



"In addition to investment in education, the primary means by which wealth creation is achieved is via **the creation of jobs** – either through relocations, expansions, or entrepreneurship."

- Competitive Assessment

2. Jobs

EXCERPTS FROM THE COMPETITIVE ASSESSMENT

*"Economic development is a multi-faceted exercise that involves a variety of entities working as a team on varied projects and exercises. But underpinning all of these activities is...**the central tenet of holistic economic development: enhancing the opportunity for all individuals to create wealth.**"*

*"...**the memory of Brown & Williamson's departure led many input participants to ask 'What would happen if we lost another major employer like that?'**"*

*"...**the community possesses a strong set of competitive advantages:** an abundant supply of water that exceeds the community's current needs...excellent road and rail connectivity...proximity to the Port of Savannah (and) Hartsfield-Jackson...the presence of Middle Georgia Regional Airport (and) Robins Air Force Base, (and a) central location within the state of Georgia. (However, from an economic development standpoint) **some of Macon-Bibb's challenges – such as workforce sustainability and public education – are significant enough to offset the community's significant location and infrastructure advantages.** If this is the case, no amount of economic development marketing effort or expense could overcome these barriers – these issues must be addressed in a more comprehensive fashion, as is being done in this process."*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The following statements represent broad objectives that should guide the development and ongoing refinement of tactical recommendations that support the second pillar in our approach to community and economic development: our **Jobs**.

Market the community's assets to support new business development.

Develop sites and infrastructure supporting job creation in target business sectors.

Retain existing businesses and enable their growth.

Support efforts to improve the entrepreneurial climate and small business support system.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS: SUMMARY

The following strategic recommendations are to be pursued by the *One Macon!* Implementation Committee in support of the aforementioned strategic objectives. Strategic recommendations are not organized by objective as many will support multiple objectives. The following pages provide additional detail on each recommendation, its justification, and the relevant actions.



- 2.1 *Establish the Middle Georgia Logistics Council to promote the region as a premier destination for distribution in the Southeast and host an annual Logistics Summit.*
- 2.2 *Establish other cluster councils to support target sector development efforts.*
- 2.3 *Utilize information on inter-industry expenditures to identify import substitution opportunities and recruitment targets that can eliminate expenditure leakage and elevate the economic impact of target sectors.*
- 2.4 *Conduct targeted existing business visits to companies headquartered outside of Macon-Bibb to support retention and expansion of major employers.*
- 2.5 *Implement a comprehensive Export Promotion Initiative that fosters new international trade relationships for existing businesses by improving utilization of existing export assistance programs and developing new export promotion programs.*
- 2.6 *Support the implementation of the Middle Georgia Regional Airport master plan.*
- 2.7 *Pursue joint-use designation for Robins Air Force Base.*
- 2.8 *Advance the implementation of critical transportation infrastructure projects that improve the viability and competitiveness of Macon-Bibb as a logistics hub and inland port.*
- 2.9 *Invest in site-specific improvements to the community's industrial parks to increase their attractiveness to prospective new investments.*
- 2.10 *Work with regional partners to develop a new "mega-site" that can accommodate a major new investment.*
- 2.11 *Optimize Macon-Bibb's general economic development marketing, communications, and public relations efforts.*
- 2.12 *Aid the advancement of the College Hill Alliance's entrepreneurship initiative and the subsequent implementation of recommendations and pilot programs.*
- 2.13 *Improve basic resources for small businesses to complement the College Hill Alliance's implementation of more aggressive and innovative improvements to the entrepreneurial ecosystem.*

Jobs: Strategic Recommendations

2.1 *Establish the Middle Georgia Logistics Council to promote the region as a premier destination for distribution in the Southeast and host an annual Logistics Summit.*



Justification: When asked to identify the community's greatest strength, survey respondents overwhelmingly mentioned Macon's strategic location.

The community's central location in the state of Georgia with proximity to the Port of Savannah and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is complemented by strong interstate connectivity and access, Class I and short-line rail, and an abundance of other infrastructural advantages from water to land that make the region a premier destination for the manufacture and distribution of goods. Macon-Bibb and the larger Middle Georgia region would benefit greatly from a deliberate, cooperative, and business-driven effort to advance the area's competitiveness as a location for distribution activities. When organized properly and meeting frequently, such a council can nurture the development of networks among and between businesses and other entities that influence cluster competitiveness. They can provide leadership in advancing strategic initiatives, inform the efforts of economic development practitioners, identify workforce concerns, inform legislative agendas, and assist with a wide variety of initiatives that support a targeted approach to economic development.

