



Rural Georgia

What?

Where?

Why?

When? How?

GEORGIA'S RURAL CENTER

Powered by Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College

Agenda...

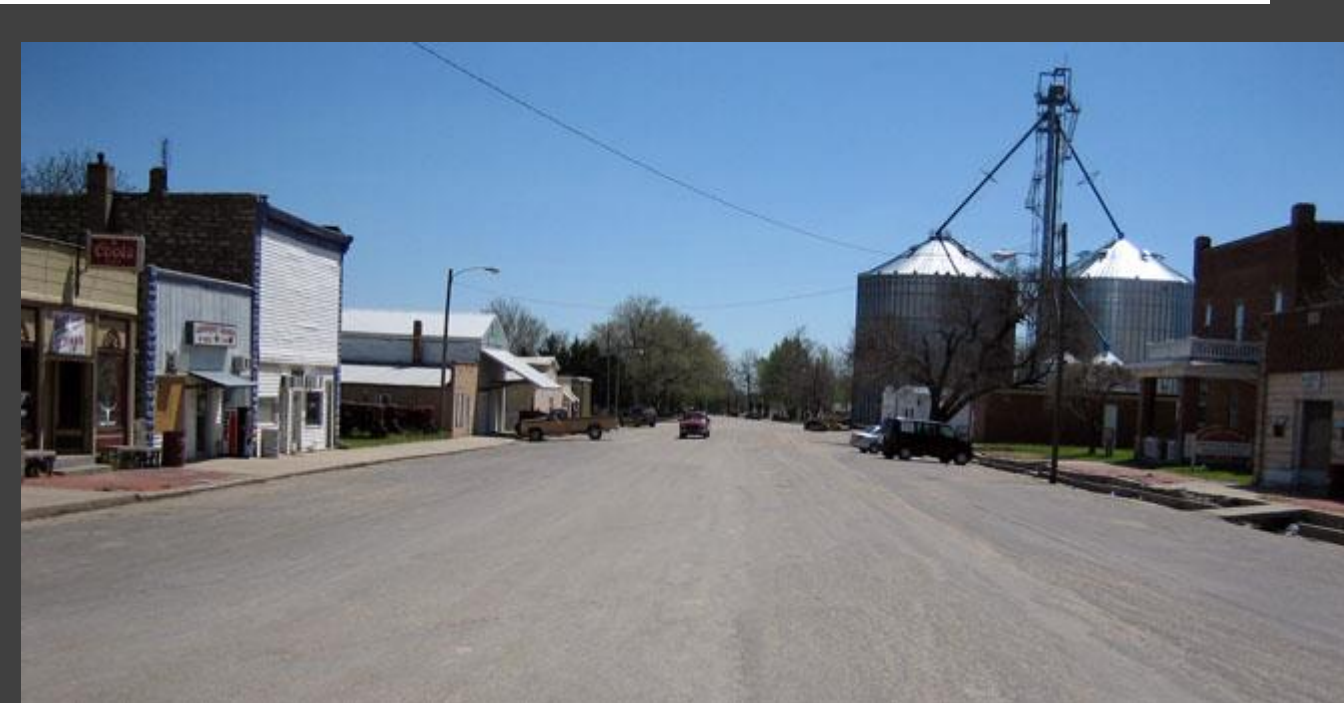
- Status check
- Review, reflection, and reminders
- Success stories
- Urgency
- Two very important questions
- Recommendations



RURAL RUINS

The urbanization of the South has left countless small towns to wither and — in some cases — to die. South Georgian Brian Brown has dedicated his life to photographing the “vanishing” buildings of Georgia — not just for the historical record, but for the memories they evoke when we see them.

BY TRACY THOMPSON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY AMANDA GREENE
AND FROM THE VANISHING SOUTH GEORGIA AND
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Status report...

