

# 2 Economic Development

The Economic Development Element of this Joint Comprehensive Plan provides the following:

- data regarding the economic trends in Gilmer County;
- an assessment of these trends to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats;
- an evaluation of the appropriateness of the existing economy given the County's population, housing availability, transportation network, natural resources, and community facilities;
- goals and strategies for achieving a growing and balanced economy; and
- implementation strategies to accomplish the County's desired economic goals and objectives.

## What is economic development?

The Georgia Economic Development Association (GEDA) defines economic development as the following:

*“a sustainable process of creating economic opportunity for all citizens, stimulating business investment, diversifying the public revenue base, and enhancing quality of life.”*

*(source: [www.geda.org](http://www.geda.org))*

## Statistics: NAICS or SIC?

In January 1997, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) replaced the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system as the governmental standard for statistics on industry. The classification type used in the tables in the economic development inventory varies, depending upon the age and source of the data.

More information on the difference between NAICS and SIC can be found on the U.S. Small Business Administration website at <http://www.sba.gov/businessop/standards/faqs.html>.

### Element Outline:

#### 2.1. Inventory

##### 2.1.1. Economic Base

- Employment
- Earnings
- Weekly Wages
- Personal Income
- New or Planned Economic Activities
- Special or Unique Economic Activities

##### 2.1.2. Labor Force

- Employment by Occupation
- Employment Status
- Unemployment Rates
- Commuting Patterns

##### 2.1.3. Local Economic Development Resources

- Agencies
- Programs
- Education and Training

#### 2.2. Assessment of Current and Future Needs

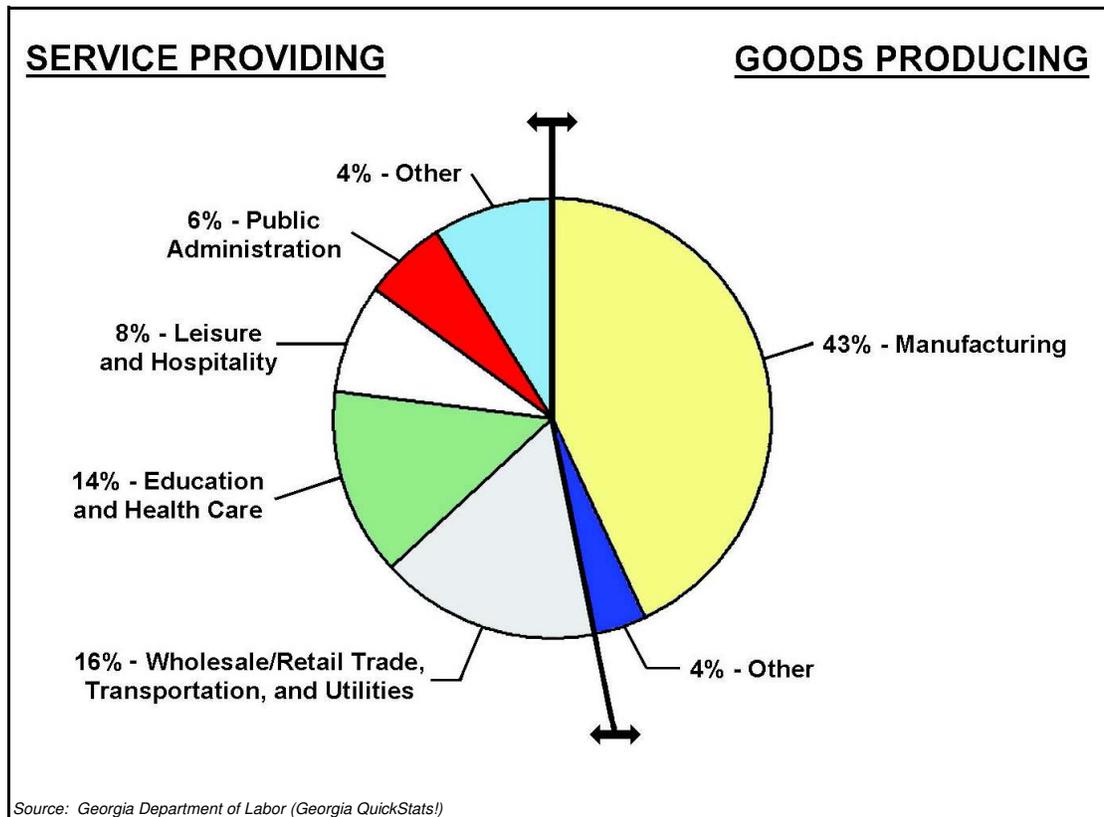
#### 2.3. Community Goal and Implementation Program

## 2.1. Inventory

### 2.1.1. Economic Base

#### 2.1.1.1. Employment

The division of employment between service-producing and goods-producing establishments is fairly even in Gilmer County, with 53% of the persons employed in the County providing services and 47% producing goods. As shown in Figure 2-A below, manufacturing establishments employed the greatest number of Gilmer County residents in 2002.



**FIGURE 2-A. 2002 Gilmer County Employment by NAICS**

Table 2-A provides historical data on the number and distribution of employees by sector in Gilmer County. This data represents persons employed in Gilmer County and not necessarily residing there.

In Gilmer County, the total number of employees has increased in both goods-producing and service-providing employment sectors. The percentage of all employees in goods-producing jobs has decreased slightly from 46% to 44%, while the percentage in service-providing jobs has increased slightly from 38% to 40%. Historically, Gilmer County has had a larger proportion of its workforce employed in manufacturing industries, while the state has had a larger proportion in service industries.

Table 2-B compares the county with state percentages of employment by sector. Note that Table 2-A uses the NCAIS, while Table 2-B uses the SIC.

**TABLE 2-A. Employment by Sector (NAICS)<sup>1</sup>**

Employment Sector	1990		1995		2000	
	# <sup>3</sup>	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Goods Producing</b>	<b>2,365</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>2,800</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>3,103</b>	<b>44%</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing <sup>2</sup>	19	0%	48	1%	20	0%
Mining	72	1%	125	2%	78	1%
Construction	164	3%	252	4%	207	3%
Manufacturing	2,110	41%	2,375	40%	2,798	40%
<b>Service Providing</b>	<b>1,989</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>2,347</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>2,827</b>	<b>40%</b>
Wholesale Trade	101	2%	173	3%	110	2%
Retail Trade	605	12%	671	11%	817	12%
Transportation and Warehousing	4	0%	43	1%	16	0%
Utilities	56	1%	63	1%	50	1%
Information	18	0%	17	0%	119	2%
Finance and Insurance	209	4%	165	3%	205	3%
Real Estate and Rental/Leasing	130	3%	84	1%	76	1%
Professional, Scientific/Technical Services	80	2%	68	1%	148	2%
Management	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Administrative/Waste Services	60	1%	10	0%	127	2%
Educational Services	0	0%	15	0%	34	0%
Health Care and Social Services	346	7%	496	8%	431	6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	9	0%	11	0%	7	0%
Accommodation and Food Services	188	4%	351	6%	401	6%
Other Services	183	4%	180	3%	286	4%
Unclassified or Undisclosed	10	0%	4	0%	6	0%
<b>Total: Private Sector</b>	<b>4,364</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>5,151</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>5,936</b>	<b>85%</b>
Federal Government	55	1%	58	1%	88	1%
State Government	638	12%	647	11%	824	12%
Local Government	122	2%	113	2%	144	2%
<b>Total: Government</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>1,056</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>All industries</b>	<b>5,179</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,969</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,992</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Georgia Department of Labor and NGRDC

<sup>1</sup>This data represents jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

<sup>2</sup>This data does not include self-employed farmers, apple growers, or migrant workers.

