

PartnershipGwinnett

a shared vision for the future

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Gwinnett County has reached a critical juncture in its history. Fueled by dramatic population growth, Gwinnett is now maturing into a dynamic urban community with a strong presence in the Atlanta region. Gwinnett must proactively reorient local and external perceptions to embrace the reality that – as the second largest county in the State of Georgia – Gwinnett is a major economic player to be supported and respected by the state’s and region’s leaders.

Partnership Gwinnett: A Shared Vision for the Future provides a blueprint for a higher level of investment in Gwinnett’s economic and community development work. The time is now for Gwinnett to make a strong step forward toward sustainable long-term economic prosperity for its companies and residents. The following four goals provide the strategic framework to achieve this vision.

Goal I: Economic Diversification and Wealth Creation

Goal II: Education and Workforce Excellence

Goal III: Quality of Life Enhancements

Goal IV: Marketing and Outreach

The goals, objectives and action steps in the Partnership Gwinnett strategy were carefully selected based on the findings of an extensive research process to identify Gwinnett’s key strengths and competitive concerns. The following provides insight into these strategic components.

Goal I: Economic Diversification and Wealth Creation

Building a stronger Gwinnett will depend on growing job opportunities and earnings for residents at various skill-levels. Ultimately, Gwinnett’s successful future will depend on developing an economy with the diversification to survive downturns in specific sectors and the creation of jobs that provide the wages necessary for local residents to thrive.

Objective 1: Attract new opportunities in target business sectors

Objective 2: Retain and expand existing firms

Objective 3: Nurture entrepreneurs and small business opportunities

Objective 4: Advance economic opportunities for international and minority business

The Target Business Analysis of this strategic planning process identified five target business sectors as the most viable areas to prioritize resources to foster quality job growth. These targets are: Health Care; Distribution and Trade; Headquarters, Regional Offices, and Professional Services; Information Technology; and Advanced Communications. Goal I focuses on strategies specifically related to generating and sustaining local jobs in the target business sectors, by addressing the three legs of the best-practice “stool” of economic development: recruitment (Objective One); existing business retention and expansion (Objective Two); and entrepreneurial and small business development (Objective Three). Additionally, it recognizes that Gwinnett’s diverse, growing minority population is one of its most distinguishable competitive advantages to be leveraged for local economic development (Objective Four).

Each objective includes numerous action steps. The following provide an overview of the types of action steps included in this goal.

- Establish the leadership, marketing, and re-development incentive programs necessary to prioritize target business sectors.
- Focus recruitment strategies on opportunities to strengthen buyer-supplier networks and other linkages with existing firms, and focus on opportunities to expand R&D-related activities.
- Ensure area roads, highways, railways, and airports (both Gwinnett County Airport and access to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport) are able to support target business sectors.
- Create a comprehensive, best-practice business retention and expansion program,

and create/redefine target-specific business councils, to provide stronger avenues for identifying and resolving existing business needs, expansion opportunities, and recruitment lead generation.

- Strengthen the Chamber’s work to support, identify, and promote entrepreneurs and small business owners, with a particular focus on opportunities related to target business sectors.
- Develop a comprehensive international trade initiative, and expand support networks for minority and international businesses in Gwinnett.

Goal II: Education and Workforce Excellence

No economic and community development strategy is complete without addressing the key components of education and workforce training. Ensuring that Gwinnett’s public and private school students are prepared to enter the local workforce, and developing a seamless workforce delivery system linked to the opportunities and needs of local businesses are the most important means of ensuring competitiveness in today’s global economy.

Objective 1: Ensure the pre-K through 12th grade educational system is able to serve local needs

Objective 2: Maintain a demand-driven approach to post-secondary education and training

The first objective of this goal recommends ways to “go above and beyond” current student performance, instead of creating new programs or attempting to “reinvent the wheel” of local education. The second objective addresses the intersection between available post-secondary school training and local employers’ needs. The implementation of Goal II will bear much of the responsibility for ensuring Gwinnett will be successful in target-business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts, as workforce-related concerns are of paramount importance to many businesses today.

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The following provide an overview of the types of action steps included in this goal.

