Update – The Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation
“Georgia is a growing and prosperous state, and we are thankful for that, but that prosperity isn’t being felt in every community across Georgia. Some of our rural areas are still struggling, and we must do everything we can to help private businesses grow jobs in every corner of our state.”

Georgia House Speaker, David Ralston
Is Rural Georgia Dying? Literally?
by Charles Hayslett on August 17, 2015

Maybe, maybe not!
But, if it does it will not go away!

Either way, the people of Georgia pay!
Is the Economic Recovery Leaving Rural America Behind?

By Sam Brasch on December 5, 2013 in Modern Farming

So what?
• Not good for anybody!
• Cities rely on rural America for food and resources.
• Lower jobs demand, hence lower wages.
• Higher per capita costs for social services.
On the same page: What is rural?
On the same page: What is prosperity?
On the same page: What is innovation?
The work of the Center and its staff will be guided by a view that we must,

- **Remind** all Georgians of the vital role that rural people and places play in statewide success and that,
- When we find ideas that are working in rural Georgia, we should **recreate** them in other communities throughout the state and that,
- An essential step in **rediscovering**, **reconnecting**, and **recreating** rural Georgia is to **reinvest** in people by infusing inspired, educated, and energetic human capital in small towns and rural communities.
Georgia’s Rural Center exists to lead all Georgians, no matter where they call home, to rediscover all that rural Georgia is and has to offer. As the center launches in 2018, we will focus on the following areas to facilitate growth and prosperity.

**RECONNECTING**
We remind all Georgians of the vital role that rural people and places play in statewide success.

**RECREATING**
We find ideas that are working in rural Georgia and recreate them in other communities throughout the state.

**REINVESTING**
We place human capital in small towns and rural communities through internships and special projects.
MISSION

Georgia’s Rural Center exists to RECONNECT the state’s rural and urban people and places, REDISCOVERING all that is unique and extraordinary in the state’s less populated areas, and reminding all Georgians of the power and potential present in small towns and crossroads communities.

We work to recognize successful businesses and efforts and help other communities RECREATE those models throughout the state.

Believing that people are Georgia’s most valuable asset, we REINVEST human capital in the state’s rural fringes through internship placement and innovative projects.
FUNCTION

Approach – outcome based relying on ABAC, CRPI, and partner strengths/assets

- Advocacy,
- Interagency coordination,
- Resource management,
- Human capital provider, and
- Intensive project management
How will the Center function?

**Project Support Team**
- Private sector – consultants, investors, stakeholders
- Public agencies
- Educational partners
- Financial partners

**Center**
- Research
- Project ID
- Resource assessment
- Project Management

**Community (owner)**
- Private sector
- Public sector
- Community stakeholders/partners
- Ancillary benefactors

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Benefitting communities

**Agencies**
- Department of Economic Development
- Department of Agriculture
- Community Affairs
- Department of Labor
- Others

**Institutions**
- USG
- TCSG
- Private
- Non-profits
  - GEDA
  - EMC

**Private sector**
- Georgia Power
- Other infrastructure providers

*[Collaborator]*
A person who works jointly on an activity or project; an associate.
OUTCOMES

• Existing business
  • Expansion
  • More employment
  • Greater profitability

• New business starts
  • R&D to support entrepreneurship
  • Connect suppliers with markets

• Connections
  • Between rural and urban Georgia
  • Existing businesses
  • Marketing/promotion/awareness

• Infusion of human capital

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Finding a the path to prosperity!

Prosperity
- People – leadership & empowerment
- Economic development
- Community development
- Business – opportunity, growth, profitability
- Education
- Health & wellness
Agriculture - the path to prosperity!
Georgia Agriculture is strong!

Based on 2016 FGVR

- $13.75 billion direct value!
- $73.3 billion in impact!
- 383,600 jobs!
Examples – work underway...

- Economic impact studies
  - Document impact and support growth and expansion
  - Demonstrate value of coops
  - Demonstrate value of regional effort

- Connection
  - Rural to urban
  - Urban to rural
  - Business synergy

- Value added
  - Promote
  - Identify opportunities
  - Build assets and retain value

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• Committed to serving Georgia Grown food to our Georgia Grown students
• Committed to producing Georgia Grown graduates to serve in Georgia communities

• A website and mobile app that connects communities and employers with students – internships and careers in rural Georgia.

• Background work completed on AgSummit

ANNOUNCEMENTS
For more information…

The website ruralga.org

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Regionalism – fact, fiction, dream or nightmare?

- Ends at the county line, sometimes the city limits
- Not NIMBY, but MIMBY
- Too many lines – county, city, territorial
- Too many BIG egos! Too little success!
- Duplication is a drain – can we afford redundancy?
Reality #1

• Many rural communities can’t and won’t stand alone in the paradigm of “industrial recruitment”.
• They may be able to meet the infrastructure and/or bricks and mortar, but they can’t meet the workforce/labor force needs to attract an industrial recruit.
• Policy and guidelines relative to inbound, new industry are not well suited to many communities where preservation of existing industry is a challenge.
• Incentives aimed at new industry recruits are often not well aligned with rural community needs.

Change the paradigm or add a new one!

REFLECTIONS ON REGIONALISM
Reality #2

- Regionalism occurs, and
  - Sometimes it’s good, and
  - Sometimes it’s bad.
- Regional centers are perceived as good for the host county, but not necessarily good for surrounding. Often not perceived as win–win!
- Many successful communities are drawing employees from multiple counties. They are regional.

REFLECTIONS ON REGIONALISM
Recommendations

- Work towards a virtual 60 county New Georgia
  - Shared Tier Rating
  - Regional workforce effort – individual cities, towns, and counties don’t mean much in rural Georgia

- Tier system
  - Do away with it, or
  - Replace it with a regional tier identification, or
  - Rolling 3-yr tiers

- Incentives
  - Move towards funding for regional effort, not individual effort, i.e. reward what you want!