<sup>3</sup>Average monthly number of employees

**TABLE 2-B. Employment by Sector (SIC)**

Employment Sector	1990		1995		2000	
	Gilmer	Georgia	Gilmer	Georgia	Gilmer	Georgia
Farm	6%	2%	4%	2%	3%	1%
Agricultural Services, Other	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Mining	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Construction	6%	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%
Manufacturing	34%	16%	34%	14%	34%	13%
Transportation/Communication/Public Utilities	2%	6%	3%	6%	2%	6%
Wholesale Trade	1%	6%	2%	6%	2%	6%
Retail Trade	15%	16%	17%	17%	17%	17%
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	8%	7%	5%	6%	5%	7%
Services	13%	24%	15%	27%	16%	29%
Government	13%	16%	11%	15%	11%	14%

Source: Woods & Pool Economics, Inc. (DCA Data Views®)

As shown in Table 2-C below, the total number of jobs in Gilmer County is expected grow in the future, while the split between goods-producing and service-providing jobs is expected to remain fairly unchanged. The manufacturing sector is expected to continue to provide the greatest number of jobs in the area.

**TABLE 2-C. Projected Employment by Sector (NAICS)<sup>1</sup>**

Employment Sector	2005		2010		2015		2020		2025	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Goods Producing</b>	<b>3,911</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>4,468</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>5,025</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>5,582</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>6,139</b>	<b>47%</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	13	0%	14	0%	15	0%	16	0%	17	0%
Mining	84	1%	75	1%	66	1%	56	0%	47	0%
Construction	275	3%	311	3%	346	3%	382	3%	418	3%
Manufacturing	3,539	43%	4,069	43%	4,598	43%	5,127	43%	5,657	44%
<b>Service Providing</b>	<b>3,269</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>3,751</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>4,232</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>4,714</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>5,195</b>	<b>40%</b>
Wholesale Trade	177	2%	195	2%	214	2%	232	2%	251	2%
Retail Trade	940	11%	1,075	11%	1,209	11%	1,343	11%	1,477	11%
Transportation/Warehousing	31	0%	32	0%	34	0%	36	0%	37	0%
Utilities	31	0%	32	0%	32	0%	33	0%	33	0%
Information	168	2%	229	2%	290	3%	351	3%	413	3%
Finance and Insurance	176	2%	172	2%	167	2%	163	1%	159	1%
Real Estate/Rental and Leasing	51	1%	45	0%	39	0%	33	0%	27	0%
Prof., Scientific, Tech. Services	172	2%	210	2%	248	2%	287	2%	325	3%
Management	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Administrative/Waste Services	89	1%	116	1%	142	1%	169	1%	195	2%
Educational Services	42	1%	52	1%	62	0.01%	72	1%	82	1%
Health Care/Social Services	569	7%	671	7%	773	7%	875	7%	977	8%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	7	0%	6	0%	5	0%	4	0%	3	0%
Accommodation/Food Services	576	7%	695	7%	814	8%	933	8%	1,052	8%
Other Services	240	3%	220	2%	201	2%	182	2%	162	1%
Unclassified	9	0%	10	0%	10	0%	11	0%	11	0%
Undisclosed	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	2	0%
<b>Total: Private Sector</b>	<b>7,191</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>8,230</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>9,269</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>10,308</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>11,346</b>	<b>88%</b>
Federal Government	90	1%	104	1%	118	1%	133	1%	147	1%
State Government	899	11%	1,001	11%	1,104	10%	1,206	10%	1,309	10%
Local Government	137	2%	143	2%	149	1%	154	1%	160	1%
<b>Total: Government</b>	<b>1,127</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>1,249</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1,371</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1,493</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1,616</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>All industries</b>	<b>8,317</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9,478</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10,640</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>11,801</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>12,962</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Georgia Department of Labor and NGRDC

<sup>1</sup>This data represents jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

### 2.1.1.2. Earnings

As would be expected, the trends in earnings in Gilmer County are similar to the trends presented in the previous section on employment. Historical and projected earnings are presented in Tables 2-D and 2-E. In 2000, total earnings in manufacturing were greater than in any other sector in Gilmer County at \$74 million or just over 34%. By contrast, only 15% of total earnings in the state were from manufacturing jobs. In Georgia, 27% of earnings came from service jobs compared to 14% in Gilmer County.

**TABLE 2-D. Earnings by Employment Sector (SIC)**

Employment Sector	1990		1995		2000	
	Gilmer	Georgia	Gilmer	Georgia	Gilmer	Georgia
Farm	11%	1%	12%	1%	9%	1%
Agricultural Services, Other	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Mining	3%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%
Construction	5%	6%	5%	5%	6%	6%
Manufacturing	35%	18%	34%	17%	34%	15%
Transportation, Public Utilities	3%	9%	4%	9%	4%	10%
Wholesale Trade	2%	9%	1%	8%	3%	8%
Retail Trade	10%	9%	11%	9%	11%	9%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6%	6%	4%	7%	4%	8%
Services	11%	22%	13%	24%	14%	27%
Government	15%	20%	13%	17%	13%	15%
Total County Earnings (1996 \$)	\$ 143,380,000		\$ 171,188,000		\$ 218,555,000	

Source: Woods & Pool Economics, Inc. (DCA Data Views®)

While total earnings in Gilmer County are projected to grow over the next twenty years, little change is anticipated in the distribution of earnings between employment sectors. For example, in Gilmer County, earnings in manufacturing should remain at about 35% of total earnings while service jobs should contribute between 14% and 16% of total earnings.

**TABLE 2-E. Projected Earnings by Employment Sector (SIC)**

Employment Sector	2005		2010		2015		2020		2025	
	Gilmer	GA								
Farm	8%	1%	8%	1%	8%	1%	8%	1%	8%	1%
Agricultural Services, Other	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Mining	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Construction	6%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Manufacturing	35%	14%	35%	14%	35%	14%	35%	13%	35%	13%
Transportation, Public Utilities	4%	10%	4%	10%	4%	10%	4%	10%	4%	10%
Wholesale Trade	3%	8%	3%	8%	3%	8%	3%	8%	3%	8%
Retail Trade	11%	9%	11%	9%	11%	9%	11%	9%	11%	9%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	4%	8%	4%	8%	4%	8%	4%	8%	4%	8%
Services	14%	28%	14%	29%	15%	30%	15%	32%	16%	34%
Government	13%	15%	14%	15%	14%	15%	14%	14%	14%	13%
Total County Earnings (1996 \$)	\$253,581,000		\$289,097,000		\$324,199,000		\$357,867,000		\$389,238,000	

Source: Woods & Pool Economics, Inc. (DCA Data Views®)

### 2.1.1.3. Weekly Wages

As shown in Table 2-F, average weekly wages in Gilmer County have historically been lower than the average weekly wages for the entire state of Georgia. The greatest variation in 1999 was in the wholesale trade industry where workers in Gilmer County made, on average, \$386 or 49% of the statewide average weekly wage. The average wage in all industries in Gilmer County was \$389 in 1999, or 63% of the statewide average of \$622. The manufacturing industry, which employs the largest number of Gilmer County residents, had an average weekly wage of \$386 compared to the state average of \$683.