- Maintain high standards in K-12 student performance, with a particular emphasis on ensuring adequate funding to maintain necessary facilities and equipment, and meeting the needs of minority and new-comer populations.
- Expand efforts to encourage private sector support of the attainment of local K-12 education goals.
- Align vocational-technical educational and enrichment programs with the needs of target business sectors.
- Strengthen partnerships between businesses, higher educational institutions, and job training programs, to ensure the local workforce is trained for target business sectors.

Goal III: Quality of Life Enhancements

Research suggests that firms and workers are increasingly placing a high priority on quality of life factors in their decision making processes on where to locate. Everything from the attractiveness of land use patterns to entertainment and recreational opportunities to crime rates have been found to impact location decisions.

Objective 1: Promote redevelopment and more sustainable development patterns

Objective 2: Enhance mobility in Gwinnett and throughout the region

Objective 3: Strengthen arts, cultural, and recreational assets

Objective 4: Improve public safety and code enforcement

Community input found that realities and perceptions of Gwinnett's land use patterns, mobility, arts and recreational assets, and crime rates need to improve for the community to be more competitive. Participants called for progressive redevelopment (Objective One), strong actions to alleviate congested roadways (Objective Two), more pervasive awareness and support for further development of local cultural and recreational assets (Objective Three), and improved crime rates (Objective Four).

The following provide an overview of the types of action steps included in this goal.

- Encourage land use plans, zoning regula-

tions, and fast-tracked approval and permitting services for projects that will allow for higher densities, more vertical development, a more dynamic mixing of uses, high-quality multi-unit housing developments, a focus on existing and planned activity centers and transportation nodes, support of target business sectors, and a priority for redevelopment over greenfield development for Gwinnett's future.

- Aggressively lobby all levels of government for timely development of local and regional road, highway, and transit projects designed to support quality growth and improved mobility in Gwinnett.
- Work with the Gwinnett Council of the Arts to significantly expand its role to serve as a partnership of local galleries and theater, music, and dance performing groups.
- Facilitate entrepreneurial development of individually-owned restaurants, bars, jazz clubs, and similar venues in the medium to up-scale quality range.
- Develop a master plan and pursue initiatives to strengthen the Gwinnett Center area's status as an entertainment district for the Atlanta region.
- Advocate for adequate expenditures to create a more connected sidewalk network, maintain and fulfill demand for active and passive park space, and create well-connected pedestrian, bike, and equestrian trails.
- Form a comprehensive Task Force of key stakeholders and practitioners to develop a best-practice action plan for public safety in Gwinnett.
- Ensure that a renewed effort on local code enforcement is undertaken

Goal IV: Marketing and Outreach

Gwinnett has reached a critical point in its growth where it has matured into a strong regional economic leader. As often occurs, perceptions have not kept pace with reality. Many in the County, region and state have yet to acknowledge Gwinnett's critical role in local economic and demographic dynamics. Gwinnett must greatly enhance its marketing efforts to advertise to the region, state and nation its growing prominence, competitive assets and

best-in-class companies. In addition, Gwinnett must engage in strategies designed to forge a greater sense of community, unity and collaboration among the County's diverse neighborhoods and populations.

Objective 1: Initiate an external marketing campaign

Objective 2: Make Gwinnett attractive and welcoming for young professionals

Objective 3: Expand community-building, involvement and outreach

Objective 4: Partner with local and regional entities

The goal begins with an objective focused on developing a comprehensive external marketing campaign, promoting Gwinnett as an attractive place to live, do business, and visit. The second objective focuses on the specific target audience of young professionals. This socio-economic group brings vitality to the living environment, and a more competitive workforce for target business sector growth. The third objective focuses on a number of best-practice community-building initiatives, as well as strategies to engage Gwinnett's minority and international communities in County leadership. Finally, this goal addresses Gwinnett's need to maintain strong partnerships with local and regional entities that can make positive contributions to the County's future.

The following provide an overview of the types of action steps included in this goal.

- Aggressively pursue a public relations campaign that Gwinnett is now a major player in the future of the Atlanta region and the State of Georgia.
- Create a brand and aggressive marketing campaign to develop a strong identity for Gwinnett.
- Establish a networking group, activities, and initiatives to help recruit and retain young professionals.
- Engage in a number of best-practice community-building and engagement efforts to enhance Gwinnett's community relationships, inclusiveness and civic capacity.
- Pursue close partnerships with key public and private sector entities in Gwinnett, the Atlanta metro, neighboring counties, and the State of Georgia.