Actions: Work with key leadership from the region's transportation, warehousing, wholesale, manufacturing, distribution, and logistics business community to assemble an initial Working Group tasked with formulating the Middle Georgia Logistics Council. The Council should be formed in partnership with business and community leadership in areas surrounding Macon-Bibb and leveraging the existing partnerships that supported by the Middle Georgia Economic Alliance. Consideration in forming the Council should be given to the following issues and components:

Membership and Directors: The Council should include executive representation from private businesses of all sizes, institutions of higher education, utilities, policymakers, and other key economic development and industry professionals. Professional economic development staff should be assigned to the Council. Co-chairs should be elected, guiding a group of 20 - 25 "Council Directors." Other entities and individuals can join the Council and become "members" at no cost.

Mission and Agenda: The Council should craft its own mission statement, defining its desired role in target sector development efforts, and must establish its own agenda, potentially including but certainly not limited to the following roles and responsibilities:

- ✓ Serve as community and target sector "ambassadors"
- ✓ Facilitate networking and development opportunities for existing companies
- ✓ Assist with the identification of potential recruitment targets
- ✓ Travel with professional economic development staff on targeted marketing missions
- ✓ Attend industry events with professional economic development staff
- ✓ Identify policy priorities at the local, state, and federal level, informing legislative agendas
- ✓ Identify talent issues and appropriate solutions (new training and degree programs)
- ✓ Advance collaborative solutions to site and infrastructure development
- ✓ Provide guidance on optimal media and messages to prioritize marketing and advertising efforts
- ✓ Advance political, financial, and resource support for strategic initiatives

Meeting Schedule: The Council should meet at least quarterly and potentially monthly, depending on the established agenda and individual perceived needs of the Directors and members.

Logistics Summit: The Middle Georgia Logistics Council could develop an annual Logistics Summit as a cornerstone of its operations. The Summit would bring together state and local economic development professionals, business development staff from relevant utilities, key transportation officials (DOT, railroad, airport, etc.), industry experts, and business leadership including the full membership of the Council, to hold forums on the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the future of distribution activities in the region. The Summit could also include an inbound tour of the region's key assets, each year targeting a different audience (prospective companies, site selection consultants, media from logistics/distribution publications). Each year, a report on the Summit's outcomes could be produced and key findings could be integrated into the Council's program of work. The inaugural Summit could focus specifically on opportunities to expand air cargo capacity (see Recommendations 2.6 and 2.7).

BEST PRACTICE: MEMPHIS REGIONAL LOGISTICS COUNCIL (MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE)

The Memphis Regional Logistics Council (RLC) was established in 2004 by the Memphis Regional Chamber as a way to strengthen both the Memphis metro area and the tri-state region as a whole. By addressing Memphis' ever-growing, ever-changing role in global distribution and logistics, the council works to establish the Memphis region as a leader in the industry, and to better tap into its role as "America's Distribution Center."

The RLC is comprised of logistics and distribution professionals who lend their insights to the city's myriad logistics and distribution issues. Members include trucking and drainage companies, freight forwarders, steamship lines, railroads, air carriers, contractors, developers, barge lines, warehouses, and distributors.

At meetings, professionals are encouraged to share their ideas and expertise regarding how to improve Memphis' ability to be a logistics center. The council includes four main committees: infrastructure, marketing, workforce development, and strategic alliances. The infrastructure committee recently helped execute the contract for the city's first ever regional infrastructure plan which examines how air, rail, road, and water converge in Memphis to move goods in and out of the city. The marketing committee works to brand the community and promote Memphis' assets and support the Chamber's ongoing marketing efforts, including but not limited to the targeted in-house publication HUB Magazine with a circulation exceeding 20,000; hosting editors of major logistics and supply sector trade publications for the Logistics Tour of Memphis; full advertising supplemental section to Inbound Logistics; and the maintenance of a frequently updated and interactive website promoting regional logistics capabilities. The workforce development committee focuses on promoting the city's economy by improving the quality of its workforce. The strategic alliance committee works to develop partnerships critical to logistics growth.

2.2 Establish other cluster councils to support target sector development efforts.

Justification: Just like the Macon Logistics Council (see Recommendation 2.1) cluster councils could benefit economic and workforce development efforts for other target sectors in Macon-Bibb. Such volunteer-led councils would be a complement to staff-led existing business retention and expansion (BRE) outreach programs, providing critical and ongoing input to professional economic and workforce

development staff regarding the specific challenges and opportunities facing businesses in the community's target sectors. Councils could help advance collaborative solutions to challenges and opportunities that they identify, as well as those identified in the Target Business Analysis.