**TABLE 2-F. Average Weekly Wages Paid By Employment Sector (SIC)<sup>1</sup>**

	1990			1995			1999		
	Gilmer County	% of GA	GA	Gilmer County	% of GA	GA	Gilmer County	% of GA	GA
	\$		\$	\$		\$	\$		\$
<b>All Industries</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>622</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	458	166%	276	--	--	322	--	--	389
Construction	284	65%	434	351	69%	508	444	71%	621
Manufacturing	295	66%	449	335	60%	555	386	57%	683
Transportation, Public Utilities	538	89%	603	580	79%	737	729	81%	895
Wholesale	442	73%	603	319	44%	729	453	49%	932
Retail	193	82%	236	233	85%	275	267	80%	334
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	256	47%	543	371	54%	693	484	53%	907
Services	322	78%	414	426	85%	501	415	68%	612
Federal Government	474	87%	543	609	91%	666	648	80%	808
State Government	472	105%	450	494	100%	493	559	97%	576
Local Government	288	75%	386	347	79%	440	411	78%	524

Source: Georgia Employment and Wages Averages, Georgia Department of Labor, 1990, 1995, 1999

<sup>1</sup>This data represents jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

"--" means data could not be provided for privacy reasons.

In 2002, the most recent year for which data is available, Gilmer County workers continued to make less than the state's average wage for all employment sectors. For example, persons in goods-producing industries made, on average, 61% of the Georgia average weekly wage. Workers in service-producing industries made even less, just 59% of the state average. Wages of government employees were approximately 81% of the state average.

Note that employment classifications in Table 2-F area based on the SIC while Table 2-G uses the NAICS. In addition, only jobs covered by unemployment insurance laws are included in the statistics of both tables.

**TABLE 2-G. Average Weekly Wages Paid by NAICS: 2002<sup>1</sup>**

2001	Gilmer County		Georgia
	\$	% of GA \$	\$
<b>Goods Producing</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>708</b>
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	465	113%	410
Construction	524	76%	693
Manufacturing	418	57%	728
<b>Service Producing</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>688</b>
Wholesale Trade	338	33%	1,018
Retail Trade	395	90%	440
Transportation and Warehousing	421	51%	828
Information	809	74%	1,098
Finance and Insurance	632	58%	1,082
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	344	49%	697
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	514	47%	1,089
Administrative/Waste services	365	75%	485
Educational Services	173	30%	581
Health Care and Social Services	476	70%	678
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	171	29%	586
Accommodation and Food Services	204	79%	259
<b>Total Private Sector</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>693</b>
<b>Total Government</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>660</b>

Source: Georgia Employment and Wages Averages, 2002

<sup>1</sup>This data represents jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws is based upon place of employment, not place of residence.

**2.1.1.4. Personal Income**

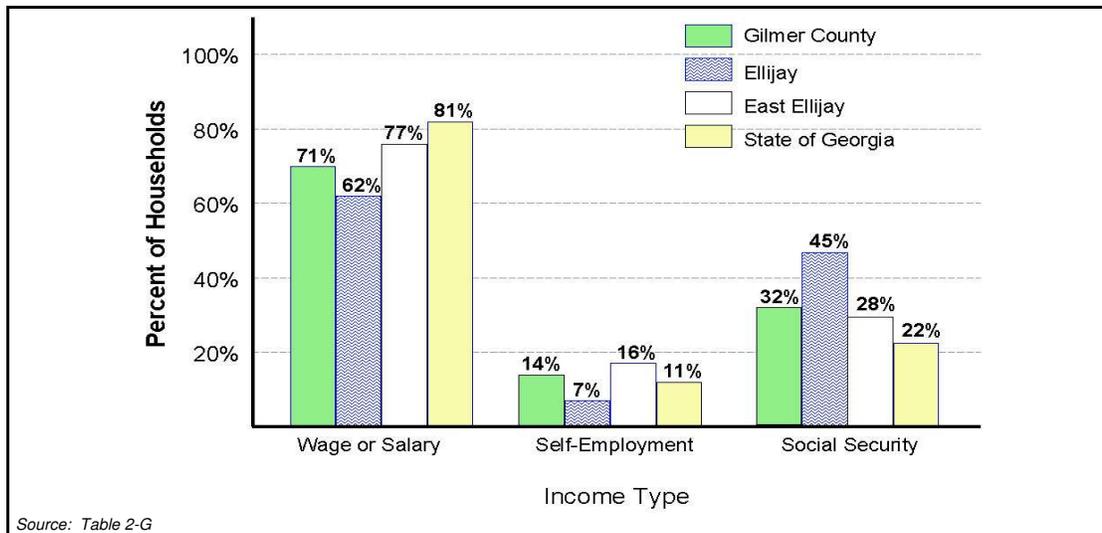
Table 2-H provides census data on sources of household income in 1989 and 1999. Few changes occurred during this decade, with the majority of households receiving wage and salary income. The most noticeable changes included a decline in Social Security income in East Ellijay (from 49% to 28%) and a decline in public assistance income in Ellijay (from 20% to 4%).

**TABLE 2-H. Percent of Households Receiving Various Sources of Income**

Source of Income	1989				1994				1999			
	Gilmer Co.	Ellijay	East Ellijay	GA	Gilmer Co.	Ellijay	East Ellijay	GA	Gilmer Co.	Ellijay	East Ellijay	GA
Wage or Salary Income	74%	59%	68%	81%	72%	60%	72%	81%	71%	62%	77%	81%
Self-Employment Income	16%	12%	4%	13%	15%	9%	10%	12%	14%	7%	16%	11%
Interest, Dividend, or Net Rental Income	27%	23%	20%	31%	26%	22%	23%	24%	26%	22%	27%	29%
Social Security Income	29%	40%	49%	23%	30%	42%	38%	22%	32%	45%	28%	22%
Supplemental Security Income	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5%	11%	6%	4%
Public Assistance Income	9%	20%	13%	1%	6%	12%	8%	8%	2%	4%	4%	3%
Retirement Income	12%	15%	3%	13%	14%	14%	9%	14%	16%	14%	15%	14%
Other Type of Income	10%	8%	10%	10%	11%	10%	12%	11%	11%	12%	14%	12%

Sources: 1990 Census STF 3, Tables P090 – P097; 2000 Census SF 3, Tables P58 – P66; others NGRDC

\* Note: Percent totals may exceed 100% due to households receiving more than one type of income.



**FIGURE 2-B. Sources of Household Income in 1999**

In 1999, differences between sources of household income in Gilmer County, Ellijay, East Ellijay, and Georgia were most noticeable in three categories of income: wage or salary, self-employment, and social security. These differences are highlighted in Figure 2-B to the right.

Ellijay had the lowest percentage of households with wage or salary income, just 62% compared to 81% for Georgia. It also had the highest percentage of households with Social Security income: 45% compared to 22% in Georgia.

Projections of sources of personal were prepared by Woods & Pool Economics, Inc. and are shown below in Table 2-I. Little change in the sources of personal income is anticipated in Gilmer County or Georgia over the next twenty years.

**TABLE 2-I. Sources of Personal Income: Projected**

Source of Income	2005		2010		2015		2020		2025	
	Gilmer	GA								
Wage or Salary Income	38%	61%	38%	61%	38%	61%	37%	61%	37%	61%
Other Labor Income	4%	7%	4%	7%	4%	6%	4%	6%	4%	6%
Proprietors Income	16%	9%	16%	8%	16%	8%	15%	8%	15%	8%
Dividends, Interest, & Rent	18%	17%	18%	17%	18%	17%	18%	16%	19%	16%
Transfer Payments	22%	11%	23%	11%	24%	12%	25%	12%	26%	12%

Source: Woods & Pool Economics, Inc. (DCA Data Views®)

### 2.1.1.5. New or Planned Economic Activities

**Major Employers.** Table 2-J lists the major employers in Gilmer County.

**TABLE 2-J. Major Employers in Gilmer County**

Company	Product/Service
Gold Kist, Inc.	poultry processing
Gilmer County School System	education services
Regal Ellijay	bath mat sets and rugs
Blue Ridge Commercial Carpet	tufted carpets
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.	retail sales
Gilmer County Government	county government
North Georgia Medical Center	health services
White Path Fab Tech, Inc.	wire harness assemblies
Ellijay Telephone Company	telephone utility
Gilmer County Bank	banking
Blue Ridge Mountain Woodcrafters	wooden trophy parts
McDonald's	fast food restaurant
Gilmer Textiles, Inc.	pillowcases, shams, shop aprons, utility packs, etc.
Courier Dyeing & Printing, Inc.	carpet dyeing and printing

**Airport Redevelopment.** Gilmer County has one airport, located south of Ellijay, off Highway 382. In the 2003, the Federal Aviation Administration awarded Gilmer County a \$450,000 grant to renovate and upgrade the airfield. The grant will fund 90% of the renovation project with the remaining funds coming from the State Department of Transportation Aviation Program (\$25,000) and Gilmer County (\$25,000).

