

ACCOMODATION and FOOD SERVICE

Successful sports programs and strong enrollment at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa County have created a high demand for hotels, restaurants and other establishments. Higher numbers of these businesses, especially in the service sector, are concentrated in Tuscaloosa County. Lodging needs continue to be strong, particularly as it relates to serving the needs of sports tourism and general commercial demand.

FORESTRY and AGRICULTURE

The region contains over 3.4 million acres of land; the vast majorities of which are primarily in timber

and then farmland. Tuscaloosa, Pickens and Fayette counties lead in timber acreage while Pickens and Tuscaloosa have the highest acreage in farmland. Several of the major employers in the region, and many minor ones in most counties, are in forestry-related business. There are 2,450 farms in the region and farming of catfish and crawfish has become well-established in Greene and Hale Counties. New emphasis on local food production and new crops such as hemp and bamboo present new opportunities for the region.

MINING and EXTRACTION

Coal is present in deep mines in Tuscaloosa and Fayette Counties. Warrior Met Coal operates the two mines currently located in The City of Brookwood. In April of 2021 the United Mine Workers of America, the union which represents Warrior Met miners, declared a strike that remains ongoing.

Petroleum and natural gas were first discovered in the region in the early 1900's. The first oil was produced in Lamar County in 1971 followed by production in Fayette and Tuscaloosa Counties. Hunt Refining Company is the second largest of three refineries in the state. Natural gas production began in 1973 in Fayette and Lamar Counties. Production began in Tuscaloosa County in 1980 followed by Pickens County in 1992. The Black Warrior basin in West Alabama is one of the more significant sources of coal bed methane (CBM) in the U.S.

TOURISM and RECREATION

Recreation and tourism have historically brought much revenue to the region, driven primarily from the numerous University of Alabama sports programs; but, this declined significantly during the height of the pandemic. The trends have improved however, and participation levels are increasing as sporting events and festivals have returned. Festivals and attractions across the region are plentiful and include the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater, Kentuck Arts Festival, and the City of Fayette Water Park. Other sources of revenue come from recreation facilities such as Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park, Moundville Archaeological Park, Lake Lurleen State Park, Brierfield Ironworks Historical State Park. These open space attractions saw an increase in participation during the pandemic.

Each county has its own unique attractions, such as historic structures, festivals and other events that are too numerous to list. However, they are significant to that particular county and may increase in regional importance as they grow. For a full display of all that west Alabama has to offer the website www.tourwestalabama.com was developed. The potential for growth in local tourism in the region presents an opportunity to encourage entrepreneurship and diversify the economy, particularly in rural areas.

The predominantly natural setting of the region provides excellent recreational opportunities in hunting and fishing and participation in these activities rose sharply during the pandemic. Sportsmen in the area hunt deer, fox, squirrel, rabbit, quail, dove and other game on both public and private land, lakes, ponds and rivers that are abundant in the region. The Corps of Engineers provides public access areas on the Black Warrior and Tombigbee Rivers; operating its largest campground in the State on the Tombigbee River at Pickensville in Pickens County. Other public areas include Payne Lake, Lake Lurleen, Lake Tuscaloosa, Bibb County Lake, Fayette County Lake and the Lamar County Lake.



Top Employers and Manufacturers by County

Source: WARC, Local Economic Developers

Bibb County

Top Employers

Bibb County Board of Education	521
Bibb Medical Center	308
MollerTech, USA Inc.	301
Wal-Mart Supercenter	217
Bibb Correctional Facility	190

Top Manufacturers

MollerTech, USA Inc.	301
Burkes Mechanical, Inc.	100
Stella-Jones, Inc.	100
Cahaba Veneer, Inc.	90
Fab Weld Steel, Inc.	40

Fayette County

Top Employers

Fayette County Board of Education	556
Fayette Medical Center	299
SHOWA	296
Bevill State Community College	291
Ox Bodies, Inc.	207

Top Manufacturers

SHOWA	296
Ox Bodies, Inc.	207
Interfor	155
King Kutter, Inc.	150
Phifer, Inc.	110

Greene County

Top Employers

Greene County Health System	250
Greene County Board of Education	230
WestRock Company	230
Consolidated Catfish Producers	140
Love's Travel Stop #773	89

Top Manufacturers

WestRock Company	230
Consolidated Catfish Producers	140
United Roofing Manufacturing, Inc.	50
Eutaw Hardwood Dimensions Company	15
National Security Industries	13

Hale County

Top Employers

Hale County Board of Education	375
Westervelt Lumber	326
Hale County Hospital	157
Hale County Commission	110
Colonial Haven Care & Rehab	86

Top Manufacturers

Westervelt Lumber	326
C&S Fabrications, Inc.	40
Plastics, Inc.	37
Greensboro Retread Shop	10
Moundville Metal Works	6

Lamar County

Top Employers

Bolzoni-Auramo	500
Marathon Equipment Company	372
Lamar County Board of Education	285
Weyerhaeuser Company	270
Max Home	192

Top Manufacturers

Bolzoni-Auramo	500
Marathon Equipment Company	372
Weyerhaeuser Company	270
Max Home	192
Steel Dust Recycling	133

Pickens County

Top Employers

Pickens County Board of Education	359
FCI Aliceville	280
Lewis Brothers Lumber Company	118
Aliceville Manor	112
Buchanan Hardwood Flooring, Inc.	100

Top Manufacturers

Lewis Brothers Lumber Company	118
Buchanan Hardwood Flooring, Inc.	100
Buchanan Lumber Birmingham, Inc.	80
McShan Lumber Company, Inc.	63
Nature's Earth Pellets	56

Tuscaloosa County

Top Employers

University of Alabama	7,065
Mercedes-Benz U. S. International	4,500
DCH Regional Medical Center	4,275
Tuscaloosa County Board of Education	2,300
Phifer, Inc.	1,500

Top Manufacturers

Mercedes-Benz U. S. International	4,500
Phifer, Inc.	1,500
Michelin/BF Goodrich Tire Plant	1,200
Lear Corporation	1,026
Brose Tuscaloosa	700

III: THE REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE



ANALYSIS OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Gaining an understanding of current conditions through a review of the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) is an essential first step in plan development. Input for the Playbook SWOT analysis was provided primarily during two planning efforts hosted in the region in coordination with the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development (UACED).

WARC’s BETTER West Alabama initiative (Bringing Economic Tools To Enrich and Revitalize) facilitated action planning for the four counties of Bibb, Greene, Hale, Pickens and select communities in Tuscaloosa. In Fayette and Lamar Counties, the I-22 Corridor Strategic Development Plan program was carried out under an Appalachian Regional Commission grant awarded to UACED. Between these two efforts, participants from across the region completed community surveys that supplemented information gathered during the planning sessions themselves. Additional input was received from conversations and other meetings with local area community leaders, and staff knowledge of area needs and issues.

The findings of the analysis indicate there is general agreement that the region has many valuable assets such as plentiful higher educational and associated outreach, access to pre-K, available land and natural resources, and the presence of robust automotive and manufacturing sectors which provide an important foundation for attracting new economic development. However, public assessment also notes the combined trends of rural population loss and aging infrastructure, along with inadequate broadband quality, challenges with housing and childcare access, lack of rural public transportation, and concerns with K-12 and college/career ready core proficiencies. *Community Conversations on Workforce*, facilitated by UACED staff, were held in the rural counties and highlighted issues of labor force participation and k-12 school performance. Scorecards issued by the Alabama Department of Education indicate students, on the whole, are not performing to the state level in reading, math and science.

The possibility of major natural or man-made disasters is also a well understood and perpetual threat to the region. Other identified threats include the uncertainties associated with new infectious diseases and inflation and recessionary economic conditions, coupled with low worker skills gaps and declining labor force participation.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 was a major catalyst which exacerbated and, in many ways, accelerated the previously existing underlying problems within the region. According to the WARC Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan (PRRP) “the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 are immense and wide ranging.” The PRRP also states there was significant economic dislocation, some of which still lingers on two years later such as challenges with “supply chains, local small business, tourism...and housing.”

Recruitment of new business and industry continues to be cited as the top activity to generate economic development; along with improving workers skills and increased investment in infrastructure. Other opportunities identified by community members in the region include expansion of diversified

workforce initiatives, expansion of broadband, new and existing federal and state funding programs, a focus on recruiting non-traditional workforce talent pools, and embracing and capitalizing upon the automotive industry’s expansion into electric vehicles.

This assessment of the region underpins the vision and strategic goals of the West Alabama Playbook and has informed the role of the WARC, as the EDD, in support of the Playbook goals.

PLAYBOOK SWOT SUMMARY

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
AVAILABLE LAND	AGING/INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES	HOUSING AVAILABILITY AT ALL TIERS
ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION/OUTREACH/R&D	BROADBAND QUALITY/SPEED
AUTOMOTIVE AND MANUFACTURING SECTOR	INTEGRATED HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS	ACCESSIBILITY OF DAYCARE
WORKFORCE SECTOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS	K-12 EDUCATION CORE PROFICIENCY LEVELS
ACCESS TO PRE-K	LIMITED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
OPPORTUNITY	THREAT
FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING PROGRAMS	INFLATION/GLOBAL ECONOMIC FORCES
INDUSTRIAL PARKS/SITES AND INCENTIVES	LOW LABORFORCE PARTICIPATION
VEHICLE ELECTRIFICATION	DIGITAL DISPARITIES
EXPANSION OF WORKFORCE INITIATIVES	WORKER SKILL GAPS
BROADBAND EXPANSION	RURAL POPULATION DECLINE
INCREASED RESILIENCE/ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION	NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS
DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION	INFECTIOUS DISEASE
NON-TRADITIONAL WORKFORCE TALENT POOLS	VARYING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY
TOURISM	

PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS

Anchor Institutions such as universities and medical centers or hospitals provide stability and security to an area and are among the most significant advantages a community or region can possess. They are major employers that grow and add jobs more readily, enhance the knowledge base, and foster a climate of entrepreneurial activity. Our premier anchor institutions are the University of Alabama and the DCH Healthcare system. Similarly, large industry in a region can catalyze cluster and sector growth while providing jobs and driving important innovation needed for future investment. Tier one and two auto suppliers further strengthen the region’s position as top location for manufacturing in the state. Mercedes Benz is the region’s premier industry and continues to be a high-performing industry leader. The new electric vehicles scheduled for production along with the Bibb County Battery plant are literally driving what’s next in Alabama. These entities have shaped the region and account for many of the strengths that, when combined, create an environment for the entire region to prosper.

Regional Anchor Institutions:

The University of Alabama
The DCH Regional Health System

Largest Regional Manufacturer:

Mercedes Benz, U. S. International



Mercedes-Benz

IV: PLAYBOOK STRATEGY



VISION AND STRATEGIC GOALS

The Playbook strategy incorporates the analysis of issues and opportunities identified in section III and seeks to recognize and incorporate the varied needs within the region. The following goals provide a framework that enables the region to achieve its vision, while offering flexibility for emerging or unforeseen needs and priorities. Goals are designed to accommodate a wide range of activities that support current sector strengths while encouraging economic diversification to increase resilience within the regional economy.