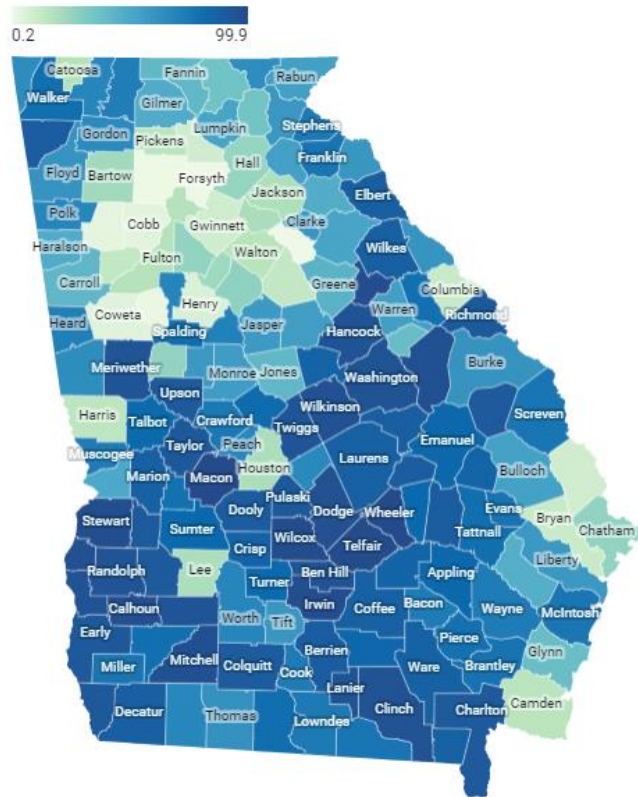
- What?

- ✓ Indicators of a healthy rural Georgia continue to decline.
- ✓ COVID has exacerbated the decline.
- ✓ Upcoming reapportionment will reduce rural political power.
- ✓ Gap between revenue and expenses in rural communities widens.
- ✓ Deferred maintenance increasing.
- ✓ Economic diversity is decreasing.



EIG's 2020 Distressed Community Index scores by Georgia county

The lighter shading, the lower (and better) the DCI score.



Map: Trouble in God's Country • Source: Economic Innovation Group • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)



Where?

All but,

- 12-13 counties around Atlanta
- Parts of coastal Georgia
- Columbia County
- Harris County
- Houston County
- Lee County

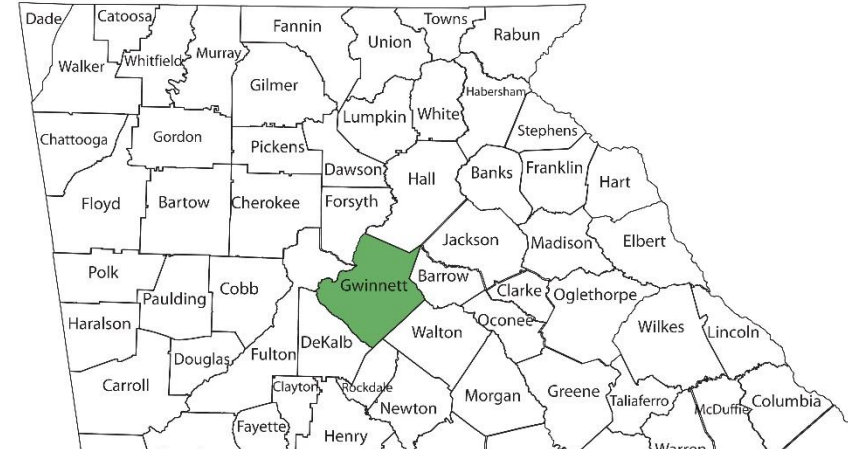
Stress points!

Is there really nothing but *trouble* in God's Country?