Because the length of the runway precludes its use by jets, it is expected that the airport will continue to serve as a peripheral amenity to the community.

The airport is discussed in further detail in Section 8.1.6.

**Business and Technology Park.** One of Gilmer County's greatest disadvantages in terms of attracting new business and industry to the area is the lack of an industrial or business and technology park. To remedy this situation, a new business and technology park is in the preliminary planning stages. The proposed location is along Clear Creek Road, just over four miles from Highway 515. Access from GA 515 will be more direct when the Eller Road Extension is completed.

**Hospital.** The North Georgia Medical Center is in the process of planning for a new hospital. The existing hospital facility will be renovated to incorporate an expansion of the nursing home.

### GA Highway 515 (Appalachian Highway/Technology Corridor).

Development along Highway 515 is predominantly auto-oriented, commercial strip development. Recent development includes a new Wal-Mart, Lowe's, Goody's, and typical fast-food restaurants located on out-parcels. Future development possibilities include a hotel, an outlet mall, and residential development. The Georgia DOT owns and manages access rights to Highway 515.



The Highlands Shopping Center is the most recent commercial development on Highway 515.

Growth along this corridor is expected to continue into the future. Gilmer County and the City of East Ellijay need to be proactive in terms of planning for the type and style of development that occurs along this corridor. Design guidelines, created through a collaborative effort of government officials, land owners, and developers should be developed to manage the appearance of development along the corridor to maintain the areas scenic beauty. Without proper planning, Highway 515 in Gilmer County will quickly evolve into a generic, suburban strip commercial corridor.

#### 2.1.1.6. Special or Unique Economic Activities

**Agriculture.** In 2002, Gilmer County ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in the State in terms of total farm gate value (\$187,020,050). Agricultural production has increased steadily over the past several years as shown in Figure 2-C.

Although apples typically come to mind when one thinks of Gilmer County agriculture, the poultry industry is the greatest dollar value contributor to the agricultural economy.

**Poultry.** In 2002, the total farm gate value of poultry/egg products in Gilmer County was \$167,738,672 or 89.7% of the total farm gate value for the County. Gilmer ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the State in terms of the production value of poultry/egg products.

**Apple Production.** Sixty percent of the apple trees in Georgia are in Gilmer County. Known as "Georgia's Apple Capital," local orchards can produce over 600,000 bushels of apples per year. (Source: Gilmer County Chamber of Commerce). Apple houses also sell other projects such as homemade apple butter, fried apple pies, and apple cider.

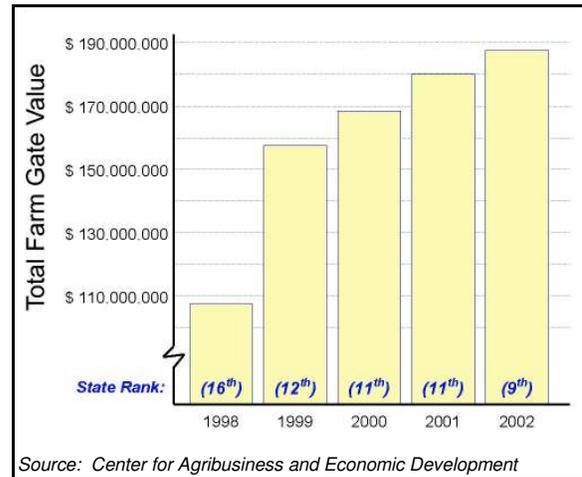
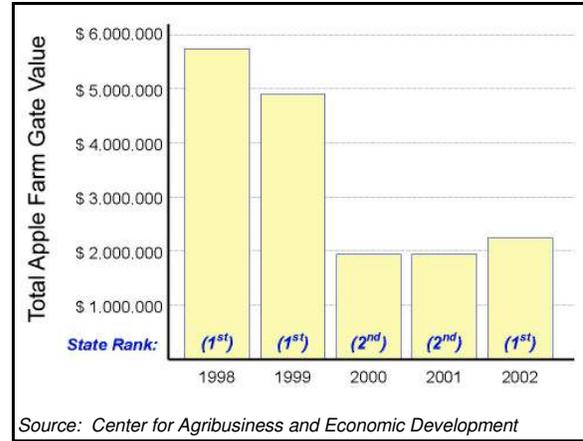


Figure 2-C. Total Farm Gate Value (unadjusted \$)

The apple season begins in late August and runs through December. The Chamber of Commerce coordinates the annual “Apple Festival” in October, featuring crafts, entertainment, parades, and country cooking. The apple season and Apple Festival are major attractions for visitors to Gilmer County. Since the Apple Festival occurs in the fall, the changing of the leaves adds another incentive to visit the area.

Although Gilmer County has ranked either first or second in the State in terms of total value of apple products, the wholesale apple industry has been declining. (See Figure 2-D.) The industry in general has shifted from wholesale (pack and ship) to retail and associated “entertainment” and spin-off businesses such as



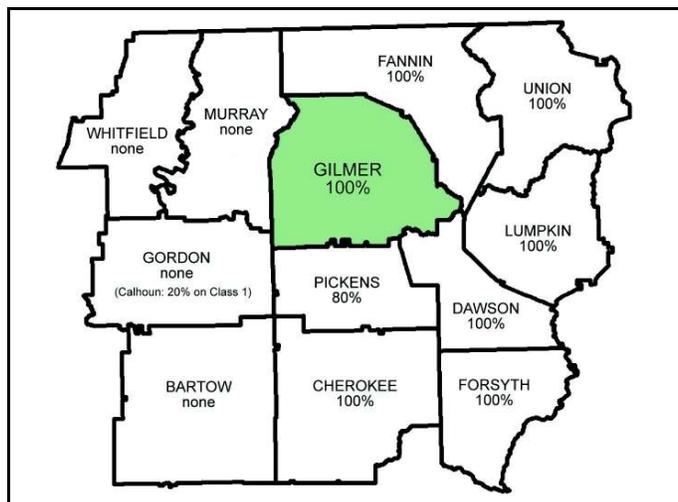
**Figure 2-D. Apple Farm Gate Value** (unadjusted \$)

**Freeport Exemption.** The governing authority of any county or municipality in Georgia may elect, with the approval of the voters, to exempt the following types of tangible personal property:

- **Class 1:** Inventory of goods in the process of being manufactured or produced including raw materials and partly finished goods;
- **Class 2:** Inventory of finished goods manufactured or produced within this State held by the manufacturer or producer for a period not to exceed 12 months;
- **Class 3:** Inventory of finished goods on January 1 that are stored in a warehouse, dock, or wharf which are destined for shipment outside this State for a period not to exceed 12 months.

The percentage of exemption can be set at 20, 40, 60, 80 or 100 percent of the inventory value. (source: Georgia Department of Revenue)

Gilmer County and the City of Ellijay voters have elected to provide a 100% exemption to all three classes of commercial and industrial inventory. Not all surrounding and nearby counties have elected freeport exemption as shown in Figure 2-E to the right.

