



GOLDEN TRIANGLE

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Golden Triangle Planning & Development District
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
2018-2021

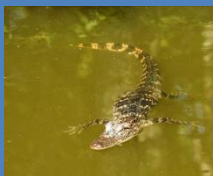
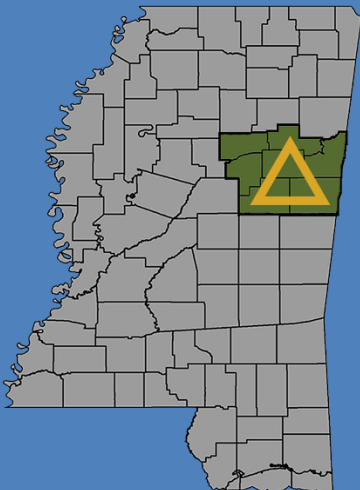
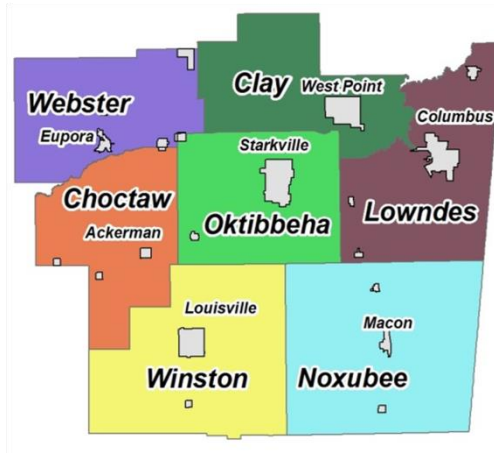


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I. Introduction

The Golden Triangle Planning and Development District Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) provides an overview of the geographic, demographic, political, economic, environmental and social characteristics of the seven (7) counties and twenty (20) municipalities that comprise the District. The CEDS is a local planning and implementation process designed to create jobs, foster a more stable and diversified economy, improve living conditions, and provide a mechanism for guiding and coordinating the efforts of persons and organizations concerned with economic development. The document describes the problems, needs, and resources of the GTPDD area; identifies goals and objectives of the development strategy, presents the strategies and action plans devised to achieve those goals, and outlines standards for evaluation of the program's achievements.

Investments made in the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District (GTPDD or "District") is guided by a planning process. Development planning is not a static decision, but instead is made up of a group of continually evolving activities and actions. It is constantly undergoing review and revisions as priorities, conditions, and objectives change within the area. This process gives citizens of the planning and development district an opportunity to participate directly at many points along the way in the formation of the programs and projects in the District. This process serves to fuse into one system the planning, setting of priorities and programming of

funding at the local, state, and regional levels.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) contributes to effective economic development through a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development process.

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) provides assistance to economic development districts to assist them in their participation in the district planning process. EDA district planning focuses on identifying pressing district needs, stating district goals and strategies, and designating specific development programs to respond to them. The development programs included policies, development strategies, and specific projects for funding.

Under Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant assistance programs, priorities for funding must be included in the Commission approved Mississippi Appalachian Development Plan and Investment Program. In selecting programs and projects to recommend for grant assistance, states consult within the planning and development districts and takes into consideration their District Development Program goals, objectives, priorities, and recommendations. This process provides a direct linkage between district planning and programming, State Appalachian Development planning, and approval of ARC grant assistance.

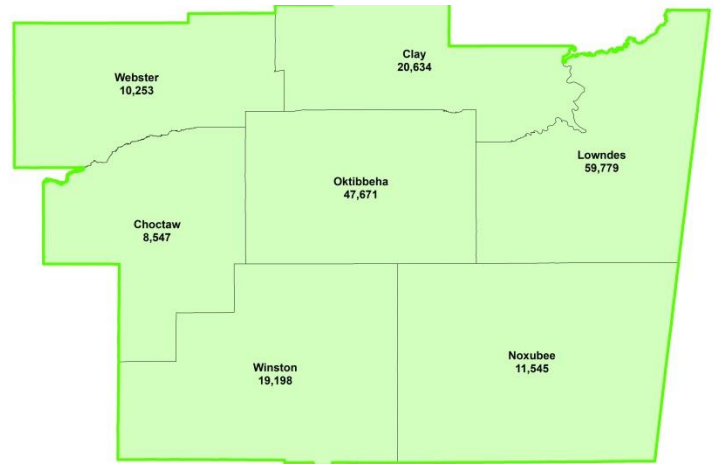
With the passage of the Economic Development Act of 1965 and the Appalachian Act of 1965, a new concept of assistance to local government began to evolve. This new concept gave rise to

a statewide system of planning and development districts in Mississippi.

The Golden Triangle Planning and Development District (GTPDD) was organized under the Appalachian Development Act of 1965 and began operation on July 1, 1970. The GTPDD was officially recognized as a sub-state planning and development district on July 11, 1971, when Governor John Bell Williams signed Mississippi Executive Order Number 81. *The GTPDD was formed for the purpose of improving and enlarging economic development and civic improvement in Choctaw, Clay, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Webster and Winston counties.* The Economic Development Administration has also recognized the GTPDD as an economic development district.

On June 8, 1972, the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District received its corporate charter as a multi-county, multi-purpose, non-profit economic development corporation. This charter was revised on October 27, 1976. The major purpose of the planning and development district is to provide a single system of planning and programming efforts with a regional approach. Because of their multi-functional capability, many federal and development districts provide a wide range of technical assistance and services to the local municipalities and member counties.

A Closer Look at GTPDD...



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Total Population
177,627

Civilian Labor Force
74,470

Unemployed
3,880

Unemployment Rate
5.2%

Employed
70,590

Average Income
\$33,886.00

Source: MS Dpt. Of Employment Security

II. Summary Background

Demographics: The population and the economic base are primary components of a region. Past and present population and economic data reveal facts, which have implications for future development. The following is a discussion of the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the GTPDD.