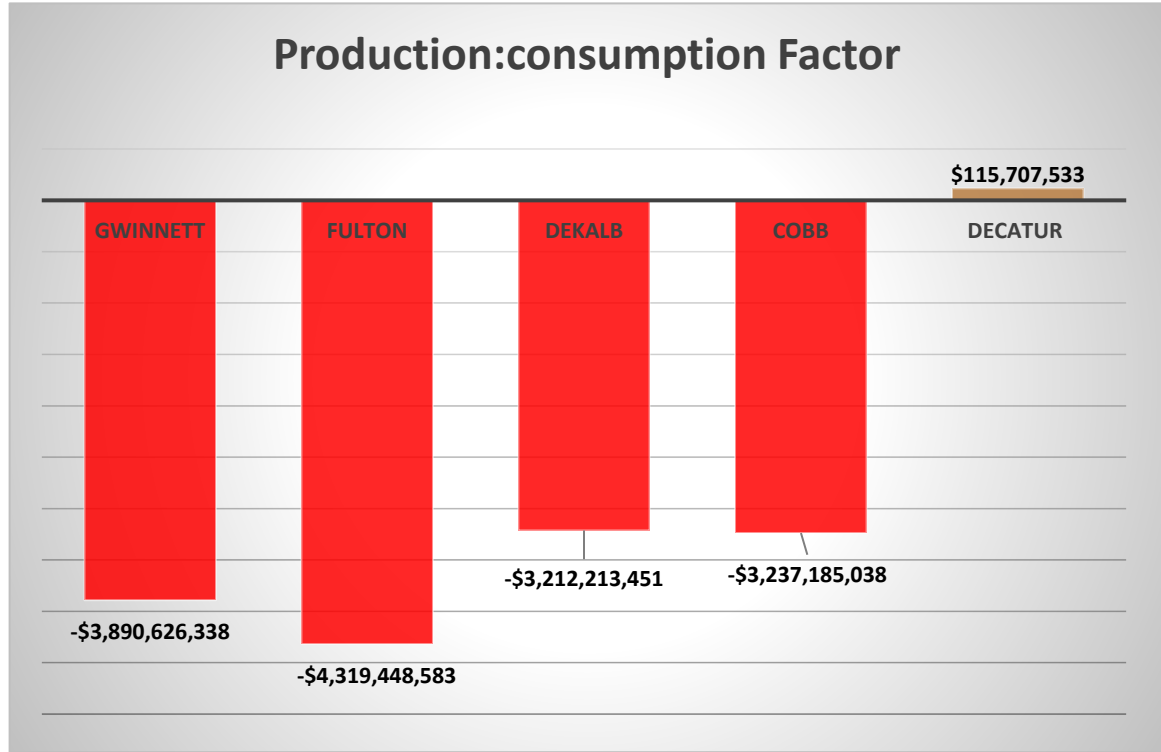
by David Bridges, May 2017

South Georgia vs. Gwinnett County

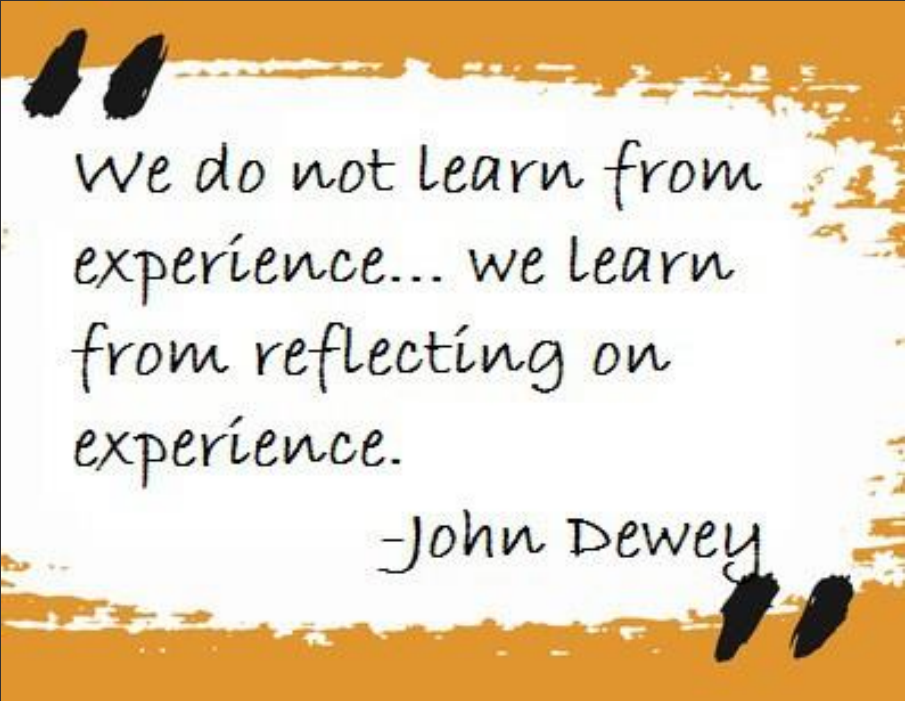
TIGC



It would take 129 Decatur Counties, or increasing the size of Georgia by 35.38%, or Annexing 40.42% of Alabama To make up the shortfall!!!!



Calculated as $\sum_{1-n \text{ household}} \text{farmgate value/household} - \text{food consumption/household}$
 Sources US Census data, USDA Farmgate Value, and USDA-ERS consumption data



We do not learn from
experience... we learn
from reflecting on
experience.

-John Dewey

HRDC - history

- Spring 2017 – planning for the 1st cycle of meetings
- May 2017 – 1st HRDC meeting
- Since then
 - Many meetings,
 - Recommendations,
 - Legislation, and
 - Funding.
- Good intentions, good will, and desire.

Back to 2017

Steps...

1. Acknowledge the problem.
2. Understand the problem and its underlying causes.
3. Plan - develop a shared vision and commitment to change.
4. Define and state the mission – scope, schedule and budget!
 - A. Goals
 - B. Develop strategy
 - C. Define tactics
5. Implement
6. Persist – assess, measure, adjust, and hold accountable.

Steps...

1. Acknowledge the problem.
 - A. *Trouble in God's Country sheds light on the problem.*
 - B. *Creation of this House Rural Development Council is acknowledgement.*
2. Understand the problem and its underlying causes.
 1. Do we really understand the problem?
 2. What part of the current situation do we think we want to change?
 3. What part of the current situation can we change?

Steps...