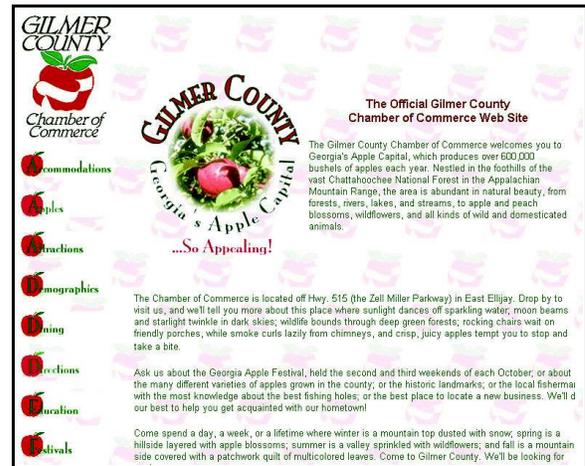


**FIGURE 2-E. Freeport Exemption in Nearby Counties.**

**Ellijay Telephone Company (ETC).** ETC is a local, independent telecommunications company that has served North Georgia since 1903. The company offers a full line of telecommunications products, cable television, a local television station, directory and cable advertising, high-speed internet, and security systems. ETC is one of the few family-owned operations left in Georgia today. According to ETC, the number of cable and telephone access lines in the community has doubled since 1999.

**Tourism and Eco-Tourism.** The primary responsibility for promoting tourism in the area currently lies with the Chamber of Commerce. The 2002 Economic Impact of Domestic Travel in Georgia published by the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade, and Tourism states that in 2002, domestic travel (tourism) expenditures totaled \$19.47 million in Gilmer County.

Currently, tourism in Gilmer County isn't characterized by hotels, motels, restaurants, and shopping, but by weekly cabin rentals, vacation homes, and eco-tourism. The natural beauty of the area is what attracts many visitors.



**The Gilmer County Chamber of Commerce uses its web site to promote tourism in the area. See [www.gilmerchamber.com](http://www.gilmerchamber.com) for more information.**

Ellijay is one of four “gateway cities” to the historic Chieftains Trail, designated by the Georgia General Assembly in 1998 as part of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Trail of Tears. Encircling Northwest Georgia, the trail tells the story of the Native Americans who once lived in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

Ellijay is one of the few remaining towns that has a town square. The square has a memorial statue as its centerpiece and is framed by the historic courthouse and several businesses. Recent streetscaping projects have greatly enhanced the attractiveness of the downtown area.

## 2.1.2. Labor Force

### 2.1.2.1. Employment by Occupation

Table 2-K compares employment by occupation of Gilmer County residents with state and national averages. Significant differences occur in several occupational categories. Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay are substantially below state and national averages in the “white collar” categories such as professional and technical specialty occupations. Conversely, the county and its municipalities have higher percentages of workers in “blue collar” occupations such as machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors.

A comparison of 1990 and 2000 data shows percentage increases certain in white collar occupations. For example, employment in “professional and technical specialty” occupations increased in Gilmer County from 6% to 12% and in Georgia from 12% to 19%. Employment in most of the other categories remained at fairly consistent percentages. Due to changes in occupational categories from the 1990 Census to the 2000 Census, detailed evaluations of changes in employment by occupation are not possible.

**TABLE 2-K. Employment by Occupation**

Occupation		1990					2000				
		Gilmer Co.	Ellijay	East Ellijay	GA	US	Gilmer Co.	Ellijay	East Ellijay	GA	US
<b>Total, All Occupations</b>	<b>#</b>	6,073	429	125			10,447	579	359		
Executive, Administrative, and Managerial (not Farm)	# %	467 8%	33 8%	5 4%	12%	12%	1,173 11%	50 9%	24 7%	14%	13%
Professional and Technical Specialty	# %	383 6%	46 11%	4 3%	12%	14%	1,223 12%	50 9%	40 11%	19%	20%
Technicians & Related Support	# %	150 2%	4 1%	0 0%	4%	4%	–	–	–	–	–
Sales	# %	608 10%	63 15%	9 7%	12%	12%	1,054 10%	76 13%	17 5%	12%	11%
Clerical and Administrative Support	# %	669 11%	39 9%	20 16%	16%	16%	1,076 10%	49 8%	24 7%	15%	15%
Private Household Services	# %	8 0%	0 0%	1 1%	1%	0%	–	–	–	–	–
Protective Services	# %	105 2%	5 1%	2 2%	2%	2%	–	–	–	–	–
Service Occupations (not Protective & Household)	# %	399 7%	39 9%	10 8%	10%	11%	1,046 10%	74 13%	41 11%	13%	15%
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	# %	353 6%	15 3%	5 4%	2%	2%	179 2%	2 0%	10 3%	1%	1%
Precision Production, Craft, and Repair	# %	1,042 17%	62 14%	22 18%	12%	11%	1,617 15%	54 9%	26 7%	11%	9%
Machine Operators, Assemblers & Inspectors	# %	1,070 18%	60 14%	17 14%	9%	7%	2,083 20%	184 32%	135 38%	9%	8%
Transportation & Material Moving	# %	470 8%	23 5%	11 9%	5%	4%	996 10%	40 7%	42 12%	7%	6%
Handlers, Equip. Cleaners Helpers & Laborers	# %	349 6%	40 9%	19 15%	4%	4%	–	–	–	–	–

Sources: 1990 Census STF 3, Table P078; 2000 Census SF 3, Table P50

“–” means data is not available because the classification was no longer included in the Census.

### 2.1.2.2. Employment Status

Employment status pertains to the composition of the labor force, including civilian and military employment and employment by sex. Figure 2-C shows that Gilmer County and Ellijay have smaller percentages of persons over the age of 16 in the labor force than do East Ellijay, Georgia, and the United States. One reason for this difference is the variation in median age between the jurisdictions. Both have median ages above 37 years. This implies that a greater percentage of persons are retired and therefore not included in the labor force.

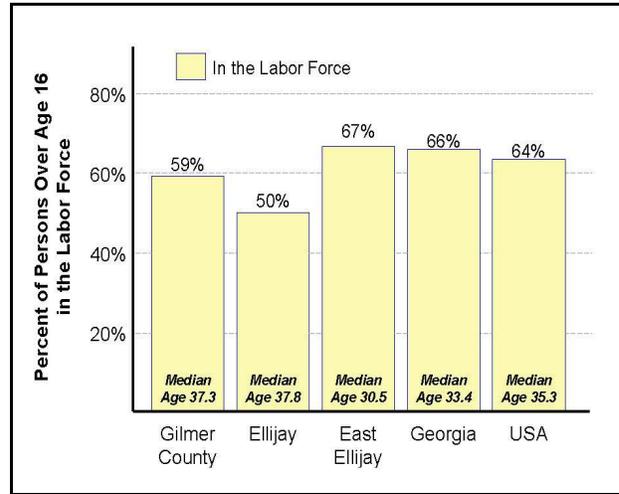


FIGURE 2-F. Persons in the Labor Force in 2000

A second reason for this difference is detailed in the bottom half of Table 2-L below. The percentage of women in Gilmer County and Ellijay who are in the labor force is 49% and 36%, respectively. This is compared to figures for East Ellijay, Georgia, and the United States of 54%, 59%, and 58%. This implies that fewer women in Gilmer County are in the labor force, either because they are retired or are otherwise not seeking employment outside the home.