Actions: Work with key leadership in each of the community's target business sectors to evaluate the potential benefits of establishing a cluster council to guide target sector development efforts. Outreach to key organizations and partnerships such as the Macon-Bibb Workforce Investment Board and the Middle Georgia Economic Alliance will be necessary to evaluate need and determine if an existing committee or working group is already addressing the needs of a specific target business sector. Consideration should be given to similar factors as those outlined for the recommended Middle Georgia Logistics Council (see Recommendation 2.1). Potential councils and their potential area(s) of focus could include but are not limited to:

- ✓ **Health Care Council:** A new Health Care Council could potentially focus a variety of issues. This could encompass economic and workforce development objectives such as talent development, attraction, and retention, as well as marketing efforts to expand non-resident health care expenditure in Macon-Bibb. The council could also focus on initiatives that target improvements in the equity of health care access and community health outcomes. Ideally, a Health Care Council would engage a diverse group of leaders from the community's health care service delivery system in addition to members of the academic community that support talent development and embark on new research endeavors.
- ✓ **Aerospace and Aviation Council:** An Aerospace and Aviation Council could potentially focus on the following core issues: supporting BRAC initiatives to preserve operations at Robins Air Force Base; identifying necessary training strategies to prepare the next generation of aerospace and aviation workers to replace impending retirees; and, developing and supporting implementation of recommendations to improve necessary infrastructure that increase competitiveness for cargo and commercial aviation traffic, and expanded aerospace assembly, manufacturing, and aviation maintenance, repair, and operations (MRO).
- ✓ **Manufacturers Council:** A Manufacturers Council could potentially assist with: marketing key resources (water, land, location, etc.) that are attractive to manufacturers; identifying buyers and suppliers that could be potential relocation targets; identifying local alternatives to non-local suppliers of intermediate inputs; supporting the re-employment and re-training of displaced workers from layoff events; and promoting interest in manufacturing careers among middle and high school students.

2.3 Utilize information on inter-industry expenditures to identify import substitution opportunities and recruitment targets that can eliminate expenditure leakage and elevate the economic impact of target sectors.

Justification: Research in the Target Business Analysis revealed that certain subsectors of the community's strategic economic development targets purchase a relatively high amount of their inputs (goods and services) from establishments located outside the region. More specifically, research revealed that Food and Beverage manufacturers in Macon-Bibb County purchased more than \$1.7 million of converted paper products in 2012 (largely packaging materials, a strong subsector within Macon-Bibb's Paper Products target). However, just 10.4 percent of these expenditures stayed within the community,

going to converted paper product manufactures located in Macon-Bibb. This high rate of expenditure leakage illustrates that there are opportunities to create better synergy between firms in two of the community's manufacturing niches. Specifically, opportunities exist to promote import substitution by working with existing Food and Beverage manufacturers in Macon-Bibb (and surrounding counties) to identify local alternatives to suppliers of food and beverage packaging. Pactiv and Graphic Packaging are large producers of packaging materials for the food and beverage industry. In addition, opportunities exist to better focus recruitment efforts on suppliers of packaging that are currently located outside the region. Meanwhile, firms within the Aerospace niche purchase nearly \$30 million of goods from other manufacturing firms, but 81.9 percent of these expenditures go to firms outside Macon-Bibb. This is to be expected given the complex, global supply chains endemic to aerospace manufacturing; but there still may be similar opportunities to expand local sourcing within certain operations. Notably, a relatively high proportion of expenditures by local manufacturers on professional and technical services (legal services, accounting, marketing and advertising, computer systems design, etc.), stays within the community. In 2012, 38 percent of manufacturers' expenditures on such services went to local providers (lawyers, accountants, etc.) as compared to 32 percent in Columbus-Muscogee and just 22 percent in Augusta-Richmond. This may in part be explained by the fact that the average manufacturing establishment in Macon-Bibb is considerably smaller (35 employees) than the average manufacturer in Columbus and Augusta (48 and 51 employees, respectively); smaller manufacturing establishments are more likely to be locally-owned and operated and less likely to have existing relationships via corporate headquarters to providers of professional services outside the region.