Population: The seven counties, which comprise the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, had 177,627 persons in 2010. The population count in 2000 was 179,227, which represented a decrease of 1,600 or 0.89%. Population estimates for 2016 indicate that every county in the GTPDD, except Oktibbeha and Webster Counties, experienced a loss of population with Webster County losing 4.7% of its population and the District as a whole losing approximately 0.639% of the total population or 1,135 persons.

The decrease in population in the GTPDD was still relatively small during the last decade. Only small decreases were registered in six counties, with one county registering a small increase. Oktibbeha County had the largest percentage increase of 4.50 while Webster County had the largest percentage decrease of 4.70. The less populous rural counties are losing jobs and people while their more urbanized counterparts are experiencing solid growth. The decline in manufacturing jobs is partly to blame as many of the manufacturing facilities which have closed or downsized were located in the smaller counties. The job losses have pushed residents to relocate to larger cities where jobs are more plentiful.

Population density in 2010 has decreased in the GTPDD in six of the seven counties. For comparison, the persons per square mile by county in 2010 were: (1) Choctaw, 20.00; (2) Clay, 50.00; (3) Lowndes, 115.00; (4) Noxubee, 17.00; (5) Oktibbeha, 104.00; (6) Webster, 24.00; (7) Winston, 32.00. District-wide, the population density has decreased from 51.06 in 2000 to 50.08 in 2010. The highest density levels are in Lowndes County (118.00 persons per square mile) and Oktibbeha County (104.00 persons per square mile), according to 2010 Census statistics. These two counties account for the major population centers in the seven county area. Choctaw, Clay, Noxubee, Webster and Winston Counties are primarily rural with all of these counties but Clay having population densities of less than 50 persons per square mile. The entire District can be classified as basically rural in nature.

In 2000, 44.87 percent of the population was non-white. The percentage of non-white inhabitants in the GTPDD in 2010 was 45.9 percent. During the ten-year period from 2000 to 2010, the total population of the District decreased by 1,600 or 0.89 percent and there was a 1.03 percent increase in the non-white population. All counties experienced an increase in the non-white population with the exception of Oktibbeha and Webster counties.

In 2010, the highest concentrations of non-whites were in Noxubee County (72.9 percent), Clay County (58.19 percent), Winston County (47.7 percent), Lowndes County (46.0 percent) and Oktibbeha County (40.8 percent) while the remaining two counties, Choctaw and

Webster, had less than 40 percent non-white population.

Education: In 2016, Oktibbeha County had the largest percentage of high school graduates from the 25 years and older category with 86.2 with Noxubee County having the smallest percentage of 65.3 percent. For the State of Mississippi in 2016, this percentage of high school graduates was 82.3 percent. A similar pattern follows for college graduates, with Oktibbeha having the largest percentage of 43.0 and Noxubee having the lowest of 11.9%. This large percentage and difference could be attributed to the accessibility of Mississippi State University to residents of Oktibbeha County.

Income: Income levels for residents of the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District increased during the last decade. Per Capita Income appears to be a little higher in the counties with the largest population and where more industries are located. There is not a great disparity even in Noxubee County, which had the lowest per capita income in 2016 of \$31,918.00 and Choctaw with \$30,430.00. These counties are also the most rural and sparsely populated in the District. Lowndes County has the largest number of industrial jobs and also the largest population in the seven county area. The per capita income for Lowndes County in 2016 was \$37,446.00.

In 2015, the average wages varied among the seven counties of the GTPDD, with the average being \$33,886.00. Noxubee and Webster counties, which are considered distressed and at-risk, have the lowest annual wages of

\$28,758.00 and \$29,915.00, respectively. Clay (\$33,197.00) and Winston (\$33,725.00) counties are also below the regional average. Lowndes (\$38,483.00) and Choctaw (38,438.00) counties are above the State average of \$36,975.00 and only Oktibbeha with \$34,685.00 being closer to the State average. All counties in the GTPDD are below the national average of \$55,484.00.

The lower wage counties usually have the lower per capita income, while per capital income in the seven counties tends to trend upward from year to year, it still is below the State of Mississippi and certainly the U.S. rate. Some of the more sparsely populated counties tend to have a higher PCI since the rate is figured by the division of all income by the total population. Poverty rates in the lesser populated counties tend to be at a higher rate. For the state of Mississippi, the poverty rate is 20.7% compared to the National rate of 14.5% for all ages 18-64. Oktibbeha and Noxubee counties have the highest poverty rates in the seven county area of 37.8% and 33.4%, respectively. The other five counties in the District have rates that reflect more of the State percentage and range between 21.8% (Lowndes) and 25.7% (Winston). The higher rate for Oktibbeha County can be explained by the addition of the large student population of Mississippi State University to the local population.

Employment:

- Manufacturing

According to the latest statistics, the civilian labor force in the GTPDD was 72,660. From 1992 to 2006, the civilian labor force increased by 4.60 percent. The number of persons employed in

manufacturing, especially in the manufacture of durable goods, decreased between 1992 and 2006. While manufacturing continues to play a major role in support of the area's economy, it is evident that some manufacturers are confronted with severe competition, increasing regulations and an uncertain global market. Cutbacks in the automotive industry and a generally uncertain economy have contributed to downsizing or closure of some manufacturing operations in the area. Unemployment is chronically high in some of the District's counties, and remains relatively high in all but Oktibbeha County. The range of unemployment is from 6.5 percent in Oktibbeha County to 14.3 percent in Noxubee County.

- Nonmanufacturing

There was an 18.52 percent increase in the non-manufacturing sector of employment from 1992 to 2006. This can be attributed to the large number of service related jobs and the fact that two universities are located in the District. Oktibbeha County's largest employer is Mississippi State University, and the Mississippi University for Women plays a major role in the economy of Lowndes County. The Columbus Air Force Base in Lowndes County has experienced reductions in military personnel due to maintenance contract being transferred to a private company. The CAFB, however, continues to be a major factor in the economic stability of Lowndes and surrounding counties and appears safe from closure. In addition to the aforementioned universities, there are two private junior colleges and one vocational training school in the District.