TABLE 2-L. Employment Status

	1990					2000				
	Gilmer	Ellijay	East Ellijay	GA	US	Gilmer	Ellijay	East Ellijay	GA	US
<b>All Persons Age 16+</b>	<b>10,442</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>261</b>	--	--	<b>18,366</b>	<b>1,244</b>	<b>559</b>	--	--
In Labor Force	6,409	451	133	--	--	10,902	620	373	--	--
% of all persons	61%	51%	51%	68%	65%	59%	50%	67%	66%	64%
▪ Civilian Labor Force	6,404	451	133	--	--	10,902	620	373	--	--
% of labor force	61%	51%	51%	66%	64%	59%	50%	67%	65%	63%
Employed	6,073	429	125	--	--	10,447	579	359	--	--
% of civ. labor force	58%	49%	48%	63%	60%	57%	47%	64%	61%	60%
Unemployed	331	22	8	--	--	455	41	14	--	--
% of civ. labor force	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%	4%
▪ Armed Forces	5	0	0	--	--	0	0	0	--	--
% of labor force	0%	0%	0%	1.5%	0.9%	0%	0%	0%	1.1%	0.5%
Not in Labor Force	4,033	429	128	--	--	7,464	624	186	--	--
% of all persons	39%	49%	49%	32%	35%	41%	50%	33%	34%	36%
<b>All Females Age 16+</b>	<b>5,339</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>135</b>	--	--	<b>9,135</b>	<b>691</b>	<b>233</b>	--	--
In Labor Force	2,607	185	46	--	--	4,476	248	125	--	--
% of all females	49%	37%	34%	60%	57%	49%	36%	54%	59%	58%
▪ Civilian Labor Force	2,607	185	46	--	--	4,476	248	125	--	--
% of labor force	49%	37%	34%	60%	57%	49%	36%	54%	59%	57%
Employed	2,442	176	44	--	--	4,212	224	121	--	--
% of civ. labor force	46%	35%	33%	56%	53%	46%	32%	52%	56%	54%
Unemployed	165	9	2	--	--	264	24	4	--	--
% of civ. labor force	3%	2%	1%	4%	4%	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%
▪ Armed Forces	0	0	0	--	--	0	0	0	--	--
% of labor force	0%	0%	0%	0.3%	0.2%	0%	0%	0%	0.3%	0.1%
Not in Labor Force	2,732	321	89	--	--	4,659	443	108	--	--
% of all females	51%	63%	66%	40%	43%	51%	64%	46%	41%	42%

Sources: 1990 Census STF 3, Table P070; 2000 Census SF 3, Table P43

### 2.1.2.3. Unemployment Rates

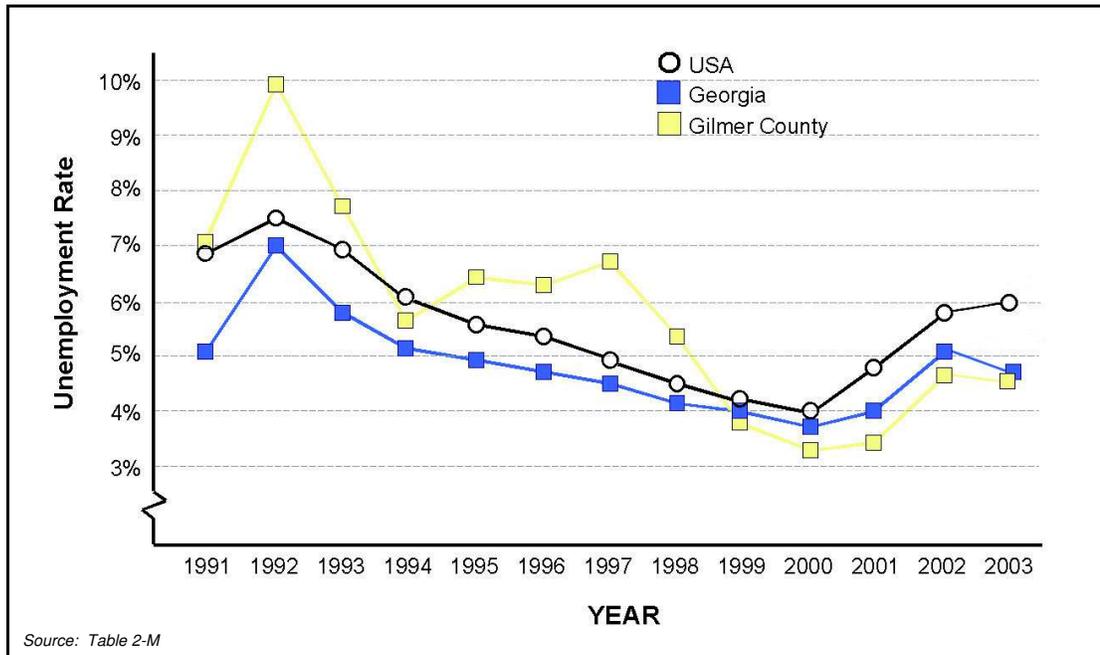
The unemployment rate is the percentage of unemployed persons in the civilian labor pool. Individuals such as students, unpaid volunteers, or retirees are not considered to be in the civilian labor force, and are therefore not included in the calculation.

As shown in Table 2-M to the right, prior to 1999, Gilmer County had unemployment rates that were higher than rates in the NGRDC area, Georgia, and the United States. Beginning in 1999, rates in Gilmer County dropped below those of Georgia and the United States and remained below through 2002. This is graphically illustrated in Figure 2-G below. Gilmer County's unemployment rates have typically been higher than the rates for the NGRDC area.

**TABLE 2-M. Unemployment Rates**

	Gilmer County	NGRDC Area	Georgia	US
1991	7.1%	6.4%	5.0%	6.8%
1992	9.9%	7.3%	7.0%	7.5%
1993	7.6%	5.3%	5.8%	6.9%
1994	5.6%	4.3%	5.2%	6.1%
1995	6.4%	4.9%	4.9%	5.6%
1996	6.2%	4.7%	4.6%	5.4%
1997	6.6%	4.9%	4.5%	4.9%
1998	5.3%	3.7%	4.2%	4.5%
1999	3.7%	3.0%	4.0%	4.2%
2000	3.3%	3.2%	3.7%	4.0%
2001	3.4%	3.9%	4.0%	4.8%
2002	4.7%	4.1%	5.1%	5.8%
2003	4.6%	3.9%	4.7%	6.0%

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Georgia Department of Labor



**FIGURE 2-G. Unemployment Trends**

### 2.1.2.4. Commuting Patterns

As shown in Table 2-N, commuting patterns in Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay did not change drastically between 1990 and 2000. Almost all residents in the area worked in Georgia and the majority worked in Gilmer County. As would be expected, a greater percentage of the residents of Ellijay and East Ellijay worked in Gilmer County than did residents of the county as a whole.



Commuting patterns in Gilmer County did not change drastically between 1990 and 2000.

TABLE 2-N. Commuting Patterns

1990	Total Resident Workers	Residents Working in Georgia		Residents Working in Gilmer County	
	#	#	%	#	%
Gilmer County	5,977	5,914	99%	4,127	69%
Ellijay	118	112	95%	95	81%
East Ellijay	418	418	100%	355	85%
2000	#	#	%	#	%
Gilmer County	10,213	10,045	98%	6,324	62%
Ellijay	563	548	97%	434	77%
East Ellijay	344	335	97%	280	81%

Sources: 1990 Census STF 3, Table P045; 2000 Census SF 3, Table P26

As shown in Table 2-O below, residents in Ellijay and East Ellijay had shorter commuting times than did residents county-wide. In 2000, only 28% of Gilmer County residents had a commute to work of less than 15 minutes, while 55% of Ellijay residents and 69% of East Ellijay residents commuted for less than 15 minutes. When compared to the state of Georgia, Gilmer County has a very similar distribution of commuting times.