1. Acknowledge the problem.
2. Understand the problem and its underlying causes.
3. Plan - develop a shared vision and commitment to change.
4. Define and state the mission – scope, schedule and budget!
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- Problem is complex and multifaceted
 - Solution must be as well
- Challenges are deeply rooted
 - Change will not be easy
- Problems didn't develop over night
 - Change will not be quick
- It's about people,
 - Not things!

- People issues
 - Educational attainment – willingness and financial motivation – **growing problem**
 - Lack of skilled labor force – number and skill level - **growing problem**
 - Lack of highly educated workforce – numbers - **CRISIS**
 - Lack of enlightened, energetic, empowered leaders – **too few and they are tired!**
- Lack of cooperation
 - County boundaries and squabbling
 - Refusal to acknowledge common, regional good
 - Satellite growth strategies are not politically popular
 - Lack of interagency coordination – **major issue**

- Quality of life issues
 - Educational opportunity – failing k-12 schools
 - Lack of access to health care
 - Lack of cultural amenities
- Connectivity
 - Transportation
 - Digital
 - Personal
- Capital



HB951 - why and what?

- Create an entity with laser focus on rural,
- Drive innovation and prosperity through change,
- Coordinate efforts among State, federal, and private entities that have resources,
- Advocate for redevelopment and reinvestment in rural Georgia,
- Study, research, conduct analyses, recommend policy, and
- Get something done!