- Agriculture

In 2007, there were 3,280 farms in the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District and total farm acreage was 847,004. Noxubee County had the most farm acreage (221,636) and the largest number of farms with 606. The market value of agricultural products sold in all counties of the District in 2012 was \$397,173,000.00. Agriculture remains the largest economic factor in Noxubee County with the market value of agricultural products sold being \$140,253,000.00. This was by far the largest dollar amount in the GTPDD.

Clusters: In 2016, the seven counties of the Golden Triangle District had approximately ten clusters. The strongest Traded Clusters, as well as top performing, were related to the region's natural resources and include: Coal Mining, Forestry, Wood Products and Textiles. The top six Local Clusters include 1.) Health Care; 2.) Hospitality; 3.) Real Estate, Construction and Development; 4.) Retail; 5.) Food & Beverage Processing; and 6.) Motor Vehicle Products & Services. The average traded cluster yearly wage was \$38,111.

It is anticipated that another job cluster will emerge in the District concerning the production of steel and steel products. Another cluster that is transitioning into the Golden Triangle area, is the defense contracting. This cluster is expected to develop into aircraft or military equipment manufacturing.

Infrastructure:

1. Sewage Collection and Treatment

Nineteen of twenty municipalities in the District operate municipal collection and treatment systems. The cities of Columbus, Starkville and West Point have constructed modern mechanical treatment plants with sufficient capacity to serve their population, and allow margins for growth. Other cities and towns have constructed lagoons and/or wetlands that must be constantly maintained and frequently upgraded. No county government operates a sewage collection and treatment system; however private developers and associations have constructed systems in several concentrated population areas in Lowndes and Oktibbeha County. Some of these privately owned systems have encountered serious fiscal and operational difficulties.

2. Water

Primary sources of domestic and industrial water supply of the Golden Triangle area are surface water from the Tombigbee and Noxubee Rivers, and ground water from the Eutaw, Gordo, and Coker Formations. Some communities in the western fringe of the District draw water from the Wilcox Formation. Domestic water supply of 250 GPM can be obtained from one of four sources in the eastern Golden Triangle area: surface water from the Noxubee River or Tombigbee River or ground water from the Gordo Formation or Coker Formation. Because of low yields of the Eutaw Formation, its value as a significant resource is diminishing. Potable water continues to be in adequate supply from ground water aquifers, except that wells must be drilled to greater depths, and water from the deeper, more abundant aquifers requires treatment for iron and other mineral content.

Industrial water supply of 2200 GPM can be obtained from one of three sources: surface water from the Gordo Formation or Coker Formation is of good chemical quality to depths of 2,000 feet with the exceptions of certain locations containing objectionable amounts of iron. The iron can be easily removed by aeration, coagulation, and filtration.

One major pulp processing industry draws a significant volume of water from the Tombigbee River for cooling purposes, and returns the water at a high degree of quality. Further study would be required as to the best source for industrial water supply, which is regulated by the U.S. Corps of Engineers.

3. Solid Waste Handling and Disposal

Each of the seven counties and all but the smallest municipalities collect solid waste for disposal in sanitary landfills. All principal municipalities and five of the seven counties collect solid waste door-to-door or "mail box-to-mail box" method. Disposal systems for municipal, non-hazardous solid waste have had dramatic change, in response to Subtitle D of the Federal Clean Water Act. Six of the seven counties and their local governments in the District joined in creation of the Golden Triangle

Regional Solid Waste Authority (GTRSWMA), which commissioned a detailed solid waste management study, resulting in a "Solid Waste management Master Plan" and a Subtitle D Landfill for the District.

4. Transportation Systems

The nearest designated Interstate Highway to the GTPDD is 25 miles from the western boundary of the District, in Mississippi, and 55 miles from the District's eastern boundary, in Alabama. U.S. Highway 82, U.S. Highway 45 and 45-A, and Mississippi Highway 25 have been four-laned under the 1987 Mississippi 4-lane Highway Program, which completed construction of 4-Lane highways in every county in the District except Choctaw. Construction is in progress on several segments of the system, and completion of the designated roads, resulting in nearly 200 miles of 4-lane highways in six counties.

Secondary highway and local roads in the district range in condition from good in some areas to seriously inferior in others. Most counties have more unpaved roads than paved, and funds for paving are not adequate to meet identified needs. Bridges on many county roads have been classified as hazardous because of deteriorated substructure. Construction and maintenance of streets, roads and bridges are a persistent and costly burden for local governments. Transportation is a greater economic and social issue than environmental, since all construction and maintenance activities are required to conform to environmental regulations, and have minimum or no adverse environmental effect

The Kansas City Southern Railroad provides major north-south rail service with east-west service provided by the Columbus and Greenville Railroad. This service is only piece-meal since the G&G RR has given notice for discontinuance of service between West Point and Greenwood, Mississippi. This is the first step in abandonment of the rail line but a notice of abandonment has not been issued. This east-west rail line is in major disrepair and C&G RR has discontinued maintenance and currently there is no scheduled rail service. This situation leaves the District without a true east-west rail carrier since there is an approximate 92-mile gap between the aforementioned municipalities along the line.

Access to passenger rail service is comparable to Interstate Highways, as indicated above. Interstate bus service is on the decline in each of the counties, and is not a major mode of transportation for local residents. Local public transportation is provided for target groups in some of the counties. Most passenger transportation is by private automobile, and is an economic and social issue for low-income persons.

The Golden Triangle Regional Airport is the only commercial airport in the district; however, it serves the air transportation needs of the area effectively, and has had several major expansions.

The Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway traverses the eastern edge of the District, from north to south, and traffic is served by a port facility at Columbus and a barge port east of West Point. The Waterway connects Northeast Mississippi to the Port of Mobile, which is a part of the Intercoastal Waterway System, and provides access to international shipping.

Due to the relative dispersal of population in the area, air quality has not become a transportation issue, and should not be expected to become an issue in the foreseeable future.