VISION for West Alabama: A resilient region advancing local opportunities while driving what's next in Alabama.

GOAL 1:

WITH OUR PEOPLE

Connect citizens of the region with resources and opportunities to better their lives and their communities.

GOAL 2:

FOR OUR PLACES

Build better, safer communities that improve the region as a desirable place to live and work.

GOAL 3:

TOWARD OUR PURPOSE

Assist job creators and innovators to successfully locate or expand in our regional economy.



GOAL OBJECTIVES

Goal 1 PEOPLE: *Connect citizens of the region with resources and opportunities to better their lives and their communities.*

1. Ensure a skilled local workforce is available to increase economic capacity in the region.
2. Improve career education and training programs and facilities that align with current and anticipated job opportunities.
3. Collaborate with educators to enhance workforce readiness and participation.
4. Expand and market opportunities for all levels of job seekers within the region and secure a pathway to training for displaced and under skilled workers.

Goal 2 PLACES: *Build better, safer communities that improve the region as a desirable place to live and work.*

1. Develop, maintain and improve public infrastructure necessary to support and enhance the quality of life in the region.
2. Increase community and private sector participation in the development of public facilities, affordable housing, daycare and transportation services.
3. Improve education, healthcare and public safety services and facilities throughout the region.
4. Protect and maintain natural resources and quality of place assets to benefit residents and increase tourism.

Goal 3 PURPOSE: *Assist job creators and innovators to successfully locate or expand in our regional economy.*

1. Work in partnership with local, regional, state, and national organizations to locate and expand business and industry that diversify or strengthen the region's economy.
2. Promote the use of federal and state programs to develop or improve infrastructure, sites and buildings to better attract and serve business and industry.
3. Develop or expand programs that cultivate entrepreneurs and stimulate economic growth, research and development, and international trade.
4. Partner with business and economic development organizations and financial institutions to provide services to business and industry that attract talent into the region.

REGIONAL TARGETS

Existing plans at the federal, state and regional level, as well as local plans, serve to identify the manner in which alignment of economic development efforts is present in the region. The Manufacturing and Healthcare sectors are a common thread in the region and are also supported by the Alabama Department of Commerce. Additionally, several other targeted sectors have been identified by area stakeholders in economic and workforce development. Whether through a traditional plan or other internal analysis, the sectors identified show much agreement about where the region should focus its energies.

PLAYBOOK PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

The capabilities of the many partnering agencies in the region are heavily relied upon to carry out research, provide technical assistance, and guide and support development efforts. Many educational and technical training providers, state and federal agencies, and area economic developers exist to serve the region and its local governments and stakeholders. This support is readily accessible across the region, and while not an inclusive list, represents the primary sources of assistance available.

PLAN ALIGNMENT

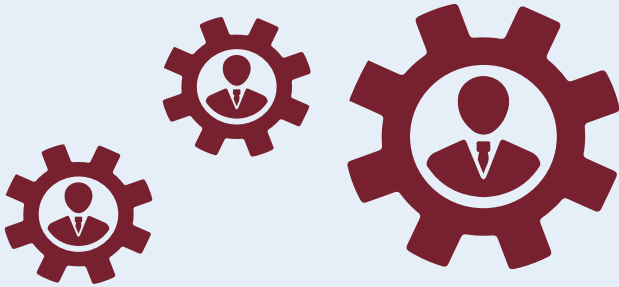
Benjamin Franklin had it right when he coined the phrase “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” The importance of planning has only continued to grow due to the increasing challenges we face. Whether due to a global pandemic or other events, planning is a lifeline that sets us on the path to positive change. WARC developed the BETTER (*Bringing Economic Tools To Enrich and Revitalize*) Initiative as a result of Covid-19 and prepared the **BETTER Pandemic Response and Recovery Plan**. WARC also sought to increase planning at the local level, and with assistance from the University Center for Economic Development, engaged 4 Counties and 14 communities to prepare individual **BETTER Action Plans**. The I-22 Corridor Strategic Development project developed strategic plans in Fayette and Lamar Counties and an overall plan for the I-22 region. Many of these communities, or their leadership, had not participated in a planning exercise before and this provided a wonderful initiation to the benefits of collaboration and meaningful dialog about issues and opportunities.

These local plans, along with many others included on the **Essential Plans** list, were reviewed as part of this planning process and are listed here because they provide the region with a tremendous competitive advantage. The list makes it much easier to identify plans that should be reviewed for alignment and housing the web links to these essential plans within the Playbook provides accessibility and time-saving convenience to stakeholders.

The Playbook’s Essential Plans list can also enhance our stakeholder’s ability to be successful when they apply for funding or other support. Citing a project’s alignment with Federal funding agency priorities or citing that the project is included in a state or local plan is extremely beneficial in a grant proposal. Likewise, some plans in the Playbook are great sources for support data that can equally strengthen a grant request. Grant seekers are also encouraged to illustrate how their request aligns with the goals and objectives of the Playbook itself, as doing so provides an additional source of validation, enhancing the competitiveness of their proposal.

WEST ALABAMA TARGETED SECTORS AND INDUSTRIES

West AlabamaWorks/Region 3 Workforce Council



Targeted Industries

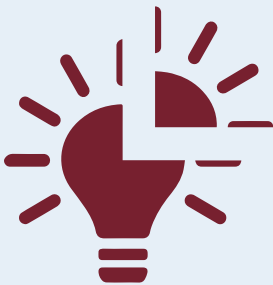
Automotive
Healthcare
Construction
Manufacturing
Professional Services

Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance

Fayette, Lamar and Marion counties

Targeted Industries

Advanced Manufacturing
Automotive Manufacturing
Food Production & Distribution
Logistics, Distribution & Warehousing
Metal Fabrication
Wood Products



Tuscaloosa County Economic Development Authority

Targeted Industries

Advanced Manufacturing
Corporate Operations
Energy
Healthcare
Information Technology
Research & Development

State of Alabama Accelerate 2.0 Plan

Targeted Sectors

Aerospace & Aviation
Agricultural Products & Food Production
Automotive
Bioscience
Chemicals
Forestry Products
Metal & Advanced Materials

Foundational Targets

Corporate Operations
Cybersecurity
Data Centers
Distribution & Logistics
Information Technology
Research & Development



EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS & RESEARCH	STATE AND FEDERAL
<u>Bevill State Community College</u>	<u>Alabama Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program</u>
<u>Bevill State Workforce Development</u>	<u>Alabama Agribusiness Council</u>
<u>Bevill State Career Technical Education</u>	<u>Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC)</u>
<u>Shelton State Community College</u>	<u>Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association</u>
<u>Shelton State Corporate Partnerships and Apprentices</u>	<u>Alabama Clean Water Partnership</u>
<u>Shelton State Workforce Development</u>	<u>Alabama Cooperative Extension System</u>
<u>Stillman College</u>	<u>Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries</u>
<u>University of Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama Department of Commerce (ADC)</u>
<u>Alabama Institute of Manufacturing Excellence (AIME)</u>	<u>Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources</u>
<u>Bama Technology Incubator (BTI)</u>	<u>Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)</u>
<u>Center for Advanced Vehicle Technologies</u>	<u>Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM)</u>
<u>Center for Materials for Information Technology (MINT)</u>	<u>Alabama Department of Industrial Relations (ADIR)</u>
<u>Professional and Management Development</u>	<u>Alabama Department of Labor</u>
<u>Alabama Industrial Assessment Center (AIAC)</u>	<u>Alabama Department of Tourism</u>
<u>Alabama Productivity Center</u>	<u>Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT)</u>
<u>Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER)</u>	<u>Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)</u>
<u>Central Analytical Facility</u>	<u>Alabama Environmental Council</u>
<u>University of West Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC)</u>
<u>University of West Alabama Workforce Development</u>	<u>Alabama Historical Commission (AHC)</u>
HIGH SCHOOL CAREER CENTERS	<u>Alabama Industrial Development and Training (AIDT)</u>
<u>Bibb County Career Academy</u>	<u>Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM)</u>
<u>Greene County Career Center</u>	<u>Alabama Rural Development Office (ARDO)</u>
<u>Hale County College and Career Academy</u>	<u>Alabama Technology Network</u>
<u>Lamar County School of Technology</u>	<u>Alabama Works/Workforce Development Councils</u>
<u>Pickens County College and Career Center</u>	<u>Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)</u>
<u>Tuscaloosa County Schools Career and Tech Education</u>	<u>Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA)</u>
REGIONAL	<u>Delta Regional Authority (DRA)</u>
<u>Alabama Gas</u>	<u>Economic Development Administration (EDA)</u>
<u>Alabama Power</u>	<u>Economic Development Association of Alabama (EDAA)</u>
<u>Aliceville Chamber of Commerce</u>	<u>Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA)</u>
<u>Bibb County Chamber of Commerce</u>	<u>Rural Water Association of Alabama</u>
<u>Black Warrior Electric Membership Corp.</u>	<u>U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)</u>
<u>Northwest Alabama Economic Development Alliance</u>	<u>U.S.D.A. Rural Development</u>
<u>Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama</u>	COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
<u>Community Service Programs of West Alabama</u>	<u>Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute</u>
<u>Fayette Area Chamber of Commerce</u>	<u>Alabama International Trade Center (AITC)</u>
<u>Greene County Industrial Development Authority</u>	<u>Alabama Small Business Development Center Network</u>
<u>Rural Planning Organization (RPO)</u>	<u>Community Development Institute Southeast</u>
<u>Southern Natural Gas</u>	<u>Economic Development Academy</u>
<u>Tuscaloosa Area Black Chamber of Commerce</u>	<u>University Center for Economic Development (UACED)</u>
<u>Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)</u>	<u>University of West Alabama Small Business Development Center</u>
<u>Tuscaloosa County Economic Development Authority</u>	<u>University of West Alabama Community Development</u>
<u>West Alabama Regional Commission</u>	
<u>West Alabama Works</u>	

FEDERAL

[Appalachia Envisioned: ARC's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#) – Appalachian Regional Commission
[Moving the Delta Forward: Delta Regional Development Plan III](#) – Delta Regional Authority

STATE

[Accelerate Alabama 2.0](#)
[Alabama 2021 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#)
[Alabama Drought Management Plan](#)
[Alabama Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan](#)
[Alabama Water Institute Strategic Plan 2021-2026](#)
[Clearing The Path: Galvanizing the Economic Impact of Women](#)
[Retain Alabama Report – EDPA 2020](#)
[The Alabama Connectivity Plan](#) and [The Alabama Broadband Map](#)

REGIONAL

[Electrify the South - Electric Transportation Toolkit](#)
[BETTER WEST AL Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan](#)
[Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis -Tuscaloosa MSA \(Tuscaloosa, Hale and Pickens\)](#)
[I-22 Corridor Strategic Development Project](#) [I-22 Corridor Strategic Development Plan](#)
[Region 3 Workforce Strategy](#)
[State of Workforce Report XIV: West](#)
[West Alabama Chamber Next Level – Executive Summary](#)