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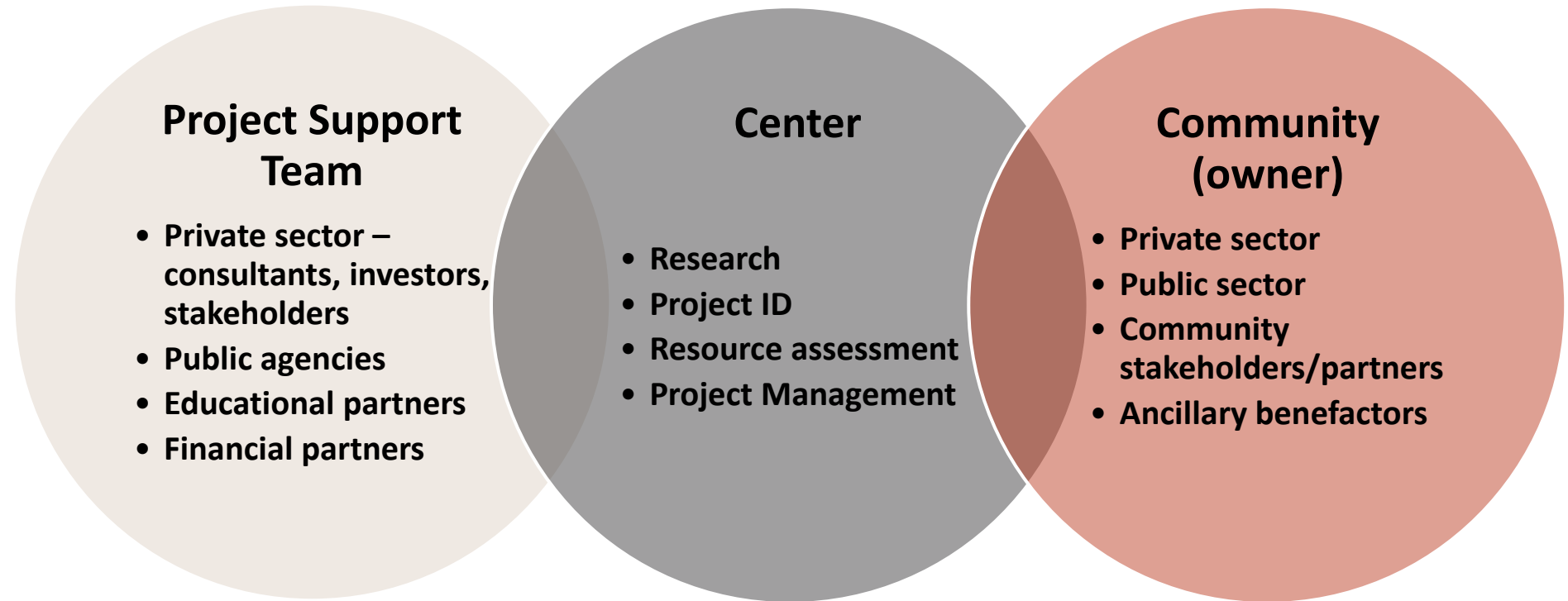
In search of prosperity



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How will the Center function?



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Success stories...

Statewide	North	Central	South
Global Telehealth - marketing	Ga Grown Trail 27 (north)	Parham Kitchen – Central State Hospital	Miller County Hospital - development
Medvert Biowaste – testing	Scenic Byways (planning)	Warthen Water Well	Georgia Hospital Food Collaborative – supply chain
Georgia Hospital Food Collaborative – supply chain	Northwest GA Van Pool (feasibility study)	Harrison Poultry Relocation	Plains – comprehensive community plan and implementation
Historic Tax Credits – documentary	Amicalola Falls Byway (planning)	Hamilton Medical Clinic (design and project mgt)	Sunbelt Economic Impact and Strategic Plan
Hospital Scrubs	Scenic Byways (planning)	Plains – comprehensive community plan and implementation	Lee Street Paving – Terrell County
Textile Reshoring	Patriot Railway (feasibility)		ABAC – Georgia Grown Dining Hall
Pecan Shelling Feasibility	Dawson County Trail (masterplan)		Berrien County Branding and Master Plan
Community/College partnership – Emory, CDC, and EPA	Chickamauga Branding		GMET Experience – planning for technology in support of healthcare