5. Industrial Parks and Sites

There are 20 public industrial parks and industrial sites in the GTPDD. Each of these sites is maintained by the county and/or local development agency. Six of the sites are undeveloped, and will need infrastructure improvements such as water, sewer, gas, access roads and electricity in order for the location of new industries or businesses. In addition, there are eight industrial sites that are partially developed but will need additional key infrastructure components before a company can actually locate to the site.

6. Power Resources

The entire Golden Triangle area is served with electricity by the Tennessee Valley Authority, giving the area an abundant, reasonably priced source of electric power. Natural gas transmission lines, making that resource abundantly available, though subject to escalating costs, also serve most of the area.

7. Broadband Telecommunications

While high-speed broadband access is available throughout the GTPDD, it is limited in rural areas. The current movement is to allow electric co-operatives, through new legislation to provide internet service, however pricing of this service remains a drawback.

8. Retail Sales and Collections

In FY2016, the District had total Retail Sales of \$1,244,794,604 and total taxes collected of \$558,984,309 by the Counties. Choctaw County had the least retail sales of all seven counties with a total of \$14,408,783.00 with \$4,990,927 of tax collections. Lowndes County had the largest amount of retail sales within the seven counties of \$680,578,273.00 and \$351,073,192.00 of tax collections.

III. SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Availability of major higher education facilities
- Committed civilian labor force
- Availability of health care facilities
- Multi-model transportation capabilities
- Diversified existing Industry
- Established steel manufacturing cluster
- Thad Cochran Research & Technology Park

Opportunities

- Higher education obtainment
- Growth in health care specialization
- Workforce development facilities
- Emerging aerospace manufacturing cluster
- Abundance of natural resources
- Three (3) certified TVA mega sites

Weaknesses

- Low education attainment
- Industrial infrastructure deficiencies
- Lack of affordable housing choices
- Below average annual wages

Threats

- Aging basic infrastructure & highways
- Limits of financial capabilities
- Loss of east-west rail capabilities
- Continuance of the loss of educated persons to higher economic areas
- Decline in general area-wide population

Demographics

A. Population

The decrease in population in the GTPDD between 2000 and 2010 lagged behind both the State of Mississippi (10.5%) and the U.S. (13.2%). While certain counties such as Oktibbeha had increases in population that compared with the State increase and favorably with the national increase, the more rural counties had small increases. Efforts should be made to retain population in these more rural areas by seeking and creating more jobs on a higher pay level. These jobs could be located in adjoining counties but efforts should be made to educate the residents of the more rural areas about the potential new and better job opportunities.

1. Education

The two largest counties, Lowndes and Oktibbeha, have major higher educational facilities that provide additional social activities that other counties

do not have. These activities need to be maintained and increased in order to create the quality of life opportunities that are needed in order to attract and keep the higher educated and persons with a higher amount of discretionary income in the District.

2. Income

There is a need to increase job opportunities, especially in the most rural counties, in order to raise the per capita income and ultimately the median household income in the GTPDD. Per capita income still lags behind the National figure of \$27,915.00.

3. Employment

With the location of several key manufacturers to the Golden Triangle area, new job opportunities are expected and will fill a need for new, higher-paying wage scales. These jobs, associated with steel production and military contracts, will fill a void left by the closure of several major industries in 2005 and 2006.

With there still being a large number of agriculturally significant counties in the Golden Triangle, there will be a need for increased vocational training for persons that wish to take advantage of employment in the higher technical-skilled jobs that are expected with the location of these newer industries to the GTPDD.

B. Clusters

Although this report accounts for a diversification of existing Clusters with the highest number of jobs, there will be a significant change in this ranking in future years. The Metal and Machining Cluster should move up along with the Energy and Tire Cluster in the very near future as both of these type clusters are associated with higher paying jobs and have been mentioned prominently in the future economy of the GTPDD with the recent expansion of Steel Dynamics (Lowndes County) and the opening of Yokohama Tire Company in Clay County.

C. Infrastructure

1. Sewage Collection and Treatment

Local governments experience pressure in maintenance of wastewater collection and disposal systems based on increased demand where population and/or usage increases (or decreases, affecting revenue); when life span factors require capital expenditures; or when changing regulations mandate major changes in facilities or operations. Several units of government within the District are out of compliance with DEQ regulatory standards but are working to correct their deficiencies.

2. Water

The Golden Triangle area has an abundance of good water for both domestic and industrial uses. Most water systems had rather obtain their water supply from a ground water source but surface water can be used for industrial uses. The establishment of a multi-county utility district to serve areas outside of the corporate limits of the major municipalities in the Golden Triangle should be explored, especially as it relates to major industrial sites and users.

3. Solid Waste Handling and Disposal

A Subtitle D Landfill is a must in order for potential clients both existing and 3. proposed to be assured that there will be an economical method for solid waste disposal.

4. Transportation Systems

The Golden Triangle holds an advantage over areas that do not have port facilities or a major airport. The District, however, does not have any interstate highways but has four-lane highways in all but one county. District officials should support efforts to four-lane Mississippi highway 12 and 15. If opportunity presents itself, U.S Highway 82 should be lobbied for as an interstate highway.

5. Industrial Parks and Sites

Key improvements need to be made to prime industrial land throughout the GTPDD such as water, sewer and access roads. One site in Lowndes County has been certified as a mega site (Crossroads) but will require additional components before it can be made readily available for immediate occupancy. Due to the fact that the larger tracts of industrial land are outside the corporate limits of the nearest municipality, area cities and counties should consider a multi-county utility district. This would make prime industrial property available for future development without putting an enormous strain on local utility departments.