WARC Transportation Plans

[Long-Range Transportation Plan - 2045 ; Interactive Map of Projects](#)
[Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\) - Fiscal Years 2020-2023 ; Interactive Map of Projects \(2020-2023\)](#)
[Tuscaloosa Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2020; Interactive Map of Bicycle Projects ; Interactive Map of Pedestrian Projects](#)
[West Alabama Coordinated Public Transit Plan 2019](#)
[Statewide Transportation Improvement Program 2020-2023 \(STIP\) ; Interactive map of the STIP projects in the West Alabama RPO Planning Area](#)

Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation plans

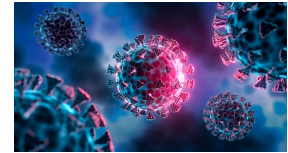
[Division C Regional Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)
[Northwest Alabama Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan \(Division E\)](#)

LOCAL

[Creating a BETTER West Alabama – County and Local Level Action Plans](#)
[Fayette County Strategic Development Plan \(I-22 Corridor Strategic Development\)](#)
[Lamar County Strategic Development Plan \(I-22 Corridor Strategic Development\)](#)

County Hazard Mitigation plans - Fayette County 2021 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update
City of Tuscaloosa Plans – [Framework](#); [Elevate Tuscaloosa](#) ; [City Planning Documents](#)

DISASTER AND RESILIENCY STRATEGY



Economic resiliency refers to the ability of the local and regional economy to bounce back from economic shock. Economic shock could be due to a natural disaster that affects the local economy, a plant closing, or anything, such as a pandemic, that would have a sudden and significant negative impact on local jobs and income. A goal of economic resiliency is to make the community shock-resistant so that such events have as little negative impact as possible.

Disruptions and economic shocks to the regional economy of West Alabama can occur at any time and are difficult to predict. This was shown to be true as Covid-19 became a global pandemic impacting not just the United States and our local economy, but every economy in the world, proving just how collectively vulnerable we really are.

In response, the WARC has undertaken various efforts to address economic resilience with specific regard to the general economy, local business in particular, natural hazards that may impact the local and regional economy, and most recently, the pandemic.

The West Alabama Economic Development Playbook. The West Alabama Economic Development Playbook, of which this section is a part, is the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the West Alabama Region. The Playbook contains a SWOT analysis in Section III that notes certain threats to the local and regional economy as well as strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

Three of the listed threats in the SWOT analysis are of particular concern with regard to economic shock. Natural and manmade disasters, as well as certain global economic forces, pose very real threats; and, both have the potential to disrupt the local or regional economy in the event of a crisis. Added to that is the possibility of an infectious disease pandemic or other community health issue triggering an economic disruption. With this in mind, the Playbook goals and objectives were developed to be flexible and broad enough to accommodate future challenges. Strategies specific to responding to disasters and building resiliency are, at a fundamental level, not so different than those of the overall plan.

Business Preparedness Toolkits. The “Playbook Action Plan” of the prior CEDS included an item to “maintain Ready Business Toolkits for each county in the Region.” This item directly addresses the topic of economic resilience. Since the adoption of the prior CEDS, a Business Preparedness Toolkit has been developed for each county within the Region. These toolkits include: information for businesses from FEMA including information about the National Flood Insurance Program; an emergency supply checklist; a sample business emergency plan; a sample shelter-in-place plan; and a sample crisis communications plan. These are available on the WARC’s website www.warc.info/planning-documents and may be used by any business to help make their organization more resilient.

Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans. Natural hazard mitigation planning is the process of determining how to reduce or eliminate the loss of life and property damage resulting from natural hazards such as tornadoes, flooding, and winter storms. Such loss of life and property damage can have a negative impact on the economy if it is extensive, as well as, severe impact on individual businesses. The State is divided into emergency management divisions which cover regional areas of the State. Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans are prepared to cover all counties within the State of Alabama.

The Division C Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan for the 10-county area included in the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) Division C contains strategies and specific actions for Bibb, Greene, Hale, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa counties of the WARC region along with the five counties of Dallas, Perry, Marengo, Sumter and Wilcox. This Plan was prepared and is maintained by the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission (ATRC).

The Northwest Alabama Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan for AEMA Division E contains strategies and specific actions for Lamar County of the WARC region along with the counties of Colbert, Franklin, Lawrence, Walker and Winston. This plan was prepared and is maintained by the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG). Fayette County, while located in AEMA Division E, prepared its own county-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan.

BETTER (Bringing Economic Tools To Enrich and Revitalize) Initiative. With funding assistance from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), WARC developed a multi-pronged approach to jump start recovery from the impacts of Covid-19. The initiative focused on a study of the pandemic’s impacts to the region and developing a recovery strategy; strengthening the capacity of those in key leadership roles; and, action planning to help our communities identify and address their most important needs. A summary of BETTER program highlights is provided on the following page.

The Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan. In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, over the course of 2020, 2021, and early 2022 the West Alabama Regional Commission researched and prepared the “BETTER” Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan. The Plan examined the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic and culminated in fifteen opportunities for recovery and resilience that aligned with the existing CEDS goal areas of *People, Places, and Purpose*. These opportunities now serve as the foundation for WARC’s disaster and resilience strategy. These fifteen opportunities are each described in the Plan and are summarized as follows.

Summary of Opportunities

Workforce and Training Opportunities	Asset and Infrastructure Development Opportunities	Business and Entrepreneurial Support Opportunities
<i>Supporting the CEDS Goal for People</i>	<i>Supporting the CEDS Goal for Places</i>	<i>Supporting the CEDS Goal for Purpose</i>
Workforce Development Coordination and Outreach	Community Development Financing	Rural Business Outreach and Assistance
Regional Workforce Development Council Support	Economic Development Financing	Financial Programs Outreach and Assistance
Work-Related Transportation Options	Higher Education Relationships	Revolving Loan Fund Enhancement
Work-Related Child Care Options	Health Care Asset Mapping	Emergency Business Practices Resource Guide
Community Leadership Training	Private Foundation Asset Mapping	Business District Planning and Development

WARC has already begun implementation of several opportunities noted above. A special revolving loan fund program called the C-19 Loan Fund was developed to make small loans, with fewer requirements, to businesses impacted by Covid-19. The program offered a quick turnaround of up to \$25,000 to be used for working capital, and deferred the repayment start date by three months to provide added relief during the crisis.

To improve locating important healthcare assets, WARC created the **BE WELL West Alabama Healthcare Locator** interactive map that includes hospitals, urgent care facilities, Covid testing and vaccination sites, mental health and substance use facilities and other resources available in the West Alabama region. The map can be accessed from both the WARC and the Area Agency on Aging websites.





Bringing Economic Tools To Enrich and Revitalize

BETTER LEADERSHIP

BETTER Leadership Program:
Four-session - 16 hour Curriculum
36 participants/7 counties/
19 Jurisdictions

Alabama Association of Regional
Councils Training Conference:
2 Sessions
16 sponsorships

BETTER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Municipal Clerk's Institute Program:
3 sessions
34 sponsorships

Your Town Alabama:
3-day intensive planning
14 sponsorships

BETTER PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Developed C-19 loan program:
12 loans made to small businesses
9 jobs created/ 66 jobs retained

Created BETTER West Alabama
Newsletter

Developed BE WELL West Alabama
Healthcare Locator map

BETTER ACTION PLANNING

BETTER Action Plans:
4 counties
14 communities

Project implementation underway

The BETTER WAL Initiative was made possible through funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) as part of its CARES Act Recovery Assistance Program



The action plan supports the goals of the Playbook and will be carried out in two ways; **WARC ACTION ITEMS** will be carried out by WARC, representing the Economic Development District (EDD), working closely with local governments and strategy committee members. **PARTNER ACTION ITEMS** will be carried out by economic development and workforce partners, and stakeholders or local governments. WARC will support and assist with the implementation of these actions as determined.

WARC ACTION ITEMS

Goal 1 Actions

1.1 Maintain the **West Alabama Regional Directory**. The Directory lists local government, state, federal, and miscellaneous agency contacts and is a valuable resource, especially in times of emergency. The directory is updated on a continuous basis and is posted Online.

1.2 Pursue *Workforce and Training Opportunities* in the **BETTER Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan**.

Goal 2 Actions

2.1 WARC may provide grant and administration services as needed or assist with implementation of community development projects identified in member government **BETTER Action Plans** or the **I-22 Corridor Strategic Development Plans**.

2.2 Produce the **Grant and Loan Guide for Local Governments in West Alabama**. The resource provides federal, state and select non-profit opportunities from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) and many others.

2.3 Pursue the *Asset and Infrastructure Development Opportunities* in the **BETTER Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan**.

2.4 Develop a regional brownfields program. WARC will seek funding from the Environmental Protection Agency EPA to identify and assess brownfield sites.

Goal 3 Actions

3.1 Offer lending assistance through the **WARC Revolving Loan Fund Program**. The program assists small to medium sized businesses creating jobs in the region.

3.2 WARC may provide grant and administration services as needed or assist with implementation of economic development projects identified in member governments **BETTER Action Plans** or the **I-22 Corridor Strategic Development Plans**.

3.3 Produce the **West Alabama Mining and Manufacturing Directory**. The Directory includes address and contact information, employment number, raw materials and finished product.

3.4 Pursue the *Business and Entrepreneurial Support Opportunities* in the **BETTER Pandemic Recovery and Resiliency Plan**.

PARTNER ACTION ITEMS

Activities carried out by individual communities and stakeholder groups that have the ability to provide considerable regional impact are noted below. These projects have been identified as priorities; are in the planning stage; or, are expected to be carried out within the next five years. While activities of localized impact, and projects cited in local plans are too numerous to be listed here, they are significant to the immediate area they serve and contribute greatly to the overall strength of the region as a whole. These accomplishments, many of which are carried out by local governments, economic and workforce development agencies and area non-profits, are reflected in the **Playbook Gains** report.

Goal 1 Actions

- 1.1 Establish Cyber-security and Information Technology Center at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa. Complete Economic Development Administration grant to create 100 new jobs and retain 100 existing jobs through expanded curricula, training opportunities, and certificates in IT.
- 1.2 Complete the Delta Regional Authority funded Work force Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) grant awarded to the West Alabama Chamber Foundation to assist Greene, Hale and Pickens counties gain workforce education and training.