TABLE 2-O. Average Travel Time to Work

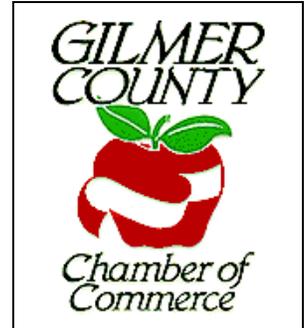
Travel Time to Work	1990				2000			
	Gilmer County	Ellijay	East Ellijay	GA	Gilmer County	Ellijay	East Ellijay	GA
Worked at Home	4%	4%	0%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Less than 5 minutes	5%	14%	16%	3%	3%	7%	7%	2%
5 to 14 minutes	26%	<b>58%</b>	<b>47%</b>	26%	25%	<b>48%</b>	<b>62%</b>	22%
15 to 29 minutes	<b>44%</b>	12%	22%	<b>51%</b>	<b>28%</b>	17%	12%	<b>34%</b>
30 to 59 minutes	11%	5%	8%	13%	25%	16%	12%	29%
60 minutes or more	12%	8%	8%	5%	15%	10%	5%	9%

Sources: 1990 Census STF 3, Table P050; 2000 Census SF 3, Table P31

## 2.1.3. Local Economic Development Resources

### 2.1.3.1. Agencies

**Gilmer County Chamber of Commerce.** The Chamber of Commerce was incorporated in 1979 and currently has a staff of three paid employees and four volunteers. It is governed by a sixteen member board. The mission of the Chamber is to promote and encourage the economic well-being and quality of life for every citizen.



Programs conducted by the Chamber include economic development, business support and recruitment services, tourism promotion, legislative lobbying, and Leadership Gilmer. Chamber staff pursues numerous grants to assist in funding of community projects. The Chamber also sponsors a number of community events including the Apple Festival, the Memorial Day Car Show, and the Fourth of July fireworks show.

The Chamber's current facility is small and not very visible. As a result, the Chamber is looking to build a new facility in the near future. A possible location is along Highway 515 near the Highlands Center. A 2,600 square foot facility in a very visible location would be ideal.

**Gilmer County Economic Development Authority.** The Economic Development Authority was incorporated in 1990 and consists of nine members appointed by the Gilmer County Board of Commissioners. The current focus of the EDA is the development of a business and technology park in Gilmer County.

**Dedicated Ellijay Merchants and Associates.** Dedicated Ellijay Merchants and Associates (DEMA) is an organization which was formed in 1994 as the Downtown Ellijay Merchants Association. Its name was later changed to expand membership to more people. Current membership includes 56 merchants and 7 associates. DEMA's purpose is to promote the



downtown as a viable economic center for retailing, cultural activities, and tourism by enhancing its historic qualities, improving its appearance, and sponsoring family oriented events throughout the year. The most visible projects completed by DEMA are the addition of the clock on the square and installation of pavers on the sidewalk. DEMA is presently working on adding permanent flowers baskets around town. Annual community projects include the Fourth of July Parade and Duck Race, Apple Arts on the Square during Apple Festival, and the Halloween candy give away by merchants in Downtown.

To expand opportunities in the downtown area, DEMA would like to have events every month, but the lack of manpower prevents that from happening. The addition of a professional Downtown Development staff person, hired by the city, would be an excellent way to make living, working, and shopping in downtown Ellijay an attractive, viable alternative for residents and visitors. This staff person could focus on efforts to diversify the retail base, improve the appearance and functionality of the downtown, and promote events to draw visitors.

### 2.1.3.2. Programs

**Quality Growth - Design Guidelines.** In 2003, the City of Ellijay received a Quality Growth Grant from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to develop design guidelines for the City. It is believed that conscientious application of the guidelines will help to accomplish the following:

- protect and stabilize property values,
- preserve and promote a residential ambience characteristic of historic Ellijay,
- prevent blight caused by neglect and insensitive development,
- promote an atmosphere encouraging reinvestment and economic revitalization, and
- provide a guide and focus for capital improvements.

**Downtown Ellijay: Vision 2003.** In 1998, the Georgia Municipal Association Office of Downtown and Economic Development Services facilitated a "Downtown Ellijay Action Planning Process" to demonstrate the process of developing a downtown vision and action plan that guides community action and policy-making. Several project proposals came out of the process including the provision of public restrooms, improved storefronts, improved parking, streetlights and traffic lights, and trees and sidewalks.

**Economic Development Feasibility Study.** The Chamber of Commerce will be approaching the Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute to conduct an economic development feasibility study for Gilmer County. This study would include assessments of items such as workforce development, entrepreneur readiness, technology opportunities, retirement needs, and existing business and industry support.

### 2.1.3.3. Education and Training

**Vocational Training.** Appalachian Technical College, located in Jasper, is a public, two-year postsecondary institution that operates as a unit of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education. It provides a comprehensive range of technical and adult education programs. The college specializes in programs in the areas of health, personal, industrial, and public services. More information can be obtained at <http://www.pickens.tec.ga.us>.

**Adult Education.** The Gilmer Adult Learning Center provides a variety of education services including (1) full academic assessment and preparation for GED or college entrance exams, (2) academic remediation for all levels of reading, math, and English, and (3) a full range of English as a Second Language (ESL) services.

The Center is a community-based non-profit organization staffed with Appalachian Technical College teachers and assistants. A total of six paid employees operate the center thirteen and a half hours a day, Monday through Thursday. On a typical day, 50 to 70 students will operate personalized, computer-based curriculum during open entry/open exit scheduling. This allows students to come and go as their schedules permit. During the current year, the Center has seen a 20% increase in the overall number of students and attendance time. Daily attendance is twice the average attendance figure of barely three years ago. The predicted annual student count for the year ending June 2004 is 460.

The building that houses the Center is Gilmer County property. The 501-C3 is supported via local donations. Individual grants have been obtained in the past for specialized programs operated by the Center that included after school help programs for K-12 students and a Family Literacy program that operated for three years. The Center is in the midst of upgrading the entire computer curriculum delivery unit. The last group of ten computers of thirty total will be upgraded by the end of March 2004. This has been accomplished during the past 14 months via local community donations provided specifically for the purpose.

Federal Adult Literacy funding for support has not kept pace with the increase in demand for services at the Center, however the community has responded agreeably to requests for special project support.

**Job Training.** Burnt Mountain Center in Jasper and Mountain Springs Center in Fannin County provide a variety of services to adults with disabilities including sheltered workshops, supportive employment, and vocational rehabilitation. On average, the Burnt Mountain Center assists 60 individuals, with over one third coming from Gilmer County.

Goodwill Industries of North Georgia, Inc., Vocation Transitions Division, also provides vocational services to assist individuals in going to work organization. It does this through contracts with the Division of Rehabilitation Services, Northwest Georgia Mental Health/Mental Retardation Regional Board, and local education agencies.

## **2.2. Assessment of Current and Future Needs**

The assessment of current and future economic development needs involves an analysis of the data provided in Section 2.1. in terms of its significance to the community and its relevance to other plan elements.

This assessment can be completed by answering the following questions which were derived from Section 110-12-1-.0 4(12)(b)2.(ii) of Georgia's Minimum Local Planning Standards.

- Which economic sectors are growing, which are declining, and which should be encouraged to develop in order to diversify the existing economic base?
- Are available jobs appropriate for the residents of the community in terms of skill and education levels required, commuting patterns, wages paid, etc.?
- Are existing local economic development programs and tools sufficient to foster economic development?
- How do regional assets affect economic development in the community and vice versa?

These questions are answered in Section 2.2.1. through 2.2.4.

### **2.2.1. Which economic sectors are growing, which are declining, and which should be encouraged to develop in order to diversify the existing economic base?**

The service and retail sectors are growing in Gilmer County, while the manufacturing sector is declining. Economic development interests should focus on program and projects which will (1) support existing industries in the area and (2) attract new technology and specialty manufacturing businesses to the area. Other sectors which should be encouraged include the tourism, health care, and retirement industries.