6. Power Resources

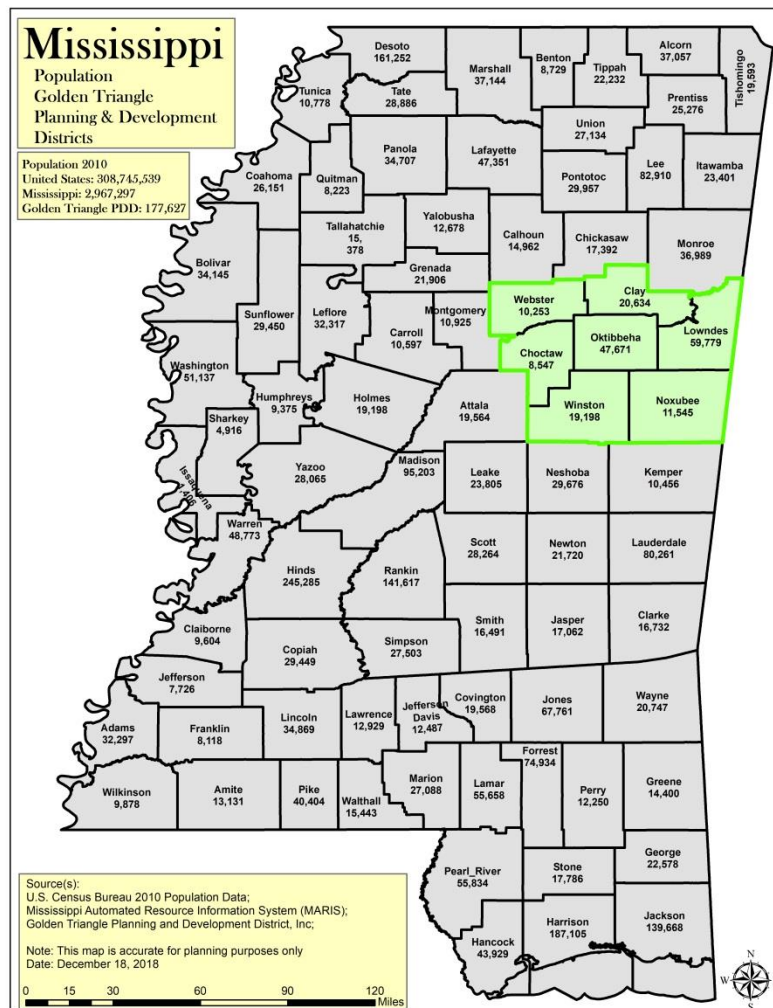
All utility providers throughout the Golden Triangle are able to provide all customers with reliable service at a competitive cost through their purchase of power through the Tennessee Valley Authority. It is imperative that the Golden Triangle area continues to work with TVA and its local suppliers (municipalities, associations, etc.) to ensure reliable service to expand services to support commercial and industrial needs.

7. Broadband Telecommunications

Access to high speed Internet is essential to entrepreneurial success and economic development. The provision of competitive Internet service will also positively impact the health, education and quality of life for residents of the area.

8. Financial Resources

The financial resources of the local governments, the millage rates, and the retail sales and collections are all indicators of the local economy. If indicators are healthy then the economy of the area is also healthy. Thus it is important that the municipalities and counties within the region continue to grow their retail sales in order to maintain millage rates and generate increased income from the sales tax. In order to do so, it is imperative that new job opportunities are made available throughout the region. New jobs translate into increased sales, which help fuel the region's economy, assisting it to grow, thus creating new jobs and increased sales tax and continuing the cycle. Thus, emphasis should be placed on expanding existing commercial and industrial jobs bring in new business and industry as well as promoting the quality of life in the region to encourage additional growth.



IV. Goals and Objectives

The GTPDD was formed for the purpose of improving and enlarging economic development and civic improvement in Choctaw, Clay, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Webster and Winston counties.

Goal 1: Promote increased and expanded economic development activities throughout the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District.

Objectives:

1. Provide suitable industrial parks and property for interested industries throughout the GTPDD.
2. Assist municipalities and counties in determining needed services and facilities and in developing such facilities and services in order to attract new industries.
3. Assist new and expanding businesses in securing needed capital through District RLF and other available sources.
4. Coordinate activities with local development organizations, chambers of commerce, etc., in providing technical assistance to area businesses.
5. Plan for vocational training programs that are responsive to changing employment trends and economic conditions.

GOAL 2: Provide all community infrastructures necessary to stimulate and support sustained economic development.

Objectives:

1. Assist in providing for the availability of an adequate supply of potable water through water systems to all residents of the GTPDD.
2. Assist in providing adequate sewage treatment facilities and services to all citizens of the GTPDD.
3. Assist in developing adequate local and regional transportation routes for movement of the people and goods.
4. Assist local governments in their efforts to provide adequate public buildings for services to local citizens.

5. Promote adequate law enforcement, fire protection and emergency services to all residents of the GTPDD.

GOAL 3: Provide efficient and productive educational facilities and programs to all citizens of the GTPDD.

Objectives:

1. Promote adequate and modern educational facilities and programs.
2. Promote adequate and modern vocational-technical facilities that are responsive to the character of the economy and to future labor needs.
3. Expand and improve adult education programs for all applicable residents of the GTPDD.
4. Support an optimum level of post-secondary education facilities and programs for all residents of the GTPDD.
5. Promote adequate and modern library facilities, easily accessible to all citizens of the GTPDD.

GOAL 4: Promote a balanced local and regional transportation system which provides for the safe, efficient, and economical movement of goods, services, and people within and through the GTPDD; and which is supportive of economic development and investment potential.

Objectives:

1. Improve and upgrade the highway system, both primary and secondary, including necessary traffic control and safety devices for all highways and streets in the GTPDD.
2. Promote improved airline service, along with upgrading of local airport facilities in the GTPDD.
3. Improve and maintain an optimum level of rail service throughout the GTPDD.
4. Provide or improve access roads to key development sites in the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District.
5. Promote public transportation in areas with high traffic volume.

GOAL 5: Provide for the orderly growth and development of the GTPDD in order to improve the quality of life for its citizens while preserving the natural resources and environment of the area.

Objectives:

1. Provide for regional planning efforts in the GTPDD in order to facilitate the continued growth of the area in a sound and orderly manner while providing guidance to towns and counties to insure a sound planning process on the local level.
2. Provide the necessary leadership and guidance to municipalities and counties in the GTPDD in order to promote the comprehensive planning process.