Goal 2 Actions

- 2.1 Complete US-11 Roadway Improvements; Daimler Benz Boulevard to Highway 5 in Tuscaloosa and Bibb counties.
- 2.2 Begin the West Central Alabama Highway project to provide four-lane access from north of the City of Fayette to I-22 in Brilliant. See map in Appendix C.
- 2.3 Begin the West Alabama Highway project to provide four-lane access from Thomasville to Tuscaloosa County just north of the City of Moundville. See map in Appendix C.
- 2.4 Complete remaining approved Tuscaloosa County Road Improvement Commission (TCRIC) projects. See map in Appendix C.
- 2.5 Establish the Cooperative Institute for Research to Operations in Hydrology – CIROH at the Alabama Water Institute on the UA Campus. Funding of \$360 million has been designated through NOAA for a period of five years.
- 2.6 Complete Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization project to enhance outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities at the Cahaba National Wildlife Refuge in Bibb County.

Goal 3 Actions

- 3.1 Construct the Smart Communities and Innovation Building to support the Alabama Mobility and Power (AMP) Initiative at the University of Alabama campus.
- 3.2 Upgrade facilities at the Tuscaloosa National Airport; expand operations to add commercial service.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

To assess the implementation of the Playbook and ensure its success, it will be evaluated each year as an annual update. The results of this evaluation will be submitted to the Economic Development Administration, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs and the Board of Directors of the West Alabama Regional Commission serving as the Playbook strategy committee, and will be posted on the WARC website.

The evaluation will have two components. The first component **Playbook Gains – Announcements** will note new developments, events and accomplishments in the region that address Playbook goals, while the second component, **Playbook Gains - Stats** will quantify the number and types of investments from federal and state funding programs, which is a Playbook goal in its own right, and will note those projects directly assisted by WARC. Stats will be tabulated as follows:

1. Number of Federal and State funded investments submitted or approved.
2. Estimated number of jobs created or retained as a result of funded projects/programs.
3. Estimated amount of local/private investment generated by funded projects/programs.

2022 PLAYBOOK GAINS

PLAYBOOK GAINS - ANNOUNCEMENTS: Community, Workforce, and Economic Development activities in FY2022 include:

Community Development

- Cahaba Medical Care opens in West Blocton.
- Bibb Medical Center and Shelton State partner to offer Practical Nursing (PN) Program for fall 2022 semester.
- Lightwave internet service to become available in Brent.
- West Central Alabama Highway announced to provide 16 mile four-lane expansion with route on Hwy 43 north of City of Fayette with Winfield bypass to connection at I-22; estimated cost is \$250 mil with 6-10 year construction period.
- Fayette County High School ranked 28th best in state; 3rd consecutive year to be in top 50.
- Ribbon cutting held for Mercy & Grace Home Health Care Service to join Greene County Health System.
- City of Eutaw included in Auburn's RAISE transportation safety program to design construction plans for sidewalks.
- Greene County selected for pilot EPA/USDA Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap Community Initiative.
- Lamar EMA submits FEMA safe room grants for Detroit, Kennedy and Millport; two in Vernon.
- Town of Millport launches new website; includes E-Notify feature to sign up for special announcements.
- ADECA funds \$510,922 to Pickens County Community Action Committee and Community Development Corporation Inc.
- Aliceville begins participation in Alabama Communities of Excellence Program (ACE).
- Aliceville holds grand opening for Boys and Girls Club.
- Carrollton Farmers Market hosts grand opening May 7, 2022.
- West Alabama Highway (WAH) project announced as part of State's REBUILD ALABAMA ACT; will link Mobile to Tuscaloosa with four-lane highway following portions of Highway 69 and 43 between Thomasville and Moundville.
- University Medical Center – Northport Clinic under construction at 1871 retail center in Northport.
- City of Tuscaloosa approves \$7.4 mil contract to build River District Park; western expansion of Tuscaloosa Riverwalk and bicycle pedestrian path and pedestrian bridge.
- City of Tuscaloosa and UA complete \$7 mil project to construct new water tank on Campus Drive.
- University of Alabama begins construction on new \$50 mil Performing Arts Academic Center at Bryce Campus.
- Randall Family Park and Trail head opens at new Northern Riverwalk in Tuscaloosa.
- City of Tuscaloosa to invest \$27.5 million in Ed Love Raw Water station (\$12M); Lift Station #3 (\$8M) and MBUSI service line (\$7.5M).
- Tesla constructs 8-stall electric car charging site in Cottondale.
- City of Tuscaloosa approves \$60 million Northriver Commons mixed-use planned unit development to be located off New Watermelon Road.

- City of Northport follows Northern Pedestrian Plan with new Southern Pedestrian Plan designed to connect with existing Northport Riverwalk and Main Avenue improvements downtown.
- Elevate Tuscaloosa begins Lake Harris/Lake Nicol public planning involvement process.
- Black Belt Community foundation makes multiple awards to local non-profits in West Alabama; Greene County – 8; Hale County – 4; Pickens County – 4.
- WARC maintained the WARC Regional Directory **(Playbook Goal 1; Action 1.1)**
- WARC is administering projects on behalf of the following local governments:
 - Town of West Blocton – ARC, MBUSI Sewer: Close Out approved
 - Town of West Blocton – CDBG, MBUSI Sewer: Close Out approved
 - Hale County Commission – CDBG-CV, Hale EMS ambulance
 - City of Moundville Water Tank – AL SRF, (Davis Bacon Compliance)
 - Town of Millport – ARC, Water Resiliency (generators)
 - Pickens County Commission – CDBG-CV, EMA storage building and LUCAS devices
 - City of Aliceville – DRA, 17th Street improvements
 - Town of Carrollton – DRA, Sewer rehab
 - Town of Carrollton – CDBG-CV2, Fire station expansion for Covid testing
 - Town of Gordo – ARC, Rehab 3 lift stations
 - City of Reform – DRA, New water well
 - City of Reform – CDBG, Sewer Rehab: Close Out approved
 - City of Reform – ARC, Lift Station upgrades: Close Out submitted**(Playbook Goal 2; WARC Action 2.1)**
- WARC submitted grant applications on behalf of following local governments:
 - Town of Carrollton – LWCF, Playground and lighting
 - Town of Gordo – LWCF, Playground and splashpad
 - City of Brookwood – LWCF, Brookwood Sports Complex improvements**(Playbook Goal 2; WARC Action 2.1)**
- WARC developed the BE WELL Healthcare Locator map. **(Playbook Resiliency Strategy)**

Workforce

- Emergency job fair held March 18 to address closure of Fayette Fabrication; 65 attended with 32 receiving job offers that same day.
- Hiring fair held at Boligee Community Center sponsored by West AlabamaWorks and other partners; over 100 employers represented.
- West AlabamaWorks host job fair in Eutaw May 19, 2022; 47 added to Career Connect Portal.
- Hale County schools to be part of pilot Health Science and Technology Academy with the UA College of Nursing.
- West AlabamaWorks hosts job fair in Greensboro June 9, 2022; 55 added to Career Connect Portal.
- West AlabamaWorks host job fair in Hale County.
- City of Aliceville and Bevill State coordinate to offer continuing education courses at the Aliceville armory building.
- West AlabamaWorks partnered with DCH Health Systems for outreach event at Aliceville Library.
- Pickens County schools to be part of pilot Health Science and Technology Academy with the UA College of Nursing.

- West AlabamaWorks hosts job fair in Pickens County; 25 added to Career Connect Portal.
- West AlabamaWorks partnered with Lear Corp for on-site hiring event in November – 60 applicants.
- West AlabamaWorks partnered with DCH Health Systems for hiring event in November – 65 applicants.
- West AlabamaWorks hosts virtual 2021 WOW event in October – 2,900 students, parents and teachers participate.
- MBUSI hosts virtual hiring event for production team members January 24, 2022.
- West AlabamaWorks postponing 2022 WOW until fall due to covid.
- West AlabamaWorks partners with Tuscaloosa Sports and Tourism, local Restaurant & Hospitality Association for hiring event – 36 companies participate.
- University of Alabama Center for Economic Development hosts Four Course Hospitality Training – offered to Greene, Hale Pickens and 4 other Black Belt counties.
- West AlabamaWorks hosts hiring event at Lear Corporation in Tuscaloosa.
- WOW 2.0 held April 6th at Shelton State Community college; 418 contingent job offers made to attending high school seniors.
- West AlabamaWorks hosted over 60 high school seniors at its Regional Signing Day for post-graduation jobs or apprenticeship.
- West AlabamaWorks hosts virtual job fair June 8-15 with DCH to fill 100 healthcare jobs.
- West AlabamaWorks hosts inaugural Disability Hiring Expo with United Cerebral Palsy of West Alabama. Over 60 people connected in Career Connect portal.
- West AlabamaWorks partners with Region 4 Central 6 for LEAR Corp for hiring event July 28, 2022 – 50 participants enrolled in Career Connect Portal.
- West AlabamaWorks partners with LEAR Corp for hiring event Aug 24, 2022.
- West AlabamaWorks and Tuscaloosa DA's Office host Second Chance Hiring Event Aug 30, 2022.
- MEGA WOW hosted by Tuscaloosa Career and Technology Academy September 1, 2022.
- WTIA Workforce Institute awarded GOOD JOBS CHALLENGE EDA grant to develop technology workforce in 11 regions across the U.S. including Alabama.
- Alabama Tourism office announces funding of new hospitality industry training program to be carried out by Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association and the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development.
- Alabama Department of Commerce awarded DRA Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) grant for \$1,384,792.

Economic Development

- KyKenKee Inc. hosts legislative mill tour as part of Woods to Goods Week celebration to highlight Alabama forest industry.
- Cahaba Pressure Treated Wood Products and Cahaba Timber acquired by Canadian corporation Stella-Jones, Inc.
- Grand opening ceremony held at new MBUSI battery plant in Bibb County; 600 jobs created by three MBUSI facilities located at the Bibb campus.
- Urban Monkey Coffee shop opens in McCalla in Bibb County.
- Patriot Aircraft USA locates at Bibb County Airport – will produce its own Patriot 2-seater aircraft design and repair/restore planes and add 100 workers.
- Big Potato Company eatery opens in Centreville.