Actions: Develop sector specific strategies to support the reduction of expenditure leakage within niche manufacturing targets, potentially via the Manufacturers Council (see Recommendation 2.2):

- ✓ **Food and Beverage; Paper Products:** Work with Food and Beverage companies to identify their suppliers of paper packaging products and determine if local producers of food packaging could be viable alternatives to their current suppliers located outside the region.
- ✓ **Aerospace:** Work with Aerospace companies to identify suppliers of key inputs into the assembly and manufacturing process that are located outside Macon-Bibb but could benefit from co-location and therefore be viable recruitment targets.
- ✓ **Building and Construction Materials:** Work with local manufacturers of Building and Construction Materials to map supply chains and identify if there are any raw materials that could potentially be sourced locally or regionally rather than imported (limestone, kaolin, timber, etc). Identify suppliers of intermediate inputs that could benefit from co-location and therefore be viable recruitment targets.

2.4 Conduct targeted existing business visits to companies headquartered outside of Macon-Bibb to support retention and expansion of major employers.

Justification: In October 2003, it was announced that one of Macon-Bibb's largest employers, Brown & Williamson, would merge with R.J. Reynolds and relocate its operations to Winston-Salem, NC. The impact of this merger on Macon-Bibb was profound. Thousands of workers lost their jobs which, according to the Census Bureau, paid an average annual wage of \$62,352 in 2001. The impact of the Brown & Williamson relocation on the Macon-Bibb economy highlights the importance of business retention efforts that seek to identify core business challenges early on, and aid local businesses in alleviating those challenges so

that they can thrive and prosper in the community for many years to come. Without question, there are circumstances (such as mergers and acquisitions) that are outside a community's control; nonetheless, the memory of Brown & Williamson's departure led many input participants to ask "What would happen if we lost another major employer like that?"

Actions: Assemble a delegation of 15-20 key business, community, and elected leaders that can serve as "community ambassadors" and represent Macon-Bibb on a series of business retention visits to meet with key management of companies that are headquartered outside of Macon-Bibb but have major operations in the community. Each trip should include 3-6 carefully selected "ambassadors" within some familiarity of the company's existing operations in Macon-Bibb. Trips should seek to identify any key management concerns about operations in Macon-Bibb and/or expansion plans that can be supported by the community and its economic development partners. Trips should be coordinated with other relevant travel such as outbound marketing and recruitment trips that seek to develop new business relationships with prospective firms and site selectors.

2.5 Implement a comprehensive Export Promotion Initiative that fosters new international trade relationships for existing businesses by improving utilization of existing export assistance programs and developing new export promotion programs.

Justification: Manufacturing firms in Macon-Bibb County exported \$1.68 billion in goods in 2012. While this far exceeded the level of exports in competing Columbus-Muscogee (\$569 million), it was less than half the manufacturing export level observed in Augusta-Richmond (\$3.57 billion). With President Obama's administration aggressively promoting a new National Export Initiative that seeks to double the level of American exports between 2010 and 2015, there is a tremendous amount of investment in export assistance programs; Macon-Bibb's manufacturers should leverage these available forms of assistance. In addition, a concerted effort to expose international delegations to the community's assets can have both short-term and long-term benefits for both export promotion and foreign direct investment in Macon-Bibb County.

Actions: Develop an Export Promotion Initiative that contains two core components: exposure to available state and federal support services and the development of a reverse trade mission.

- ✓ **Trade Development Day:** Develop a day-long program in collaboration with state and federal officials to educate existing businesses about export assistance programs and connect them to appropriate contacts at the state and federal level that can support the develop of company-specific export promotion plans and facilitate new business relationships. The first half of the day's agenda should include presentations and panels from state and federal officials regarding available programs, including executives from existing businesses in Georgia that can share their success stories based on assistance received from state and federal partners. The second half of the day's agenda could include short windows (15-20 minutes) allowing representatives from existing Macon-Bibb employers to meet with state and federal officials, discuss their broad objectives, and schedule a time for further consultation and assistance. The following aspects of federal and state programs should be promoted:
 - **Federal programs:** Work with state representatives of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank) to educate manufacturers about available forms of assistance and promote greater

utilization of existing services offered such as the SBA's International Trade Loan program, the Ex-Im Bank's guaranteed term financing for international buyers of U.S. exports. The International Trade Administration (ITA) also frequently helps companies negotiate the removal of barriers to exporting, often involving changes to international regulations that impact market access. The ITA's U.S. Commercial Service operated Regional Export Assistance Centers (located in Atlanta and Savannah in the state of Georgia) helps U.S. companies develop customized export promotion plans and then facilitate meetings with international delegates and key business connections in foreign countries.