V. Public/Private Partnership

In the GTPDD, a number of local, regional and state organizations are working to achieve economic development goals. The GTPDD works closely with member governments and their respective economic development professionals in the development of projects to satisfy these common goals. By working with the local development officials, the District is able to work with present and potential industry on expansion and location opportunities. These development opportunities enable the District to participate in the development of economic development packages that include participation of the local power distributors, state agencies and federal agencies such as ARC, HUD, EDA and USDA-Rural Development. With the development of these funding packages, the District also works closely with professional engineers and architects, and various attorneys. GTPDD is a designated Census Data Affiliate through the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Local economic development organizations in the District include:

- Choctaw/Webster County Growth Alliance
- Golden Triangle Development Link
- Noxubee County Economic Development Association
- Oktibbeha County Economic Development Authority
- Winston County Economic Development Partnership

Other economic and community development organizations include:

- Appalachian Regional Commission
- Economic Development Administration
- USDA-Rural Development
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

- Federal Emergency Management Agency/ Homeland Security
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Mississippi Office of the Governor
- Mississippi Development Authority
- Mississippi Department of Transportation
- Mississippi State Department of Health
- Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
- Mississippi Emergency Management Agency
- Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration
- Mississippi Department of Employment Security
- Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks
- Mississippi Department of Archives and History
- Mississippi Department of Public Safety and Planning
- Mississippi Automated Resource Information Systems
- Mississippi Association of Planning and Development Districts
- Mississippi Hills Heritage Area
- Mississippi State Legislature
- U.S. Congressional Offices (Mississippi)
- Electric Power Associations and Local Distributors
- Area Community Colleges
- Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning
- Area four-year Colleges and Universities
- Mississippi Association of Supervisors
- Mississippi Municipal League
- Various Chambers of Commerce
- Golden Triangle Regional Airport
- GTPDD Revolving Loan Fund
- GTPDD Seven-county Area Officials
- Local Commercial Banks
- Local Port Authorities
- State Data Center of Mississippi
- U.S. Bureau of the Census

The CEDS development process entails a thirty-day review period after advertising in local newspapers of any major changes, revisions or rewrites. This period of time gives the local public time to comment or make their feelings known before the document is actually put into public circulation.

VI. Strategic Projects, Programs, and Activities

A. Vital Projects List

- Construction of new educational facilities to satisfy future industrial needs through the community college system (Goal 1, Objective 5). The Golden Triangle Campus of the East Mississippi Community Campus is in need of additional facilities to meet the needs of new industry as it locates to the Golden Triangle Industrial Park and as additional clusters emerge in the District. The anticipated impact will be the development of new training programs to meet the needs of the various industries and the auxiliary companies that will cluster to the area.
- Construct basic industrial infrastructure (water, sewer, access roads, etc.) to satisfy the needs of future industry that is attracted to the larger industrial parks. Basic infrastructure is needed to attract new industry and jobs to the Golden Triangle area. There are prospects of up to 1,000 new jobs associated with these improvements in Clay and Lowndes Counties. The establishment of a multi-county utility district to support development in the unincorporated areas with prospects of attracting large industry is an anticipated outcome.
- Construct needed improvements and additions to the river ports in the GTPDD (Clay & Lowndes Counties). It is imperative that port facilities remain updated with the latest barge handling equipment to efficiently load and unload materials and product to the satisfaction of today's new industry demands.

B. Suggested Projects List

- Consolidation of rural water systems – this initiative would be a joint project between rural systems, USDA-Rural Development, State Health Department and the GTPDD.
- Support efforts to Improve emergency services (to include ambulance, fire protection and police protection) for rural areas of the District.
- Support the efforts of the Mississippi Department of Transportation in providing four-lane access to all areas in Mississippi especially in Choctaw and Winston Counties.
- Assist in fulfilling the need for construction of access roads to serve industrial areas as they are developed.
- Support efforts of local governments to assess the need for public transportation in high growth areas or high traffic industrial areas.
- Work with Choctaw County as they see compatible energy-based projects to locate in or near the Redhills Ecoplex. These projects should be based on: a. Natural Resources (coal); b. Renewables; and b. waste products such as methane gas.
- Work with local officials to seek funding sources to modernize, rehabilitate or construct public buildings, especially in Oktibbeha County.

VII. Action Plan

The action for the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District consists of providing support and technical assistance to the district's local county and municipal governments and coordination with other economic development agencies as identified in Section V. The GTPDD was established by local officials from the seven member counties over forty-seven years ago and has a long-standing history of providing quality technical assistance and administrative services to the twenty-seven member governments. The district has been able to coordinate with many different Federal and state Agencies to bring projects that have had a real impact on economic development for the seven county area. The staff of the GTPDD will continue to maintain its presence in the District by attending and meeting with various local boards (both public officials and appointed) and sharing information that has been disseminated through on-going channels with other funding agencies, contacts and associations that the District has cultivated over the years. By maintaining the coordination within the seven-county area, the GTPDD strive to meet the goals and objectives as set for in this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

VIII. Performance Measures

An element of evaluation is contained within each category of Background Information, above; however a summary evaluation will be included in this section.

The Golden Triangle Planning and Development District area could be described as an emerging economy, since its natural resources are abundant, and largely intact. The area evolved from a primarily agricultural and timber economy to a manufacturing economy from the 1950's to the 1980's. Remaining agricultural operations are highly mechanized, and generally offer employment for owner/operators, and a few seasonal helpers. Timber harvesting and processing jobs are available, but are grueling and relatively low paying.

Growth in manufacturing jobs leveled out during the recession of the 1980's, and recovery has been very slow. Local communities compete with one another, with neighboring states, and with foreign countries for the relative few new manufacturing jobs. Some counties have lost industries to this competition, and have experienced chronic, high unemployment. Communities that lack available industrial buildings and/or developed industrial acreage perceive a serious disadvantage in industrial recruitment; but other communities with these infrastructure improvements also find industrial recruitment to be a slow and frustrating pursuit. Most industrial expansion results from a fortuitous combination of a successful and growing company, available manpower, infrastructure, and capital. However, manufacturing operations can sustain only when the manufacturer can compete successfully in the global market.