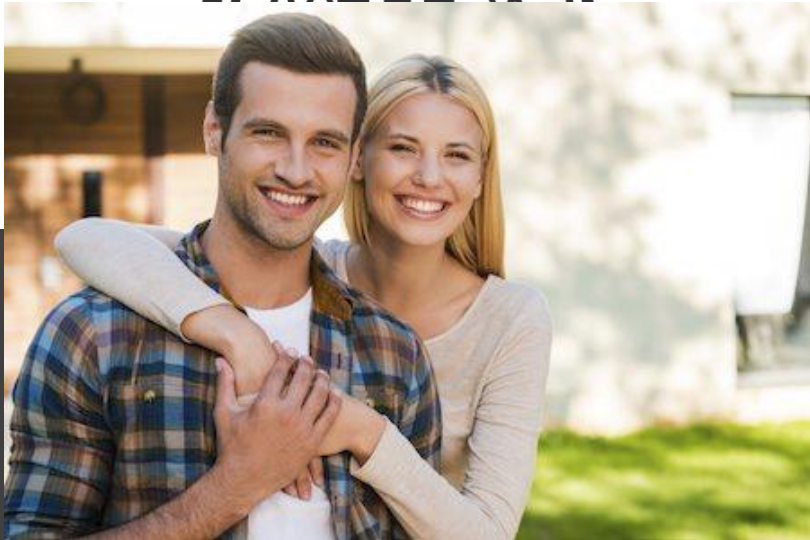




TIME IS
RUNNING OUT!



- Perceived lack of business, job, or financial opportunity,
- Concerns about quality of education for their family, and
- Lack of access to basic healthcare needs.



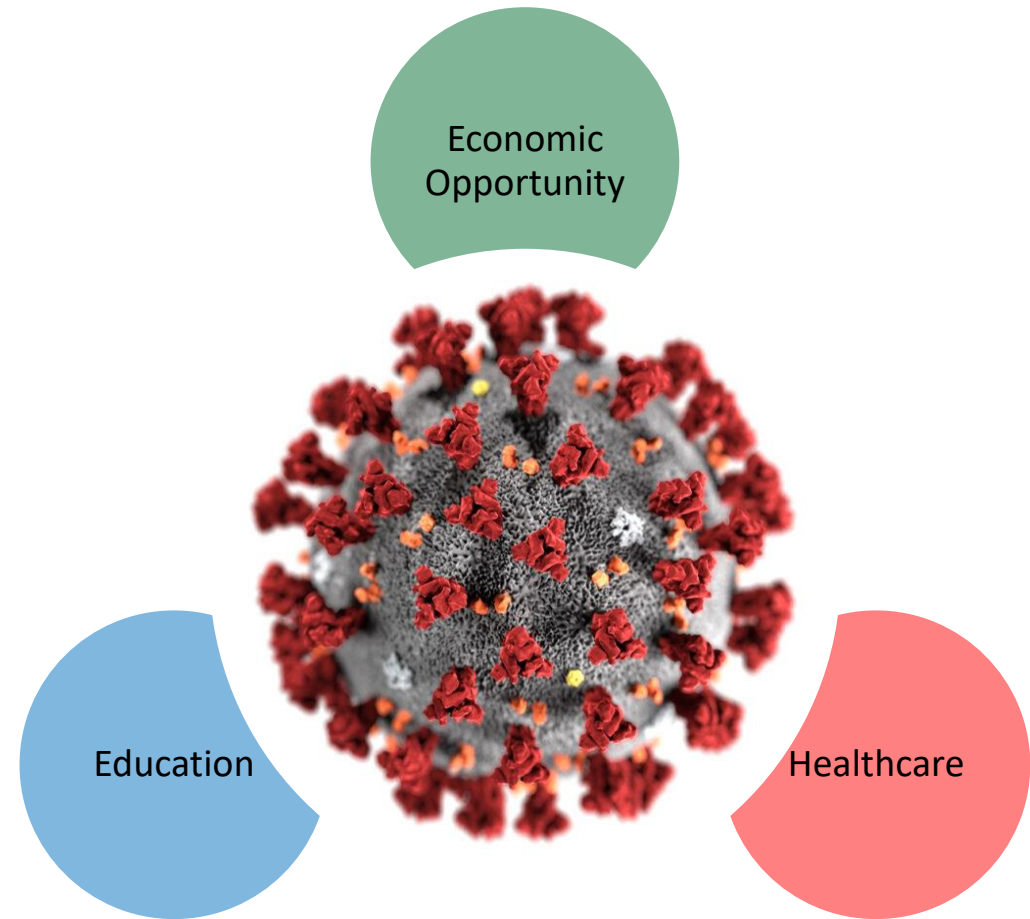
Three reasons!