- Winn Dixie and additional tenants to occupy new shopping center development at Highways 11 & 5 in Woodstock.
- Bibb County proposed hiring of dedicated economic developer to be supported by local municipalities.
- SHOWA Group selected among 12 top-rated companies for inaugural Made in Alabama Showcase to highlight Alabama-American made products during Manufacturing Month.
- O’Neal Manufacturing Services to locate in former Fayette Fab location – will create 70 jobs.
- The Coffee Shop; Furniture Plus; and Shop & Save Outlet open in historic downtown Eutaw.
- Glenville Antiques & Gifts opens in Eutaw.
- Ribbon cutting held in Eutaw for re-opening of Square Roots restaurant.
- Ribbon cutting held for Soul Out Café in Eutaw.
- Jacks Family Restaurant opens in Moundville.
- Dollar General Market announces opening of 12,000 square foot store in Moundville.
- Cole’s Antiques & Uniques and The Golden Oldie open in downtown Millport.
- Heavenly Makeovers & Blush Dream Boutique opens in Vernon.
- Extra Mile convenience store opens in Vernon.
- Grand opening held for new Vernon Medical Center.
- Sulligent Hardware to open on Front Street in Sulligent.
- Ribbon cuttings held in Sulligent for new business locations for Cagle & Sandlin Tax & Accounting LLC and Sulligent Tire & Lube.
- New Family Dollar/Dollar Tree store opens in Millport.
- Ribbon cutting held for opening of Salon on Elm in Sulligent.
- Dandelions and Daisies holds grand opening in Pine Springs community near Sulligent.
- McGee Buildings to expand and add 7 new jobs in Lamar County.
- Ribbon cutting held for new business Pink Peach Boutique in Sulligent.
- Grand opening held for Sulligent Drug at new location.
- New Family Dollar opens in Vernon.
- New Loftis Park opens in Beaverton.
- Movie “Vernon” partially shot on location, premieres at Vernon Auditorium.
- Thrive 4 Fitness opens in Carrollton.
- Flower Girl florist opens in Reform.
- New Family Dollar/Dollar Tree store opens in Reform.
- Sisters by Mary boutique opens in Aliceville.
- The Edge Tuscaloosa host DEMO-Day financing workshop (120 visitors) and 3rd annual River Pitch event for start-ups (150 attendees).
- MBUSI expands Tuscaloosa plant in preparation for 2022 production of EQS and EQE sport utility electric vehicles.
- University of Alabama’s (Drive Regional Innovation through Vehicle Electrification (DRIVE) selected as finalist in EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge; project was not selected for funding in final round.
- U.S. Geological Survey to partner with The University of Alabama to construct a new \$38.5 million Hydrologic Instrumentation Facility. The 95,000-square-foot, two-story facility will include a hydraulics lab, water quality labs, field testing facilities, environmental chambers, sensor innovation space, warehouse, training labs, network operations center, and administrative offices. Construction to begin in late 2022, and the USGS plans to take occupancy in 2023.

- The Venue of Tuscaloosa announced; will include open area with live-entertainment stage, 5 restaurants and ice-cream/coffee shop to be located near Sokol Park on Watermelon Road.
- Building Bridges Institute for Racial Reconciliation has ribbon cutting in Tuscaloosa.
- Stillman College announces athletics apparel deal with New Balance – marks company’s first contract with a Historically Black College or University (HBCU).
- Alley Cake Co. opens in former Mary’s Cakes and Pastries shop in Northport.
- Northport proposes to construct \$14mil Linear Park connecting four local schools to businesses along Rose Boulevard.
- JNJ production, LLC (apparel screen printing) announces \$5,126,584 investment to be completed in 2023; will add 34 jobs in Northport.
- 5 Star Custom Portable Buildings opens in Northport.
- Grand opening held in Northport for Great American Cookie and Marble Slab Creamery.
- Fit Foodz will announces \$15 million poultry processing plant in City of Tuscaloosa – will create 180 new jobs.
- Mercedes-Benz USA has launched the Mercedes-EQ Experience. The three-day training program will ensure that the dealership and corporate employees are equipped with the company’s strategy and sustainability commitments and prepared to build enthusiasm for the company’s new EQ vehicles.
- Innovate Alabama awards 30 grants including two to west Alabama: BioGradMatch, Tuscaloosa joint venture between Stillman College and Admit Academy help students apply to well-matched biomedical graduate programs and EH Group, Inc., to develop tools to detect and identify objects in military satellite images.
- WARC Revolving Loan fund activities:
 - Four new C-19 Loans; one C—19 loan paid. **(Playbook Resiliency Strategy)**
- WARC is partnering in the ARC I-22 Corridor Strategic Development Project (Fayette/Lamar counties) led by University Center for Economic Development. **(Playbook Resiliency Strategy)**
- WARC carried out the BETTER (Bringing Economic Tools To Enrich and Revitalize) Initiative, supported by EDA Cares funding. The program has completed a pandemic recovery plan; held a region-wide leadership training program; provided sponsorships for capacity training; and completed county and local-level action plans. **(Playbook Resiliency Strategy)**

FY2022 PLAYBOOK GAINS - STATS

Location	Activity/Description	Playbook Goal	Grant\$ Loan\$	Local\$ Private\$	Funding Sources	Jobs Created/ Retained	Project Status
Bibb County	EMA extraction tool; public education materials	2	\$18,478	\$0	TRC&D		Awarded
Bibb County	Greenpond Water system improvements	2	\$4,045,119	\$0	ADEM ARPA-SRF		Approved
Bibb County	Reconstruct airport taxiway and new taxi lane	2	\$1,521,654		FAA/AIP		Approved
Bibb County	Chaba River National Wildlife Refuge improvement	2	\$2,433,960		AMLER		Applied
Brent	Well #7	2	\$795,000	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Brent	Sewer Improvements	2	\$500,000		CDBG		Applied
Centreville	Canoe Launch improvements & permitting	2	\$3,000	\$0	TRC&D		Awarded
Centreville	Watermain replacement	2	\$1,320,301	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Centreville	Sewer Rehab	2	\$1,670,773	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Centreville	Cahaba Medical Care Foundation Residency prgrm	1	\$8,640,000		HRSA		Approved
West Blocton	Water system improvements	2	\$2,998,990	\$375,000	ADEM ARPA-SRF		Approved
West Blocton	Sewer Improvements	2	\$1,213,572	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Woodstock	Sewer Pump Station rehab (Exit 100)	2	\$200,000	\$445,977	ARC	45	Awarded
Woodstock	Sewer system upgrades	2	\$2,288,350	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Woodstock	Senior Center upgrades		\$3,000	\$0	TRC&D		Awarded
Fayette County	Nine community projects	2	\$94,642	\$0	TRC&D		Awarded
Fayette County	EMA Equipment	2	\$18,000	\$0	DHS		Awarded
Belk	Watermain Rehab	2	\$511,780	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Belk	Water system improvements	2	\$400,000		CDBG		Applied
Berry	Sewer upgrades	2	\$200,000	\$90,000	ARC		Awarded
Berry	Sewer upgrades	2	\$350,000		CDBG		Awarded
Berry	Water system improvements	2	\$400,000		CDBG		Applied
Fayette	Sewer upgrades	2	\$700,000	\$300,000	ARC		Awarded
Fayette	Water supply improvements	2	\$222,100	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Fayette	Airport Taxilane Pavement Maintenance Project	2	\$56,062	\$18,688	ALDOT		Approved
Fayette	Equipment for cardboard recycling program	2	\$24,545	\$0	ADEM		Awarded
Fayette	159 Pump station rehab	2	\$350,000	\$181,000	ARC		Applied
Glen Allen	Water system improvements	2	\$510,000	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Glen Allen	Street and Drainage improvements	2	\$275,000		CDBG		Applied
Greene County	Update Crossroads of America (COA) Masterplan	2	\$75,000	\$25,000	USDA RBOG		Approved
Greene County	Five community projects	2	\$5,375	\$0	TCR&D		Awarded
Greene County	Greene Track Lagoon upgrades	2	\$1,036,325	\$96,667	ADEM ARPA-SRF		Approved
Greene County	Water system Improvements	2	\$4,678,000	\$325,000	ADEM ARPA-SRF		Approved
Boligee	Sewer Improvements	2	\$2,121,000	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Boligee	Sewer Improvements	2	\$400,000		CDBG		Applied
Eutaw	Covid Center - Roof replacement	2	\$500,000	\$15,620	CDBG-CV2		Not Funded
Forkland	Water system improvements	2	\$1,623,950	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Forkland	Parks/Playground	2	\$400,000		CDBG		Applied
Hale County	Hale Water Authority CR 64, 21, 69 line imp	2	\$500,000		CDBG		Applied
Hale County	Water improvements	2	\$7,458,000	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Hale County	Five community projects	2	\$38,829	\$0	TCR&D		Awarded
Akron	Sewer system upgrades	2	\$3,597,400	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Akron	Water system upgrades	2	\$4,195,675	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Greensboro	Sewer Improvements	2	\$850,000	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Greensboro	Water improvements	2	\$850,000	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Greensboro	Rehabilitate airport runway	2	\$1,063,373		FAA/AIP		Awarded
Moundville	Sewer system upgrades	2	\$1,203,200	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Moundville	Market Street Watermain replacement	2	\$659,500	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Moundville	Water system improvements	2	\$1,800,600	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Lamar County	Three community projects	2	\$38,177	\$0	TCR&D		Awarded
Lamar County	Communications upgrades; Sheriff & Fire dept	2	\$50,000		DHS		Applied
Millport	Sewer line repairs	2	\$1,000,000		ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Millport	Water Treatment Plant Upgrades	2	\$500,000		ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Millport	Water Resiliency Upgrades (generators)	2	\$170,380	\$73,020	ARC		Awarded
Millport	Water Treatment Plant Upgrades	2	\$499,565	\$0	CDBG-CV2		Not Funded
Sulligent	Stormwater drainage SR118 (Main St)	2	\$865,636	\$0	ATRIP2		Awarded
Sulligent	Humbers Subdivision sewer extension	2	\$2,122,090		ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Vernon	Volunteer Fire Dept	2	\$10,000		State of AL		Awarded
Vernon	Sewer lagoon improvements	2	\$4,060,000		ADEM ARPA -SRF		Not Funded