Service employment has increased in the population centers, but pay is low in that sector, and does not offer an adequate substitute for scarce manufacturing jobs.

Value added manufacturing should be considered as a promising field of economic activity in the Golden Triangle area. Wood products manufacturers should consider converting wood chips into particle board, pulp, or other value added products, and food products, including poultry, beef, swine and vegetables, would return a much greater profit to the area if processed prior to shipping.

Community colleges that serve the Golden Triangle area offer post secondary and adult job training programs in response to the continual need for upgrading job skills. In-service training is available for industries that require specialized training for employees.

Economic development will be limited by environmental considerations, including solid waste, wastewater, and hazardous waste disposal. Indications are that water and air quality standards, and wildlife protection regulations will be increasingly stringent. These environmental issues, given current technology, will entail economic costs.

The explosion of information and communication offers a challenge for participation in new areas of potentially profitable endeavors. However, competition and complexity of

this field demand a high degree of sophistication. Educational attainment and technical expertise must improve for the District's economy to be competitive into the 21st century.

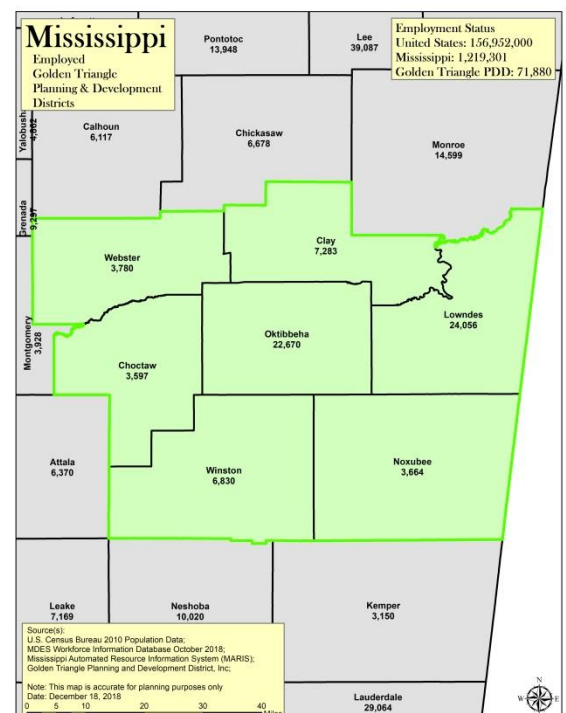
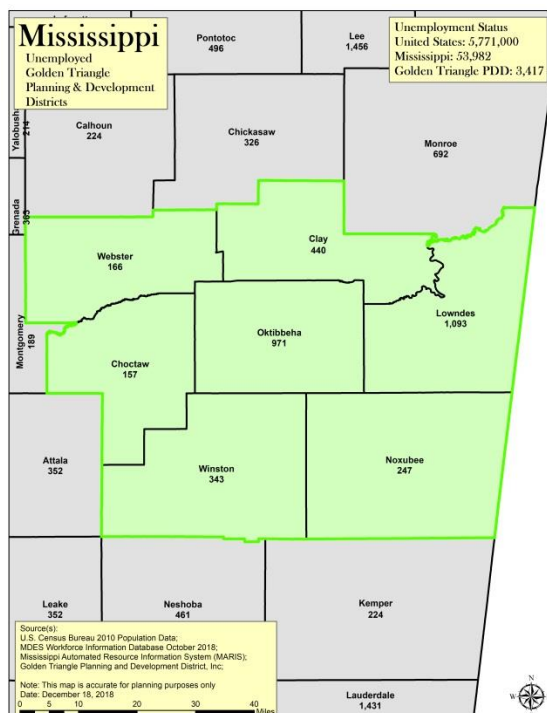
The progress of implementing goals and objectives as presented in the CEDS can be monitored and measured as follows:

- (1) Number and types of jobs created and retained in the region.
- (2) Amount of private sector investment related to jobs created and retained in the District after implementation of the CEDS.
- (3) Number and type of public and private infrastructure investments undertaken in the District.
- (4) Number of studies or strategic planning efforts undertaken that are regional in scope.

IX. Economic Resiliency

The loss of manufacturing concerns in all seven counties of the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District the late 1990's to mid 2,000's has caused the loss of high paying jobs that put many skilled workers in the unemployment lines. These jobs affected a wide range of job classifications including automobile parts and accessories, food processing and packaging, steel fabrication, the garment industry as a whole, and furniture manufacturing. Most of the counties now have economic developers that work closely with District staff to recruit new industry and help existing industry expand to meet the needs of the Golden Triangle area.

Besides the loss of jobs from plant closures, counties within the District have experienced weather related disasters that have affected the ability of the local economy to function. With the help of District staff, these counties have been able to recover and come back from significant natural disasters. Staff of the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District have been able to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to help these counties recover from natural disasters that seem terminal, but with the proper leadership were able to show the resiliency that was needed to make a healthy economy again. The Hazardous Mitigation Plans that were developed for each county were implemented by local officials with the help of District staff. Planning was initiated in areas that needed it the most through grants from EDA and ARC. These plans turned out to be an effective means for counties to make a quicker recovery from the unforeseen circumstances, such as floods, fires, tornadoes, high wind, and devastating storms.



X. Planning

The comprehensive planning process is concerned with the systematic consideration of needs and strategies to improve the social, economic, physical and political environment and well being of the people of the area. Such efforts have been developed over the last twenty years in the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District. Since the formation of the District in 1970, various resources have been pooled and efforts directed toward comprehensive planning and development programs on an areawide basis, coordinated with a regional technical assistance program.

At the regional level, the GTPDD has been designated as the official Regional Clearinghouse under Executive Order 12372. The District reviews all proposed projects that are located within the boundary of the seven-county area, as well as those affecting the area. The District has also been designated by the U. S. Bureau of the Census as a "Census Data Affiliate" and provides a source of census information in the area to interested persons. The GTPDD is also involved in land use planning, water and sewer, recreation, solid waste, housing, aging, tourism, and economic development projects on a district-wide basis.