Urgency!



Either you have a sense of urgency today or you have a sense of regret tomorrow!!

Anonymous



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What?



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When?

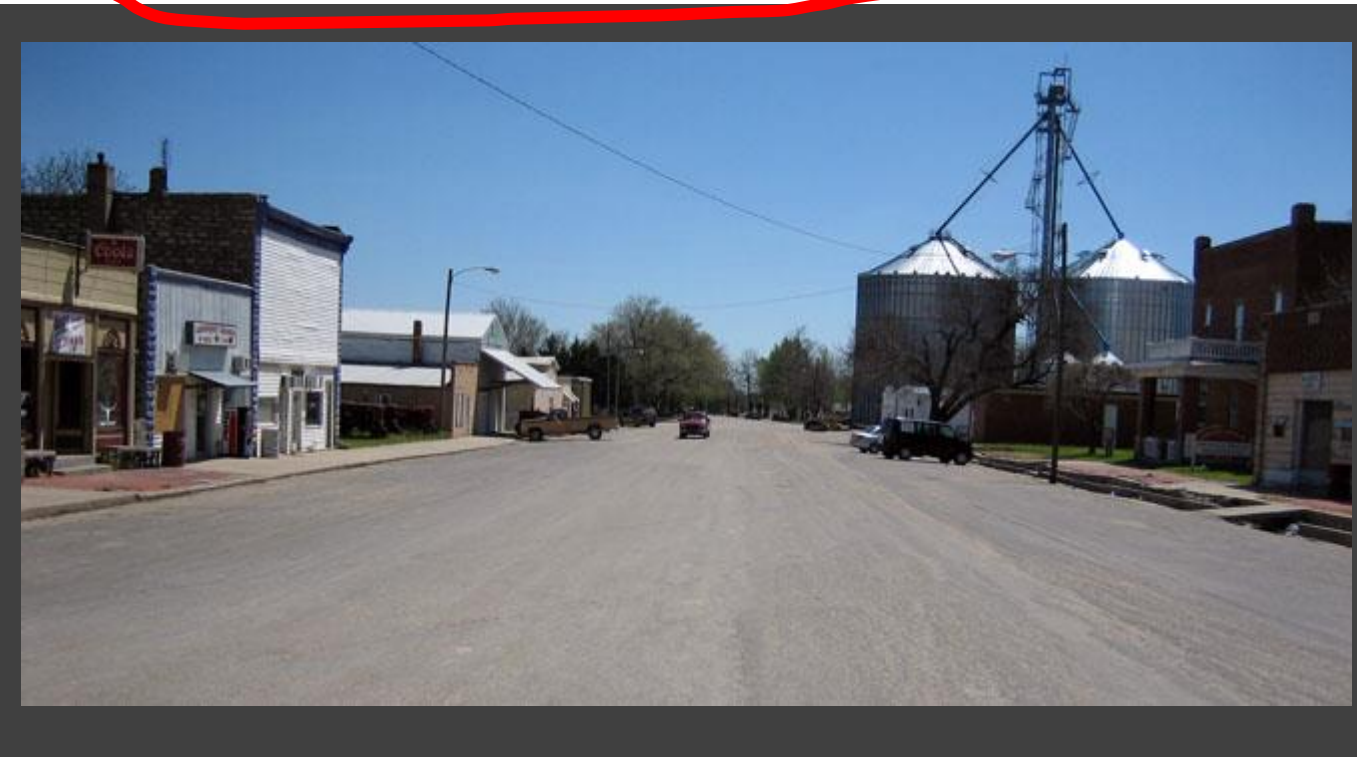


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What?