Vernon	Speculative Building	2	\$350,000	\$150,000	CDBG		Applied
Pickens County	Seven community projects	2	\$34,977	\$0	TCR&D		Awarded
Pickens County	PCCAC Low income water bill assistance	1	\$107,954	\$0	ADECA		Approved
Aliceville	17th Street Improvements	2	\$120,000	\$180,000	DRA		Awarded
Aliceville	Snoddy well #2	2	\$930,000		ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Carrollton	Fire Station addition - Covid	2	\$498,582	\$0	CDBG-CV2		Awarded
Carrollton	Spring Street bridge replacement	2	\$300,000	\$218,876	CDBG-ENH		Not Funded
Carrollton	Sewer I&I Upgrades	2	\$272,794	\$12,225	DRA		Awarded
Carrollton	Sewer line repairs	2	\$1,000,000		ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Gordo WSG	Sullivan Well Rehabilitation	2	\$1,674,002	\$325,000	ADEM ARPA-SRF		Approved
Reform	Volunteer Fire Dept	2	\$10,300		State of AL		Awarded
Reform	Water Well	2	\$500,000	\$0	CDBG-CV2		Not Funded
Reform	Water Well	2	\$250,000	\$408,139	DRA		Awarded
Reform	Water system upgrades	2	\$5,500,000		ADEM ARPA -SRF		Approved
Reform	New sewer lift station and repairs	2	\$1,500,000		ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Tuscaloosa County	Carroll's Creek Blue Creek expansion	2	\$5,660,500	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Tuscaloosa County	Carroll's Creek water system improvements	2	\$2,701,300	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Tuscaloosa County	Englewood-Hull water system improvements	2	\$1,398,900	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Tuscaloosa County	Fosters-Ralph water system improvements	2	\$3,579,500	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Tuscaloosa County	Seven community projects	2	\$44,176	\$0	TCR&D		Awarded
Brookwood	Brookwood Sports Complex improvements	2	\$96,500.00	\$96,500.00	LWCF		Applied
Brookwood	to Miners Memorial Parkway	2	\$1,981,274	\$0	ATRIP2		Awarded
Coaling	New sanitary sewer system - business area	2	\$2,236,000	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Coaling	Water system upgrades	2	\$1,047,800	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Coker	Watermain replacement	2	\$2,035,472	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Cottondale	Peterson water system improvement	2	\$709,400	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Duncanville	Mitchell water system improvements	2	\$2,256,700	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Lake View	Patrol unit cameras	2	\$24,000	\$0	ADECA- JAG		Awarded
Lake View	Water line upgrades -Million Dollar Lakes Sub	2	\$3,179,657		ADEM ARPA-SRF		Applied
Northport	Hwy 82 sewer pump station and force main	2	\$6,136,504	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Northport	Water meter replacement	2	\$6,308,089	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Northport	Downtown wifi	2	\$46,000	\$0	T-Mobile		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	Resurface 4 roadways	2	\$3,620,000	\$905,000	ALDOT/MPO		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	University Blvd upgrades	2	\$17,500,000	\$10,100,000	US DOT/RAISE		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	Stillman College- Facilities and equipment	2	\$800,000		CPF Dist.7		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	Wastewater improvements	2	\$1,250,000	\$9,595,100	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	Water system improvements	2	\$12,000,000	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	UA Campus police - Bullet-proof vests	2	\$2,332	\$0	ADECA- JAG		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	Stillman - Winsborough Hall renovation	2	\$500,000		DOI/NPS		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	Stillman - Sheppard Library: Digital Learning Center and Civil Rights Museum	2	\$500,000		DOI/NPS		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	Stillman Cybersecurity and IT training center	2	\$2,700,000	\$100,000	EDA	100/100	Awarded
Tuscaloosa	UA/Crimson Ride electric bus replacement	2	\$8,000,000	\$2,000,000	IJA/DOT		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	Tuscaloosa National Airport - Apron reconstruction	2	\$4,213,116	\$0	FAA		Awarded
Tuscaloosa	Tuscaloosa National Airport - Apron upgrades	2	\$1,053,163	\$0	US DOT		Awarded
Vance	Sewer system upgrades	2	\$1,872,000	\$0	ADEM ARPA -SRF		Applied
Region	UA - Building and transportation infrastructure research	3	\$341,679	\$0	ADECA/ARDE		Awarded
Region	Turning Point of Tuscaloosa - Advocacy	1	\$45,000		ADECA		Awarded
Region	Environmental hazard home repairs - UA Safe State for Black Belt - includes Greene, Hale, Pickens	1	\$2,000,000		HUD		Awarded
Region	CSP -Water bill assistance to low income families	1	\$1,230,000	\$0	ADECA		Approved
Region	CSP - Home weatherization assistance	1	\$203,232	\$0	ADECA		Approved
Region	CIROH Multi-institution water/climate research center at National Water Center on UA Campus		\$3,600,000	\$0	NOAA		Awarded
Region	Weatherization program - CSP of W AL	2	\$34,731	\$0	ADECA		Awarded

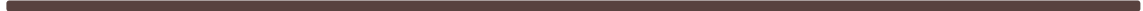
\$188,092,035 \$26,036,812

WARC Assisted Activity

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

1. Number of Federal and State funded investments submitted or approved 111
2. Estimated number of jobs created or retained as a result of projects 145/100
3. Estimated amount of local/private investment generated by projects \$26,036,812

PLAYBOOK APPENDICES



Rob Robertson	County Government
Stanley Allred	Municipal Government
Rodney Stabler	County Government
Bobbie White	Municipal Government
Mike Freeman	Business
Rod Northam	Municipal Government
Latasha Johnson	Municipal Government
Mickey Walker	Business
Joe Barger	Business
Lee Busby	Municipal Government
Norman Crow	Business
John Faile	Municipal Government
Bobby Herndon	Business
Brenda Morrison	Municipal Government
Matthew Wilson	Municipal Government
Sharon Nethery	County Government
Jimmy Madison	Municipal Government
Allen Dunavant	Municipal Government
Arthur Crawford	County Government
Tony Lester	Business
Craig Patterson	Municipal Government
Stan Acker	Higher Education
Mike Fields	Work Force Development
Walt Maddox	Municipal Government
Reginald Murray	Business
Mark Nelson	Education
Raeven Howard	Municipal Government
Jerry Tingle	County Government



REGIONAL BACKGROUND

Environment

- Topography: The landscape of the region is diverse due to the meeting of the Coastal Plain and the Appalachian Mountains. Rivers and lakes are abundant throughout; the northern portion of the region is covered in hills and mountains while the southern portion consists of flat, fertile land.
- Natural Resources: The region has varying quantities of coal, methane gas, oil, and timber available. Methane gas is produced in Tuscaloosa, Bibb, and Fayette counties; though limited in Greene and Hale, coal is present in all counties, as are oil wells. Timberland accounts for over half of the surface land area.
- Climate: The climate is humid subtropical. The average annual temperature is 63 degrees Fahrenheit, and the average rainfall is 56 inches. Thunderstorms occur throughout the year but are most common in the summer. The region experiences two tornado seasons, in March/April and in November/December.

Transportation

- Highways: There are 1,049 miles of State and Federal highway in the region. Interstate Highway 20/59 serves Greene and Tuscaloosa Counties. Other U. S. Highways include U. S. 11, 43, 80, 82, and 278. Major State Routes are 5, 6, 13, 14, 17, 25, 69, 96, 129, 159 and 171. In all categories, there are over 6,700 miles of roads in the region.
- Air: Airports are located in each of the seven counties in the region; however, the Eutaw Airport in Greene County is currently not in operation. There is no scheduled commercial service available in the region. The nearest airports offering commercial air service are in Birmingham, AL and Columbus, MS.
- Water: The Black Warrior River provides Greene, Hale and Tuscaloosa Counties with a navigable waterway and connects with the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, which serves Greene and Pickens Counties. These two rivers provide the region with a navigable waterway from the Port of Mobile to the Midwest. Public port facilities are available in Greene County; and, in Aliceville and Pickensville in Pickens County. There are also a few private facilities along both rivers. Along the Black Warrior River, there are several facilities available for shipping. The State Docks Facility in the City of Northport, in Tuscaloosa County, is currently leased by Parker Towing Company.
- Rail: There are four Class I railroads in west Alabama: Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), CSX Transportation (CSXT), Kansas City Southern (KCS), and Norfolk Southern (NS). KCS leases their line to WATCO which operates as Alabama Southern (ABS). There are no Class II railroads and only one Class III railroad: Luxapalila Valley Railroad Company (LXVR). Amtrak passenger rail service is available in Tuscaloosa.
- Truck: The region is served by several truck lines. One or more terminals are operated in each county. United Parcel Service and Federal Express operate terminals in Tuscaloosa.
- Public Transportation: Providers are available in all counties and are comprised of both public/nonprofits and private entities. Some agencies provide services only to their clients. Between taxis, shuttles, buses and other services there are over 60 providers. Detailed information can be found in the WARC [West Alabama Coordinated Transit Plan 2019](#).

Utilities

- Electricity: Alabama Power and Black Warrior Electric Membership Corporation, PowerSouth, and Tombigbee Electric Co-op provide the region with electricity. All counties in the region have adequate power for residential and industrial growth. Rates are controlled by the Alabama Public Service Commission.

- Gas: The region is served by Southern Natural Gas, Alabama Gas Corporation and a few local gas boards. Most municipalities are served by a natural gas system. There is sufficient supply in the region to provide for additional residential and industrial growth.
- Water: All the municipalities in the region are served by water systems, but there are several areas not served. These systems have adequate source and storage facilities to handle the current conditions, but a new major industry would create a need for additional source water, treatment and storage. The WARC maintains a report of all region water systems, and a GIS mapping inventory is available for all counties except Tuscaloosa.
- Sewer: Sanitary sewer systems are located in all the larger municipalities; those residents not served use septic tanks. Most municipalities that have sewer systems are unable to extend service to all residents within their boundaries. Deficiencies and needed upgrades plague many systems yet, most have capacity for additional growth. The WARC maintains a report of all region sewer systems, and maps are available for some systems.
- Solid Waste: All counties have solid waste collection programs and all except Bibb County operate inert landfills. Tuscaloosa County is the only county in the region operating a solid waste landfill.

Communications and Broadband

- Telephone: AT & T, Century Link, Comcast, Frontier Communications, Moundville Telephone Company, and BellSouth Telecommunications serve the region.
- Television: There are two local television stations in the region, both located in Tuscaloosa. Cable systems are in all counties and provide service from all networks.
- Radio: There are one or more local radio stations in every county with the exception of Hale. Other stations available include local Public Radio and numerous stations from Birmingham and Columbus and Meridian, MS.
- Newspapers: One daily newspaper, “The Tuscaloosa News,” is published in the region. There are ten weekly papers and several daily papers of state and national circulation available.
- Broadband: There are numerous types of broadband technologies including wireless, fiber, cable, satellite, DSL (digital subscriber line), and BPL (broadband over power line). Broadband access varies throughout the region, as do the number of available providers and the types and quality of technology being provided. Recently, AT&T Fixed Wireless Internet has been deployed to Greene and Hale Counties, and the Tombigbee Electric Cooperative FREEDOM FIBER now serves Lamar County and the City of Fayette.

Education and Training

- Each county and the City of Tuscaloosa operates a public school system. There are also several private schools in the region. All public systems operate grades K-12, and all county systems operate college and career education or training centers.
- The University of Alabama and Stillman College (private) are located in Tuscaloosa and offer a full range of degrees. There are two community colleges serving the region, Beville State Community College in Fayette and Carrollton and Shelton State Community College in Tuscaloosa. Each offers technical training in various vocations and night classes. There are several private technical/career schools in the Tuscaloosa Urban Area.

Health Services and Facilities

- Hospitals are present in all counties except Lamar and Pickens counties. In Tuscaloosa there are two major hospitals, a VA Medical Center, Bryce Hospital, Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility, Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center, the University of Alabama Psychology Center, Speech and Hearing Center, West Alabama Rehabilitation Center, and the University of Alabama Family Practice Center. Numerous urgent care clinic and specialty providers serve the region. WARC hosts the **BE WELL West Alabama Healthcare Locator**, an interactive map at www.warc.info.

- All counties in the region have at least one assisted living facility.
- The Area Agency on Aging, a program of the WARC, operates senior centers and nutrition sites in all the counties. The WARC Area Agency on Aging website www.westalabamaaging.org contains information on available programs and services.
- All counties in the region have at least three or more day care facilities.