- **State programs:** Representatives from the Georgia Department of Economic Development's (GDEcD) International Trade Team (ITT) are tasked with assisting Georgia companies with export promotion. Representatives are located in ten countries around the world, including Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Germany, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and the U.K. and Ireland. These representatives help make business connections and facilitate trade missions that are hosted frequently throughout the year in various countries and targeting different types of economic activities. Locally, the state publishes "trade opportunities" bulletins every two weeks highlighting specific products and services demanded by business contacts in foreign countries. The state also maintains a Georgia Export Directory that profiles companies and the products and services that they offer. Macon-Bibb companies should be informed of all available state services and proactively encouraged to utilize these services, including participation on international trade missions. Representatives from the ITT should be invited to speak to local companies alongside U.S. Department of Commerce officials at a coordinated event.
- ✓ **Reverse trade mission:** The second component of the Export Promotion Initiative would be the development of a reverse trade mission. Some communities have worked with their state and federal partners to organize reverse trade missions, hosting foreign trade commissioners and consuls to expose them to existing businesses and their export potential as well as the community's assets that can attract new foreign direct investment. Many communities have found that such reverse missions can be more cost-effective and provide greater exposure for local companies and the community as a whole. With an abundance of trade commission offices and consulates located in Metro Atlanta, a reverse trade mission coordinated with the state of Georgia and the Governor's Office could prove beneficial for Macon-Bibb.

2.6 Support the implementation of the Middle Georgia Regional Airport master plan.

Justification: While Macon-Bibb is fortunate to be located just 80 miles from the nation's 14th busiest cargo airport (Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport), perhaps the community's greatest weakness from a logistics and distribution standpoint is its relatively limited local air cargo capacity. Opportunities exist to improve air cargo capacity by implementing planned improvements at Middle Georgia Regional Airport – improvements that can help increase the attractiveness of the airport and surrounding industrial properties. Investments supporting expansion of air cargo capacity can have many other benefits including but limited to improved competitiveness for maintenance, repair, and operations (MRO) activities, aerospace and aviation manufacturing and assembly, and other distribution opportunities.

Actions: Through the recommended Middle Georgia Logistics Council (see Recommendation 2.1), advance discussions regarding the necessary procedures and investments to increase air cargo capacity at Middle Georgia Regional Airport. First and foremost, efforts to promote additional cargo capacity at Middle Georgia Regional Airport should be consistent with the airport's long-term master plan. Potential exists to expand capacity at the airport to support larger aircraft and additional cargo flights. The two primary challenges facing the expansion of cargo operations at Middle Georgia Regional Airport are the runways' existing cargo load capacity (or pavement classification) and runway length. Recent investments have upgraded the weight rating/pavement classification by adding additional asphalt, while investments to extend the main runway from roughly 6,500 feet to roughly 8,000 feet were delayed by opposition to the Regional Transportation Referendum (also known as the regional TSPLOST). Continued investment in the runways could help attract new air cargo-intensive operations and industries to Macon-Bibb and support development at adjacent properties and industrial parks.

2.7 Pursue joint-use designation for Robins Air Force Base.

Justification: While Macon-Bibb is fortunate to be located just 80 miles from the nation's 14th busiest cargo airport (Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport), perhaps the community's greatest weakness from a logistics and distribution standpoint is its relatively limited local air cargo capacity. Opportunities exist to improve air cargo capacity by pursuing joint-use designation for Robins Air Force Base, allowing both military and civilian aircraft to use the airfield. Investments supporting expansion of air cargo capacity can have many other benefits including but limited to improved competitiveness for maintenance, repair, and operations (MRO) activities, aerospace and aviation manufacturing and assembly, and other distribution opportunities.

Actions: Through the recommended Middle Georgia Logistics Council (see Recommendation 2.1), advance discussions regarding the necessary procedures and investments to increase air cargo capacity at Robins Air Force Base. With support from the United States Air Force, the Federal Aviation Administration, and a wide variety of government partners at the federal, state, and local level, potential may exist to establish Robins Air Force Base as a joint-use airport. Joint-use facilities are simply shared facilities at which both military and civilian aircraft make shared use of the airfield. There are currently 23 military joint-use airfields, of which 12 are located at Air Force bases. The closest joint-use facility to Macon is located at Fort Stewart. Given the nature of operations at Robins – which is heavily oriented towards maintenance and contains relatively little flight traffic/missions as compared to other Air Force bases – joint-use may be a viable option for enhancing air cargo capacity in the region. This effort could be complemented by the assembly and development of land adjacent to the Base's runway for industrial and commercial uses. Such an effort would require collaboration between local governments and the Base to facilitate land acquisition, site assembly, and infrastructure improvements; this could potentially be facilitated through a joint development authority (JDA).