Each year the District develops a project package for the Appalachian Regional Commission consisting of high priority items that the GTPDD Board of Directors determines will best help the citizens of the area both economically and socially. This project package evolves from the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy process, which serves as an inventory of the District's long-range

public investment strategies. The CEDS serves as the basic guide for growth and development and public investment in the seven county area and meets the planning requirements of ARC, EDA, HUD and FmHA as well as other federal agencies.

General comprehensive planning and technical assistance activities are provided by the GTPDD through the planning and technical assistance programs of the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Economic Development Administration. The GTPDD will continue to work with representatives of various Federal, State and local agencies, other planning and development districts, the GTPDD Board of Directors, mayors, county board of supervisors, technical professionals, and other private citizens to develop and improve the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District to its fullest potential.

XI. Development Strategy

Economic Development

-Provide technical assistance to municipalities and counties in developing needed industrial infrastructure, including planning and funding sources.

-Coordinate efforts to secure expansion of existing and recruitment of new industries.

-Coordinate educational and training programs to meet the needs of potential and existing industries.

-Provide needed capital through RLF and other available financial resources.

Community Development

-Provide technical assistance to local municipalities, counties, and water associations in securing funds for the implementation of water system plans.

-Seek to provide sewer facilities and services in those areas with the greatest needs in the District.

-Work with local governments in securing funds for construction and repair of streets and roads.

-Provide technical assistance to local units of government in securing funding for the preservation, construction, or renovation of public buildings.

-Provide technical assistance to municipal and county governments in submitting applications for fire protection equipment.

-Seek to obtain adequate law enforcement equipment, personnel, and facilities in needed areas of the District.

-Provide technical assistance to local municipalities and county governments to secure funding for recreational facilities and programs.

Education

-Coordinate information, activities, and developments related to child care services with Mississippi Department of Human Services.

-Provide technical assistance to secure grants for construction or renovation of education facilities.

-Seek additional funds to support vocational-technical programs in the District.

-Coordinate information and activities with Job Development and training in operation of programs under the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act.

-Support the provision of basic education programs in areas where they do not currently exist.

-Seek funds to support additional facilities and programs for post-secondary educational facilities in the GTPDD.

-Seek funds for the construction or renovation of library facilities.

-Seek funds for construction of training facilities and programs for the disabled.

Health

-Help local municipalities, boards, agencies, and organizations to explore more extensive recruitment procedures for health professionals to practice in the GTPDD.

-Provide technical assistance in the coordination and preparation of funding applications for construction and improvement of health care facilities and equipment in critically underserved areas in the District.

-Provide for the construction/expansion of out-patient treatment facilities and home health programs.

-Utilize the GTPDD Information and Referral Service and other agencies to promote health services and programs within the GTPDD.

Transportation

-Encourage completion of the Mississippi Department of Transportation 1987 Four-lane Highway Program.

-Seek Federal assistance and provide technical assistance to local municipalities and counties for the improvement of airports and airport properties in the GTPDD.

-Cooperate with railroads through development organizations in the GTPDD in seeking ways to encourage continued and increased service and proper maintenance of rail lines.

-Continue to provide technical assistance in securing Federal Funds for access roads, both industrial and recreational, in the GTPDD.

Housing

-Acquire and disseminate information to local governments about changes in state and Federal housing programs.

-Provide technical assistance to local governments in the preparation of applications for housing assistance for low to moderate income persons.

-Coordinate housing activities and information with applications, local housing authorities and sponsors, and various state and Federal agencies.

Social Services

-Encourage the expansion of all Federal, state, and local programs for the elderly.

-Encourage and promote recreational activities, nutrition, home health care, transportation, and information and referral services for the elderly.

Planning

-When requested by local governments, assist in the development or revision of comprehensive plans or elements thereof, to allow for the adoption and efficient implementation of plans.

-Provide the Executive Order 12372 Clearinghouse Review Process.

-Promote the National Flood Insurance Program and adoption of proper flood plain management ordinances or resolutions in order for flood insurance to be available to every citizen in the GTPDD.

-Provide specialized governmental planning and technical assistance and advice on a wide variety of planning related items, including geographic information systems (GIS) that would not be economically possible in small towns and counties with limited resources and personnel.

- Provide assistance to those units of government in the GTPDD that wish to prepare Community Development Block Grant applications.

XII. Evaluation

The District Staff of the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District and the CEDS committee members will continually monitor progress in achieving CEDS goals and objectives to determine effectiveness of program implementation. Semiannual progress reports, as scheduled by EDA, will review accomplishments during those intervals, and will indicate areas where special emphasis is required. Success in implementing short-term projects identified in the CEDS will be an indicator of program effectiveness. Long-term projects will be examined with a view toward more immediate accomplishments, as appropriate.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Golden Triangle Planning and Development District plans to submit its new Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDS) to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) by December 1, 2018. The aforementioned CEDS will be available for review and comment for a period of 30 days beginning on November 1, 2018.

Review of the CEDS will be available to interested persons during normal working days (M-F) 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM except holidays. The Golden Triangle Planning and Development District's offices are located at 106 Miley Drive in Starkville, Mississippi 39759. All comments should be received by November 30, 2018 at the above address or at P.O. Box 828, Starkville, Mississippi 39760.

Publish one (1) time on November 1, 2018 as a legal advertisement. Bill Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, P.O. Box 485, Starkville, Mississippi 39760.

RESOLUTION
Of
The Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, Inc.
Board of Directors
Approving the 2018-2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
For Submission to the Economic Development Administration

WHEREAS, the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District has been designated an Economic Development District by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, and


WHEREAS, the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, Inc. has developed a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the years 2018-2021 in order to remain eligible for funding programs under the Economic Development Administration (EDA), and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District has been duly advertised for public review and comment;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District Board of Directors, after reviewing the CEDS document, hereby approves the report and authorizes its submittal to the Economic Development Administration.

SO ORDERED THIS the 18th day of December 2018, by the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District Board of Directors in a regularly scheduled meeting.


Robert E. Boykin, President


Jimmie Oliver, Sec. /Treasurer