Public Safety

- Each county employs an emergency management director that coordinates emergency services and is included in an AEMA Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Division plan or maintains a county-level plan in addition to other emergency operation plans. Each county also maintains an E-911 office.
- Law Enforcement services are provided by each county and the majority of municipalities. Smaller communities that lack a department rely on the County Sheriff's office for assistance.
- Fire Protection and emergency services are provided in all counties. Each county has a Fire Association that coordinates all volunteer and municipal departments. Ambulance services are primarily provided through contracts with private providers; some communities provide this service directly.
- There are approximately 85 community safe rooms open to the public within the region. The number and occupancy capacity vary by jurisdiction.

Social Services and Assistance

- The Alabama Department of Human Resources operates offices in all seven counties of west Alabama. The services rendered by the Department include aiding public assistance applicants and recipients, administering the food stamp program, administering financial aid programs, providing social services, and making referrals to agencies.
- The region has over 2,300 non-profit and 501 C 3 organizations. The services provided by these agencies are of significant value to the region. Examples include; Temporary Emergency Services; Community Service Programs of West Alabama, Inc.; the United Way of West Alabama; West Alabama Aids Outreach; the Good Samaritan Clinic; and Whatley Health Services.

REGION II Socio-Economic Comparison to State and U.S.



Population by Age, 2020

	Region II*	Percent	Alabama	Percent	U.S.	Percent
Total	307,838	100.00%	4,893,186	100.00%	326,569,308	100.00%
Preschool (0 to 4)	17,998	5.90%	291,920	5.90%	19,555,508	5.90%
School Age (5 to 17)	46,001	15.00%	795,363	16.20%	53,694,784	16.20%
College Age (18 to 24)	42,027	13.80%	447,642	9.10%	30,161,885	9.10%
Young Adult (25 to 44)	79,059	25.90%	1,246,908	25.30%	88,828,407	26.80%
Adult (45 to 64)	73,565	24.20%	1,265,455	25.70%	83,193,770	25.10%
Older Adult (65 plus)	46,280	15.20%	874,244	17.80%	56,014,929	16.90%
Median Age	36.7		39.2		38.2	

Population by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2020

	Region II*	Percent	Alabama	Percent	U.S.	Percent
Total	307,838	100.00%	4,893,186	100.00%	326,569,308	100.00%
American Ind. Or Alaskan Native Alone	403	0.13%	34,897	0.70%	4,308,841	1.30%
Asian Alone	3,651	1.20%	75,551	1.50%	20,218,406	6.10%
Black Alone	98,810	32.50%	1,319,751	26.80%	44,745,653	13.50%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pac. Isl. Alone	49	0.01%	5,393	0.10%	994,348	0.30%
White Alone	187,722	61.60%	3,396,053	69.00%	251,901,454	76.00%
Two or More Race Groups	3,762	1.20%	89,887	1.80%	9,612,029	2.90%
Total Hispanic or Latino	10,115	3.30%	226,557	4.60%	61,649,566	18.60%

Educational Attainment, 2020

	Region II*	Percent	Alabama	Percent	U.S.	Percent
Total Population 25 and older	198,486	100.00%	3,344,006	100.00%	222,836,834	100.00%
Less than 9th Grade	7,422	3.70%	133,650	4.00%	10,923,030	4.90%
9th to 12th, No Diploma	18,363	9.30%	305,297	9.10%	14,639,650	6.60%
High School Graduate (incl. equiv.)	65,695	33.10%	1,014,342	30.03%	59,421,419	26.70%
Some College, No Degree	41,365	20.80%	721,609	21.60%	45,242,162	20.30%
Associate Degree	16,294	8.30%	292,064	8.70%	19,254,254	8.60%
Bachelor's Degree	29,653	14.90%	546,674	16.30%	45,034,610	20.20%
Graduate or Professional Degree	19,694	9.90%	330,370	9.90%	28,321,709	12.70%

Poverty, 2020

	Region II*	Percent	Alabama	Percent	U.S.	Percent
Total Population (for whom poverty status determined)	288,609	100.00%	4,754,288	100.00%	316,715,051	100.00%
In Poverty	55,328	19.20%	795,989	16.70%	42,510,843	13.40%
Age 65 and Over in Poverty	4,504	10.30%	79,771	10.20%	4,587,432	9.30%

Source: StatsAmerica, *Calculations by WARC

REGION II COUNTY RANKINGS



BIBB COUNTY, AL

	Value	Rank in State	Rank in U.S.
Population (2021)	22,477	44	1686
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	-1.90%	37	1784
Households (2020)	7,259	49	1895
Labor Force (persons) (2020)	8,640	44	1840
Unemployment Rate (2020)	6.6	23	1501
Per Capita Personal Income (2020)	\$34,300	66	2970
Median Household Income (2019)	\$47,918	24	2182
Poverty Rate (2019)	20.3	19	447
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	80.90%	54	2720
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	11.30%	64	2986
Covered Employment	4,653	48	2001
Avg Wage per Job	\$45,974	21	1111



FAYETTE COUNTY, AL

Population (2021)	16,148	52	2012
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	-6.30%	50	2431
Households (2020)	6,805	50	1954
Labor Force (persons) (2020)	6,562	53	2104
Unemployment Rate (2020)	5.0	41	2448
Per Capita Personal Income (2020)	\$38,001	46	2688
Median Household Income (2019)	\$44,212	38	2525
Poverty Rate (2019)	17.0	37	849
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	84.20%	28	2346
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	12.30%	59	2885
Covered Employment	3,891	51	2143
Avg Wage per Job	\$35,845	65	2807



GREENE COUNTY, AL

Population (2021)	7,629	67	2581
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	-15.70%	66	3016
Households (2020)	3,178	66	2583
Labor Force (persons) (2020)	3,015	66	2679
Unemployment Rate (2020)	10.9	3	124
Per Capita Personal Income (2020)	\$35,992	61	2868
Median Household Income (2019)	\$28,699	67	3136
Poverty Rate (2019)	31.7	4	46
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	80.90%	54	2720
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	10.10%	67	3070
Covered Employment	1,833	66	2656
Avg Wage per Job	\$36,280	63	2761

REGION II COUNTY RANKINGS



HALE COUNTY, AL

	Value	Rank in State	Rank in U.S.
Population (2021)	14,754	55	2085
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	-6.40%	51	2445
Households (2020)	5,490	56	2157
Labor Force (persons) (2020)	6,075	56	2165
Unemployment Rate (2020)	9.4	7	334
Per Capita Personal Income (2020)	\$41,190	25	2309
Median Household Income (2019)	\$40,745	52	2805
Poverty Rate (2019)	20.5	17	431
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	80.70%	57	2739
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	15.60%	37	2401
Covered Employment	2,529	62	2459
Avg Wage per Job	\$41,200	36	1938



LAMAR COUNTY, AL

Population (2021)	13,689	57	2159
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	-6.00%	49	2385
Households (2020)	5,631	55	2137
Labor Force (persons) (2020)	5,730	58	2207
Unemployment Rate (2020)	4.9	43	2495
Per Capita Personal Income (2020)	\$37,161	54	2774
Median Household Income (2019)	\$42,686	46	2660
Poverty Rate (2019)	15.3	54	1148
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	83.30%	36	2501
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	11.30%	64	2986
Covered Employment	3,321	57	2285
Avg Wage per Job	\$42,537	32	1695



PICKENS COUNTY, AL

Population (2021)	18,801	50	1871
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	-4.80%	45	2213
Households (2020)	7,731	46	1828
Labor Force (persons) (2020)	7,660	49	1960
Unemployment Rate (2020)	6.5	26	1563
Per Capita Personal Income (2020)	\$36,861	57	2793
Median Household Income (2019)	\$40,249	54	2840
Poverty Rate (2019)	24.3	11	183
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	82.90%	37	2513
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	14.40%	43	2626
Covered Employment	3,561	52	2216
Avg Wage per Job	\$41,926	34	1813

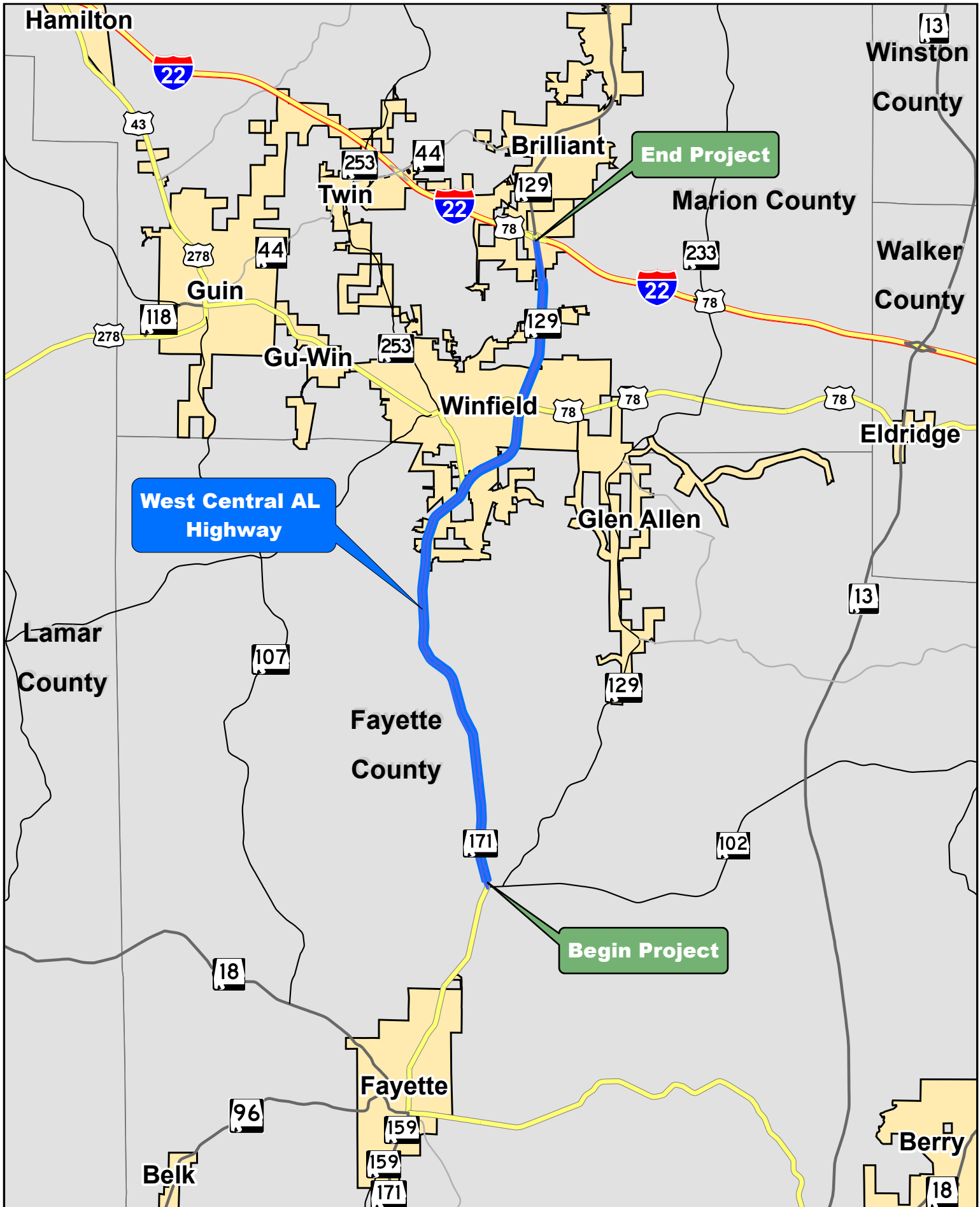
REGION II COUNTY RANKINGS



TUSCALOOSA COUNTY, AL

	Value	Rank in State	Rank in U.S.
Population (2021)	227,007	6	308
Growth (%) since 2010 Census	16.60%	5	227
Households (2020)	74,713	7	340
Labor Force (persons) (2020)	102,222	6	322
Unemployment Rate (2020)	6.6	23	1501
Per Capita Personal Income (2020)	\$42,868	18	2084
Median Household Income (2019)	\$52,307	14	1684
Poverty Rate (2019)	16.2	43	977
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	89.50%	6	1414
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2020)	31.10%	7	526
Covered Employment	90,084	5	301
Avg Wage per Job	\$49,881	11	669