2.8 Advance the implementation of critical transportation infrastructure projects that improve the viability and competitiveness of Macon-Bibb as a logistics hub and inland port.

Justification: As previously mentioned, the strategic, central location of Macon-Bibb in the state of Georgia, and its access to key rail and interstate infrastructure between the Port of Savannah and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport make the region a highly-competitive location for a variety of manufacturing, distribution, and logistics operations. However, there a multiple investments in the

community's and region's transportation infrastructure that can further improve its competitiveness and viability as an inland port. While all face varied funding obstacles today, many of these key projects would have been supported by the regional transportation special purpose local options sales tax (TSPLOST) that was not supported at the polls in 2012. Regardless, these projects (and many others) remain critical to the community's short-term and long-term economic competitiveness, and complement external factors such as port-deepening in Savannah that may increase the amount of cargo transported to Macon-Bibb via truck and rail. With adequate demand, Macon-Bibb could establish itself as an inland port, allowing cargo to be processed through customs at the inland port.

Actions: Continue collaborative efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to establish Macon-Bibb as an inland port. Working with the full spectrum of necessary partners at the local, regional, state, and federal levels, support the advancement of key transportation infrastructure projects, including but not limited the following projects that will help improve the prospects of developing a viable inland port and reinforcing Macon-Bibb's position as a logistic hub.

- ✓ **Interstate-16/Interstate-75 interchange**
- ✓ **Sardis Church Road extension**
- ✓ **Export-Import Highway:** The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has developed plans to fund improvements along key freight corridors in the state. Much of this work is prompted by the forecasted surge in freight traffic on Georgia's highways and interstates that will result from port deepening in Savannah. Among the projects identified by GDOT, a truck bypass around Atlanta that runs west from Macon to LaGrange and north to I-75 around the Georgia-Tennessee is one of the least expensive but most impactful according to economic impact estimates) among the proposed freight corridors. The corridor would also improve connectivity to the West Point/LaGrange region that is home to Kia Motors and its suppliers.

2.9 Invest in site-specific improvements to the community's industrial parks to increase their attractiveness to prospective new investments.

Justification: The Site Assessment conducted by J. Michael Mullis, a leading site location consultant, identified a number of site-specific improvements that could increase the attractiveness of existing sites and industrial parks to prospective companies.

Actions: Pursue the following upgrades to existing sites and parks, their surrounding areas, and their corresponding marketing materials, consistent with the Site Assessment:

- ✓ **I-75 Business Park**
 - Covert the Park's main entrance to the access point on Sardis Church Road.
 - Reserve land at the southern end for improvements in landscaping and signage.
 - Market the southern portion of the Park for commercial development.
 - Work with owners at the northern entrance to maintain clean and attractive properties.
 - Better identify and delineate available parcels in marketing documents.
- ✓ **Ocmulgee East Industrial Park**
 - Develop a new Park maintenance plan to improve aesthetics.

- ✓ Sofkee Industrial Park
 - Work with local government and non-profit partners to beautify the corridors (particularly Highway 247) that provide access to the Park via clean-up and landscaping.
- ✓ Airport South and Airport Industrial Park
 - Better identify and delineate available parcels in marketing documents.
- ✓ Cumberland & Western Resources Complex/Former Brown & Williamson Facility
 - Continue to work with property owners to support enhanced marketing efforts.

2.10 Work with regional partners to develop a new “mega-site” that can accommodate a major new investment.

Justification: While Macon-Bibb has numerous sites and buildings that are appropriate for a wide variety of manufacturers, it has few if any sites that could support the largest manufacturing projects. MEDC, the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority, and their regional partners in economic development will need to constantly evaluate options to assemble and prepare larger sites in close proximity to I-75 and I-16 – potentially in collaboration with partners in neighboring counties – to ensure that Macon-Bibb remains “in the conversation” for the largest manufacturing projects.