1. Continue to pass legislation that targets improvements in rural Georgia:
 - A. Education
 - B. Economic Development
 - C. Healthcare
2. Demand accountability – especially among State Agencies, institutions, and systems that have statewide responsibility.
3. Reduce regulation and bureaucracy!
4. Create new programs that are:
 - A. Tailored to Georgia,
 - B. Run by rural Georgians,
 - C. Flexible.
5. Ask agencies to work with those of us who are committed to rural Georgia rather than stand in our way and/or work against us!

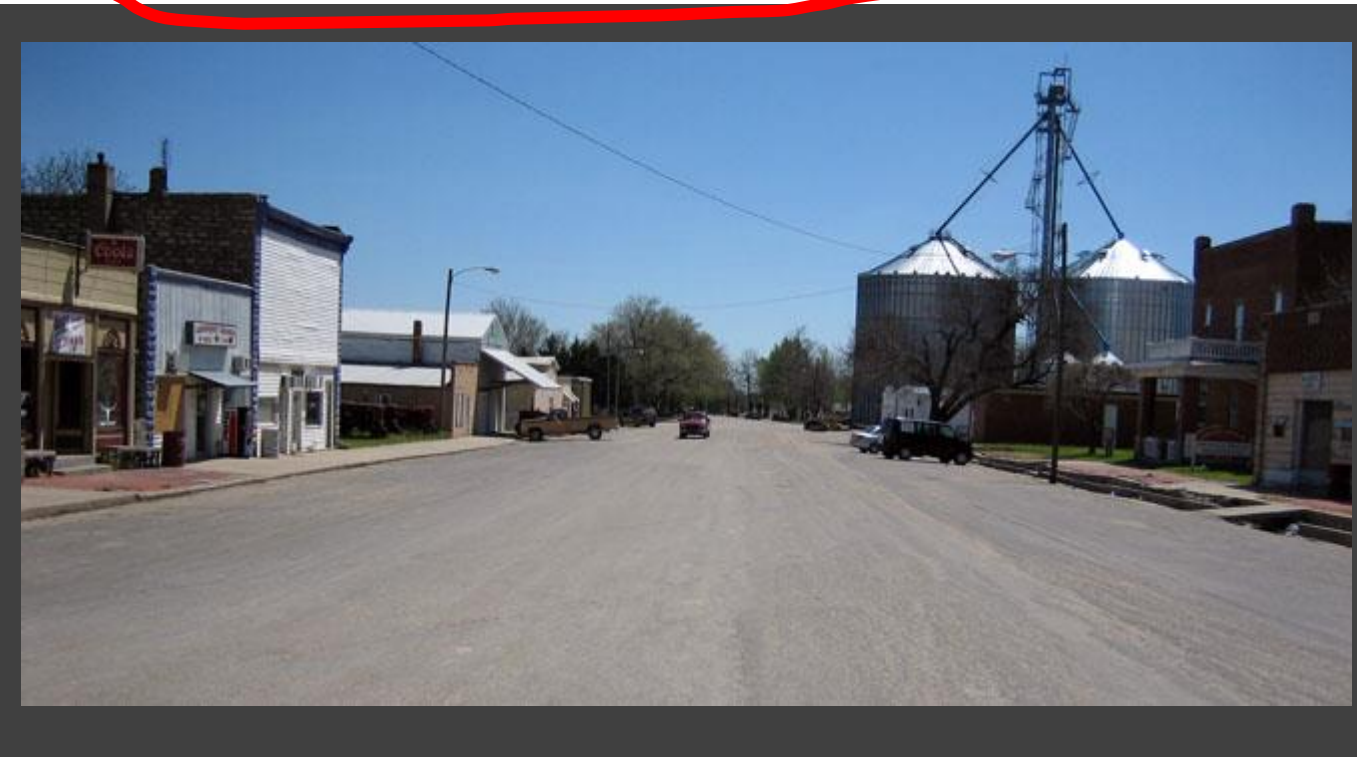


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When?

1. Now!
2. Now!
3. Now!



Thank you...

Remember, rural Georgia

- Feeds Georgia
- Clothes Georgia
- Shelters Georgia
- Is part of Georgia
- Is important to Georgia!
- Urgency



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