Source: StatsAmerica



West Central AL Highway

End Project

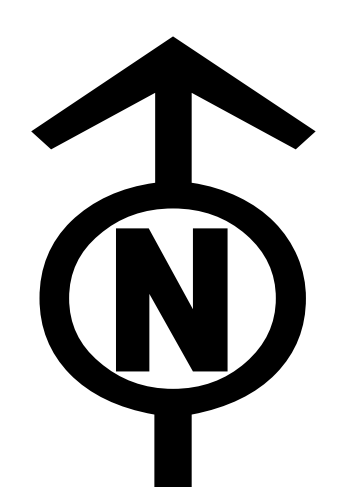
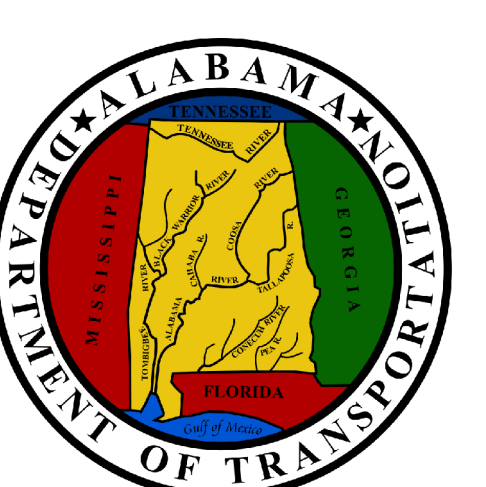
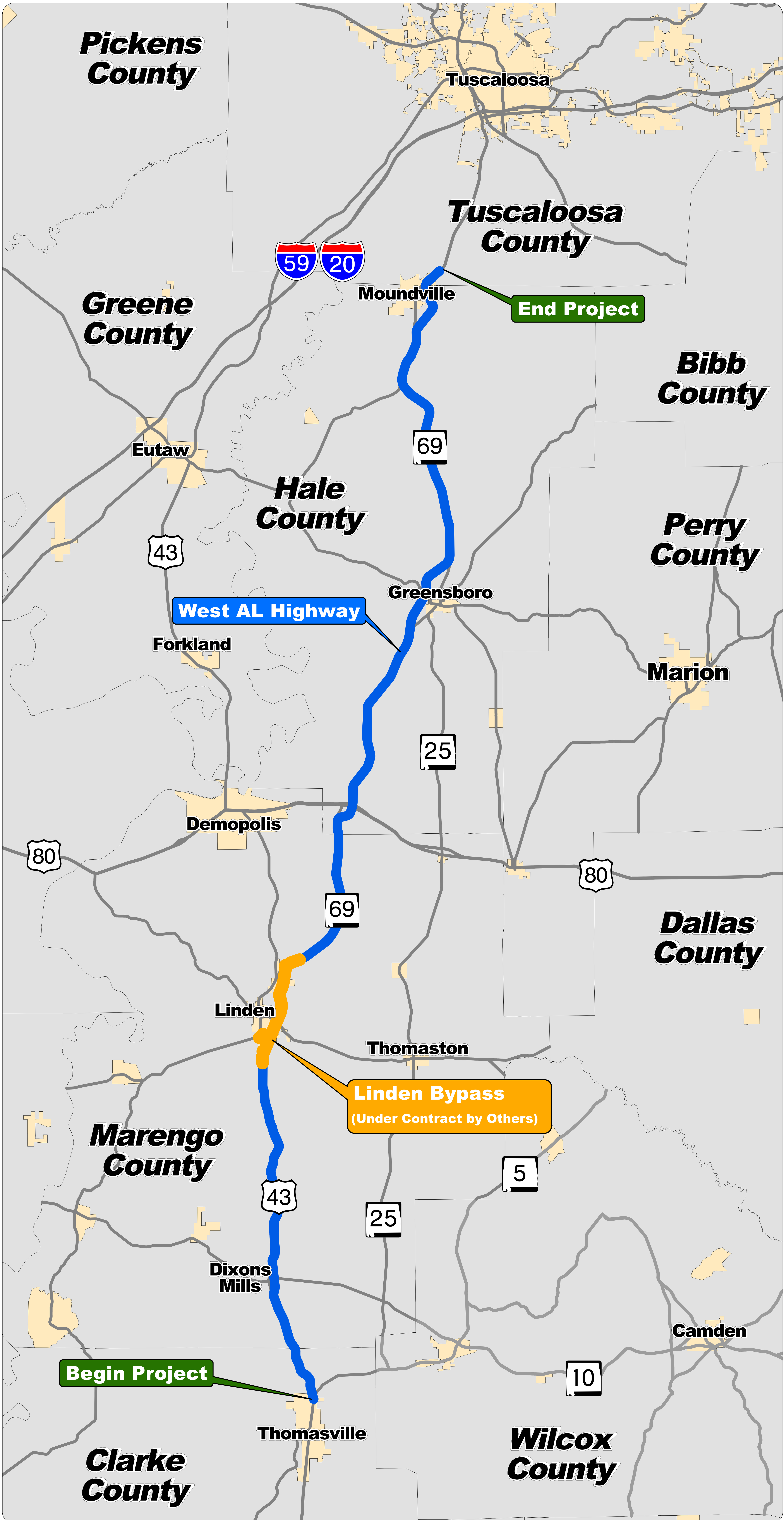
Begin Project



ANOTHER PROJECT TO
REBUILD ALABAMA



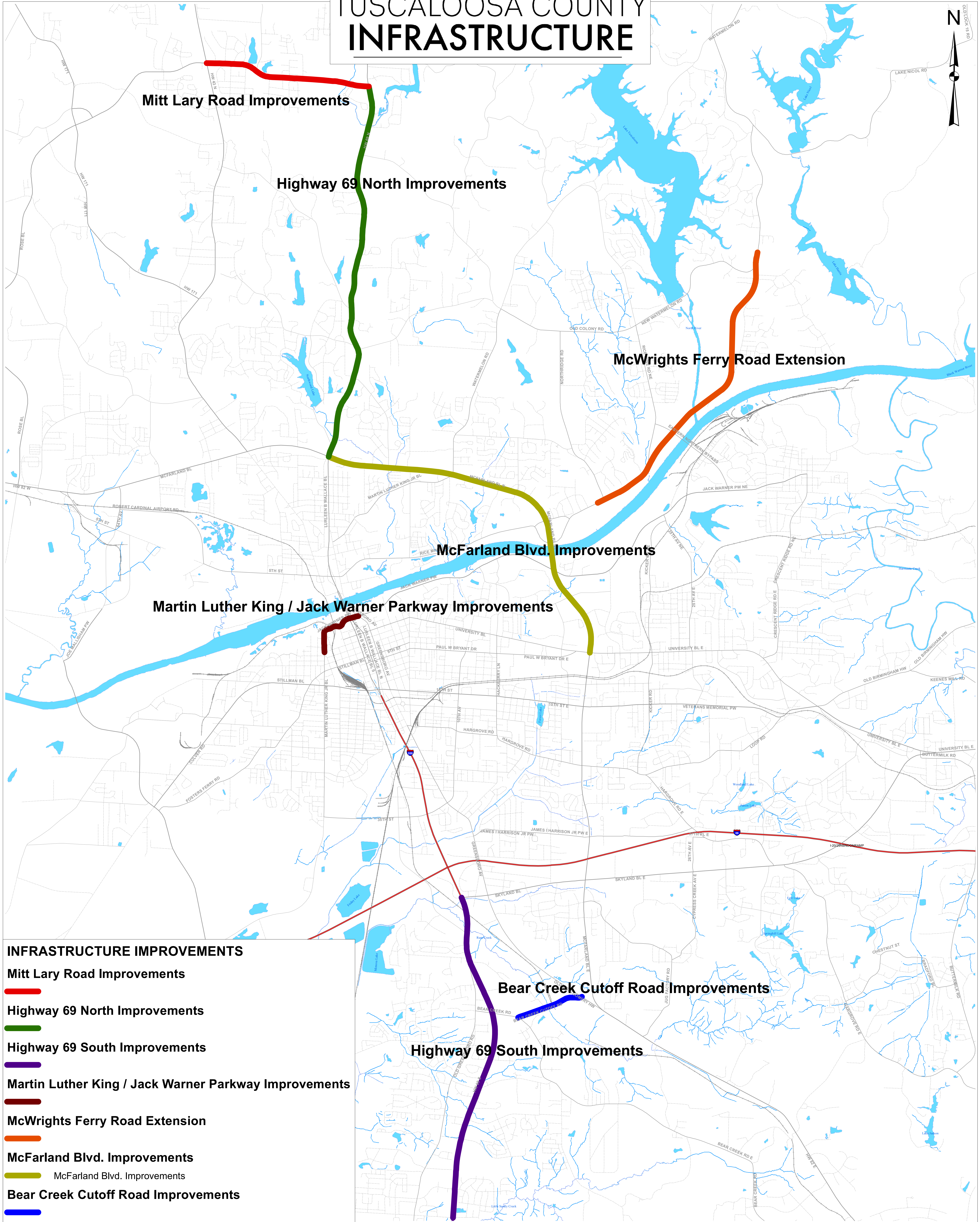
WEST CENTRAL ALABAMA HIGHWAY
D1
Fayette to I-22



WEST ALABAMA HIGHWAY

D2 Thomasville to Tuscaloosa

TRANSFORMING TUSCALOOSA COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE



INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- Mitt Lary Road Improvements**
- Highway 69 North Improvements**
- Highway 69 South Improvements**
- Martin Luther King / Jack Warner Parkway Improvements**
- McWrights Ferry Road Extension**
- McFarland Blvd. Improvements**
 McFarland Blvd. Improvements
- Bear Creek Cutoff Road Improvements**