Actions: Engage regional partners in neighboring counties to evaluate specific properties could potentially be assembled to jointly develop a new mega-site, preferably in excess of 500 acres and continuous to or in close proximity to one of the two interstates. Working through the Central Georgia Joint Development Authority would permit joint ownership and development, as well as the extension of the maximum job tax credit to any company locating on the site. Work with relevant partners to develop a conceptual development plan including costs and timing of all related site acquisition and preparation activities, including infrastructure improvements.

2.11 Optimize Macon-Bibb’s general economic development marketing, communications, and public relations efforts.

Justification: The Marketing Review component of the research phase evaluated a wide variety of economic development marketing activities as carried out by the Macon Economic Development Commission (MEDC) and its partners throughout the community. As competition for economic development projects and new corporate investment increases, economic development organizations (EDOs) such as MEDC must continually assess the characteristics and strategic components of their marketing programs. The EDOs that succeed in marketing their communities build comprehensive programs developed with a number of platforms, priorities, and clear focus areas. MEDC and its partners have developed some highly effective components of a comprehensive marketing effort, but there is always room for improvement; the Marketing Review highlighted the areas that could use additional attention and investment.

Actions: Implement the following changes to the community’s economic development marketing, communications, and public relations efforts:

Community and Organizational Branding:

- ✓ Ensure that any branding elements – such as “Macon Works” tagline and MEDC logos – are incorporated into all marketing efforts.

- ✓ Develop an improved, recognizable “square” logo for use on social media, etc.

MEDC Website:

- ✓ Build upon the recently updated website look to streamline and package content in a more easily navigable fashion, as described in the Web Presence section of the Marketing Review.
- ✓ Ensure that all data included on the website is the most current information available. Create an update schedule based on a data release calendar and regularly update the website accordingly.
- ✓ Make all data available in downloadable spreadsheets, the preferred format for site selectors.
- ✓ Redefine target sectors based on the Target Business Analysis and develop customized and informative webpages for each target sector that profile existing businesses, describe the relevant assets that support each target sector (infrastructure, education and workforce, small business resources, etc.), promote applicable data, and make the case for Macon-Bibb as a preferred and competitive location for such economic activities.
- ✓ Integrate new information that is currently missing or difficult to find on the MEDC website (tax rates, recent announcements and news, etc.) as identified in the Marketing Review.
- ✓ Consider repositioning elements from the “Why Macon Works,” “Labor Market,” and “Incentives” sections into the following new tabs: Doing Business in Macon, Living in Macon, and Data Center.
- ✓ Revise the “Contact Us” tab to “About Us” including annual reports and key investor communications.
- ✓ Eliminate the “Learn More” left-hand navigation that is redundant with top-level navigation.

Print Collateral:

- ✓ Update all print (and downloadable) marketing collateral to reflect the current MEDC brand identity (colors, logos, fonts, etc.) and the community’s redefined target sectors. Evaluate the feasibility of outsourcing design work to improve overall quality and reduce demands on MEDC staff time. Potential for reduced price or in-kind services from an MEDC investor or Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce member may exist.

Social Media:

- ✓ Create a more “active” presence on social media, particularly Twitter. Update these sites more frequently (at least once per day on Twitter), and view the use of these tools as an opportunity to directly engage target audiences both internally and externally, and spread awareness of news, announcements, and events.

Public Relations and Earned Media:

- ✓ Increase MEDC’s use of press releases to announce project wins, milestones, and other newsworthy events (such as inbound marketing successes). Distribute these press releases via e-mail to a defined list of media and influencers, and post an electronic version of each of these press releases in the News & Press section of *maconworks.com* to create a complete, publicly accessible archive of MEDC’s success.
- ✓ Continue to use targeted newsletters to reach external audiences, including members of the site selection community. Update the look and feel of these newsletters to be consistent with a broad brand strategy, and focus content on regional advantages and data, project wins, and economic development news that is relevant to those outside the community.

- ✓ As Macon-Bibb enters a new era of consolidated government, and as this Community and Economic Development Strategy is implemented, it will be important to tell the story of the community's success to a wide audience. MEDC should evaluate the feasibility of partnering with other organizations such as the Chamber to engage a public relations firm capable of generating media coverage of positive developments within the community.

Marketing the Region's Water Resources:

- ✓ The Macon Water Authority, in partnership with the MEDC, currently operates an aggressive marketing program that seeks to develop leads and generate new business opportunities that can benefit from the sustainability and quality of the region's water supply. Existing efforts should continue, and consideration should be given to forging new partnerships with the state (GDECD and the Governor's Office) to conduct joint business development trips to specific markets, share costs in attending trade shows and other industry events, and best position Macon-Bibb within state-level economic development marketing efforts for manufacturing sectors that are high water users.

