

# FAYETTE COUNTY, GEORGIA

## Community Action Plan

*Market Street was my clear choice, based on their balanced consideration of both economic and community development. Every one of their team members was a pleasure to work with - knowledgeable, experienced, and practical. Would not hesitate to engage them again.*



Bob Ross, Vision Plan Steering Committee Co-Chairman

### Background

Fayette County, located south of Atlanta and one of the southernmost counties in Metropolitan Atlanta, is well-known as a preferred destination in the region that provides a distinct and enviable quality of life for its residents. The education system has been the jewel for the community and a beacon that has brought many families to the county. In 2013, the Fayette Chamber of Commerce and the Fayette County Development Authority came together to fully assess Fayette County's opportunities and challenges and funnel the community's energy into a process that will create a holistic strategy for the future. The following issues informed the core goal areas for the **Fayette Vision Plan**:

- **Growth and Migration:** Fayette County population growth was slowing to the point of stagnation. It was determined that the county needed to focus on the in-migration of both ends of the age spectrum while also preserving the attributes that attract families.
- **Shifting Race and Ethnicity:** At the time of the research phase of the process, Fayette County was diversifying more rapidly than Metro Atlanta. Rapid diversification underscored the need to include as many perspectives as possible in leadership opportunities.
- **Preserving Local Education:** To maintain the county's reputation for high-quality education, Fayette County identified post-secondary and technical education and connectivity of those to the K-12 system was a key opportunity.
- **Spatial Mismatch – Resident Skills and Local Jobs:** Local employment opportunities did not align with educational attainment levels or incomes of households in Fayette County. Finding a better match between local skill sets and local jobs was a priority, particularly in reducing traffic congestion.

### Implementation Highlights

Soon after the Vision Plan was approved in 2014, implementation began and marketing efforts were launched. Fayettevision.org, the project website, was repurposed, and annual Fayette Visioning Summits are hosted to update the public of the plan's progress and successes. Some of these successes are as follows.

- Education was identified as a top priority early on in the visioning process. Since implementation of Fayette Visioning began, several education-related successes have been achieved, including the launch of Fayette County Schools' STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics)



Externship Program and the opening of the Fayetteville campuses of Georgia Military College and the Georgia Film Academy.

- In summer 2016, 34 Fayette County School elementary and middle school teachers spent a week in the district's first STEAM Externship Program touring local businesses and using what they learned and observed to write district-wide STEAM lessons plans for grade levels Kindergarten through seventh.
  - During the process, the community's leaders determined that the presence of a postsecondary educational facility in the county would be a great asset. In 2015, Georgia Military College opened its newest campus in Fayetteville, strategically located near Pinewood Atlanta Studios and Piedmont Fayette Hospital. Since its opening, enrollment has increased by 30 percent each semester. In 2016, the Fayetteville campus of the Georgia Film Academy opened, co-located with Pinewood Atlanta Studios. The school provides basic production crafts training.
- The Community goal is focused on fostering leadership opportunities and civic engagement across the community's diverse population through a variety of programs and initiatives.
  - In 2015, the Fayette County Sheriff's Office hosted its first Citizen Academy, a 12-week course designed to provide citizens with essential information about the law enforcement profession and the daily operations of the Fayette County Sheriff's Office as well as to establish and maintain positive relationships between the community and the sheriff's office.
  - In 2016, the first Fayette Candidate Academy was held. The academy is a half-day non-partisan workshop for residents who are running or may be interested in running for local, state, or federal elected office.
  - The Chamber launched the Catalyst mentor program in June 2015 and has begun creating meaningful connections among Chamber members. Mentees are paired with established industry and community advisors who serve as mentors, encouraging and developing leaders and to support one another in professional and personal growth. The Chamber also re-launched its young professionals program to promote the development of the community's emerging leaders.
- Understanding that quality of place is an attractor of top talent, the Place goal focuses on ensuring that Fayette County remains a top location of choice for existing and potential residents of all ages. In April 2017, Fayette County's new brand and marketing blueprint was announced. Along with a logo and its tagline "Create Your Story," the three-year plan will utilize various media and marketing platforms to tell Fayette County's stories and to showcase what the community has to offer to businesses and residents.
- The Economy goal identifies business retention and expansion, small business and entrepreneurial growth, and the development of a film and entertainment cluster as its priorities. Following the completion of the Vision Plan, all of the municipalities within the county increased their funding to support the Fayette County Development Authority (FCDA), the lead economic development organization for the county. The FCDA has launched various initiatives, including Developers Day to show regional and state economic development project managers and site selection consultants the county's assets and competitive advantages.