### **2.2.2. Are available jobs appropriate for the residents of the community?**

Job growth has not kept pace with population growth in Gilmer County. One way to evaluate this is to examine the jobs to housing balance. An ideal jobs to housing balance would be an equal number of jobs to housing units in a jurisdiction. This would minimize vehicle miles traveled to and from work, reducing community costs for employees, and reduce traffic congestion. In 1990, the jobs to housing balance in Gilmer County (excluding seasonally vacant homes) was 1.01. By 2000, the ratio had dropped to 0.69 jobs per housing unit. The recommended target range is 1.3 to 1.7 jobs per housing unit.

Another way to evaluate job availability is to examine the jobs to employed residents ratio. In 1990, this ratio was 0.98 jobs per employed resident. By 2000, this ratio had dropped to 0.67:1. The ideal ratio would be 1:1.

In terms of the type of jobs which are available, many employment opportunities exist in minimum wage range jobs, particularly in the retail and service industries. Because of a lack of professional and technical jobs in the community, some residents commute for higher-paying jobs. For this reason, new efforts should be made to attract technology and specialty manufacturing business to the area as jobs associated with these sectors tend to provide employees with better incomes and benefits.

In the past, the labor force of Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay lacked sufficient skills and education to attract high technology and capital intensive industries. Efforts have been made to improve education levels in the community and these efforts should continue. In addition, while the technical colleges in nearby counties are valuable assets to the community, enrollment in more traditional, 4-year baccalaureate programs should also be encouraged.

### **2.2.3. Are existing local economic development programs and tools sufficient to foster economic development?**

Gilmer County would benefit greatly from the establishment of an economic development program headed by a professional staff person. This program would focus on business recruitment and development efforts not related to tourism. The Gilmer County Chamber of Commerce does not have the staff necessary to support both tourism and economic development efforts.

In addition, tourism opportunities need to be more fully developed and marketed. An inventory of all potential tourist attractions should be developed so that an effective strategy can be prepared to capitalize on the community's many assets.

Business and industrial parks are an essential tool to facilitate economic expansion within an area. In order to be competitive in attracting business and industry, such parks need to be fully developed with all utilities and ready for immediate occupancy. To be competitive, Gilmer County must develop a full service business and technology park or a full service industrial park, or both. The process of developing a business and technology park off of Clear Creek Road has begun and should be vigorously pursued. A park which is suited to heavier industry should also be developed in the future; however, due to the lack of available resources, the establishment of the business and technology park should be the primary focus in the near future.

### **2.2.4. How do regional assets affect economic development in Gilmer County and vice versa?**

The abundant natural resources in Gilmer and surrounding counties make the area appealing to residents, tourists, and second home buyers. Protecting these natural resources is important if the county is to retain its attractiveness.

Highway 515 provides convenient access to and from Gilmer County. Development along this corridor in Pickens, Gilmer, and Fannin Counties is occurring rapidly and is leading to congestion along several segments of the road. Much of the development is of a strip commercial nature, with little design control. While new development should be encouraged, design guidelines should be developed to offset the potential negative visual impact of the development and well as the impact the development could have upon natural resources.

Carter's Lake, and the Ellijay, Cartecay, and Coosawattee Rivers provides tourism opportunities and serve as sources of drinking water for Gilmer and nearby counties. Carter's Lake may serve as a source of drinking water for a regional water authority in the future. Maintaining water quality in the lake and rivers is of vital importance to the area.

## 2.3. Community Goals and Implementation Program

As part of the comprehensive planning process outlined by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay are required to develop community goals and an associated implementation program that set forth a plan for economic development in terms of the following:

- how much growth is desired,
- what can be done to support retention and expansion of existing businesses,
- what types of new business and industries will be encouraged to locate in the community,
- what incentives will be offered to encourage economic development,
- will educational and or job training programs be initiated or expanded, and
- what infrastructure improvements need to be made to support economic development goals during the planning period.

The implementation program must support the Community Vision and include actions which should be undertaken to achieve the Community Vision.

### 2.3.1. Community Vision

In the year 2024, Gilmer County, Ellijay, and East Ellijay will be known as vibrant, safe, healthy, and attractive places to live, work, and play. The excellent quality of life experienced by all of our residents and visitors is a result of the following:

**Livability.** We have healthy residential neighborhoods, thriving commercial areas and activity centers, strong agricultural establishments, and outstanding public facilities and services. Opportunities for quality education, employment, and recreation are varied and plentiful.

**Community Character.** We recognize that our community's abundant natural resources and rich history contribute greatly to our quality of life and to our economic prosperity. We seek measures to protect these resources while promoting and facilitating well-planned growth and development.

**Shared Direction.** The public and private sectors work together as partners to proactively plan for growth in the community. The local governments provide excellent leadership and residents are well-informed about the projects and activities which are planned for and occurring in the community.

### 2.3.2. Goal, Policies, and Action Items

To support and achieve the Joint Vision Statement above, Gilmer County and the Cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay have developed the following economic development goal and associated policies and action items:

<p><b>Goal:</b> A healthy economy which is diversified among both the industrial and commercial sectors, which enhances the quality of life for all of our citizens, and which prudently manages the community's resources.</p>	
<p><b>Policy 1: Growth Preparedness.*</b> Establish and support an on-going, effective, and coordinated economic development program which will promote Gilmer County throughout the state and nation.</p>	<p><b>Action Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Seek funding for a full-time, paid staff position of "Economic Development Director" through a cities/county partnership.</li> <li>a.1. Develop a web site which will promote the area as a prime location for business and technology interests.</li> <li>a.2. Expand and maintain a community marketing and promotion package including web site, community profile data, available buildings and sites, labor force profile, and other characteristics which make Gilmer County unique.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy 2: Regional Identity.*</b> Refine and promote the community's identity to take advantage of the unique aspects of its character.</p>	<p><b>Action Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Continue to promote the area as an apple capital and seek ways to extend the tourist season associated with apples.</li> <li>b. Through a committee of local officials, developers, and interested citizens, develop design guidelines for the Highway 515 corridor which will promote a positive visual image of the community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy 3: Appropriate Business and Employment Options.*</b> Support the retention and expansion of existing business and industry and attract and recruit businesses and industries which are compatible with the community's long-term goals and which provide quality jobs for our citizens.</p>	<p><b>Action Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Work with the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade, and Tourism to promote the community to statewide development interests.</li> <li>b. Work with the Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute to prepare an Economic Development Feasibility Study for Gilmer County.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy 4: Educational Opportunities.*</b> Provide a more skilled and educated labor force to attract business and industry to the area.</p>	<p><b>Action Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Continue programs at the schools to improve educational levels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy 5: Adequate Infrastructure.</b> Promote new growth in areas where necessary infrastructure is already in place or is planned in the future.</p>	<p><b>Action Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Pursue the development of a business and technology park, including adequate infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy 6: Downtown Development.</b> Promote downtown Ellijay as a center for retail and tourist activities and implement measures which will enhance the charm and the value of the downtown area.</p>	<p><b>Action Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Seek funding to develop a downtown master plan for the City of Ellijay to address traffic, parking, landscaping, signage, historic preservation, pedestrian facilities, and housing. This plan should address both residential and commercial development in downtown.</li> <li>b. Address the issues of building maintenance, vacancies, and retail diversification among downtown retailers and property owners.</li> <li>c. Investigate the establishment of a Downtown Development staff position within the City of Ellijay or as a function of the Economic Development Director.</li> <li>d. Continue to expand the streetscape program in Ellijay.</li> </ul>

\* A DCA "Quality Communities" Objective