2.12 Aid the advancement of the College Hill Alliance's entrepreneurship initiative and the subsequent implementation of recommendations and pilot programs.

Justification: Given recent contraction in business sectors such as manufacturing and concerns about a reliance on a few major employers, input participants also suggested that there needs to be a greater focus on entrepreneurship. Said one participant, "Macon's leaders see economic development as 'just industrial.'" Another noted a community culture that can be complacent with too few risk "risk-takers" and "business-hungry" people. Whatever the source, many agreed that there should be an increased emphasis on supporting small businesses, promoting innovation, and opening up access to capital. Such an emphasis on entrepreneurship could help create more opportunities to Macon-Bibb residents at all income levels and engage student and young professional populations. Beginning in 2012, the College Hill Alliance has facilitated the development of a new vision and plan for the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Macon-Bibb, the goal of which is to support startups and existing small businesses, and advance a shift in community and business culture towards support for entrepreneurship. Supported by a \$2.3 million grant from the Knight Foundation, the initiative was aimed at identifying and implementing appropriate pilot programs to advance the development of an entrepreneurial culture and place entrepreneurship at a more prominent position within the community's approach to economic development. Since the onset of this Community and Economic Development Strategy planning process, it has been the intent that this process will support and not supersede this entrepreneurship initiative, but rather, integrate its recommendations as part of the larger Community and Economic Development Strategy. As a result, this Community and Economic Development Strategy does not introduce any large-scale, transformative actions related to the entrepreneurial ecosystem; instead, it presents a set of small-scale and relatively low-cost improvements to basic small business resources (see Recommendation 2.13).

Actions: The Steering Committee and its subsequent implementation efforts should be coordinated with the College Hill Alliance to support its initiative in every way possible and integrate recommendations into the Community and Economic Development Strategy's priorities and implementation timeline once these recommendations are developed, approved, and made public.

2.13 Improve basic resources for small businesses to complement the College Hill Alliance's implementation of more aggressive and innovative improvements to the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Justification: While the College Hill Alliance's entrepreneurship initiative will result in a comprehensive new strategy to develop the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem, Macon-Bibb County's community and economic development leadership can begin making improvements to basic small business support services and resources in advance of new initiatives identified in the Alliance's new regional plan for entrepreneurship. Some of these basic improvements will be necessary once the City of Macon and Bibb County consolidate in late 2013.

Actions: The following actions are basic improvements that can be implemented without superseding a more comprehensive entrepreneurship strategy being developed by the College Hill Alliance:

- ✓ **Proactively identify all small businesses in Macon-Bibb County:** Utilize databases such as Dun & Bradstreet, ReferenceUSA, and other regional business contact databases to identify all small businesses in Macon-Bibb.
- ✓ **Develop a web-based business assistance request form:** Create a form on government and Macon Economic Development Commission websites to provide small business owners with a place to request assistance.
- ✓ **Develop a web-based and downloadable guide to starting a business in Macon-Bibb:** The new consolidated government will need a comprehensive guide to starting a business that is available online at government and MEDC websites.
- ✓ **Identify and contact new small businesses through business license applications:** Develop processes with business license and permit offices to provide regular updates on new companies locating/opening in Macon-Bibb County. Conduct outreach to all new businesses to ensure that they are aware of available startup support services.
- ✓ **Integrate small businesses into business retention and expansion (BRE) outreach efforts:** Develop an online survey that targets small business owners in Macon-Bibb that seeks to identify their individual concerns and barriers to expansion. Utilize findings to inform ongoing efforts to improve the climate for existing businesses in Macon-Bibb. Efforts should seek to engage small business owners that may not have previously been engaged by the small business support system, including but not limited to the Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, MEDC, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), SCORE, and others.
- ✓ **Develop a network of local companies willing to offer free or reduced-cost services to small businesses in Macon-Bibb:** Professional service firms (lawyers, accountants, tax preparers, financial advisors, etc.) could be recruited to serve in a network that offers discounted or no-cost services (up to a limited number of hours) for local entrepreneurs and small business owners. Small incentives could be developed to encourage participation.
- ✓ **Identify barriers to the utilization of SBDC, SCORE, and other existing support services:** Work with existing providers of small business support services to evaluate historical utilization of their services and identify barriers to awareness and utilization of available services.