



Economic Development 2018 Year End Review

Gainesville-Hall County, Georgia - December 27, 2018: The Greater Hall Chamber Economic Development Council (EDC) reports 2018 year-end results of 14 new and expanding firms adding nearly 1,200 new jobs and \$310 million in new capital investment to Gainesville-Hall County. The results are an 80% increase in capital investment over the previous year.

“Georgia has earned the #1 ranking for its business environment for an unprecedented sixth consecutive year, and during that time, Gainesville-Hall County has been the top job producing Metropolitan Area in the state,” said David Lee of Jackson EMC and Chamber Vice Chair of Economic Development. In 2018, *Site Selection* magazine named Gainesville-Hall County one of the “Top Small Metros in the Nation for Job Creation and Investment.” Similarly, *Forbes* magazine has rated Gainesville-Hall County as one of the “Best Small Places for Business & Careers” for the last six years.

In the most recent 12-month data, the Georgia Department of Labor reports that Gainesville-Hall County added 3,794 jobs from October 2017 to October 2018, a 3.9 % increase for the 12-month period. “Our Economic Development success is a result of teamwork and a spirit of dedication to the benefit of the community,” said David Lee. “The Chamber provides a forum for the business community, educators and elected officials to work together on the issues that impact existing industries, small businesses, the healthcare community, retail and new business recruitment.”

Many of the jobs and investments announced in 2018 have already taken place, but others, like Fox Factory and Auto Metal Direct (AMD), will add their investment and jobs to the local economy in 2019 and beyond. Both Fox and AMD are constructing new facilities in Hall County, for a combined 500,000 square feet, that will serve as both operations and headquarters for the businesses. Both firms are using local construction and engineering firms for their new developments, adding to the local economy. Additional business expansions and investments announced in 2018 include VDL (Netherlands), ZF Industries (Germany), KIK (Canada), McCraney Property Group and Pattillo Industrial Real Estate. Since 2013, the Chamber’s economic development program has assisted more than 150 new and expanding businesses that have announced 6,350 jobs and \$1.3 billion in new capital investment.

The recently announced Northeast Georgia Inland Port Terminal will extend the Port of Savannah’s reach into the region with a new location in Gateway Industrial Centre on Highway 365.

“Our new Gainesville location is part of our Network Georgia initiative that provides new and existing port customers with additional logistics options,” said Georgia Port Authority (GPA) Executive Director Griff Lynch. “The facility will offer a direct rail connection to the terminal in Savannah. The GPA will operate the facility in partnership with Norfolk Southern. The facility is expected to lower costs for businesses that are importing components or exporting goods by container. “In addition to serving existing port customers,” said Governor Nathan Deal, “this project will also act as an economic development tool, drawing new investment from business and industry to Hall and its surrounding counties.”

Governor Deal and the Technical College System of Georgia recently unveiled the new Lanier Technical College Campus on Highway 365. The new campus will open for instruction in January 2019 and represents a \$135 million capital investment in new instructional facilities to serve the record-high enrollment of 4,050 students. Lanier Tech plays heavily in developing workplace skills in demand by area businesses and healthcare service providers. The college offers training toward degree and certificate programs and has recently expanded its apprenticeship partnerships in machining and industrial maintenance. Lanier Technical College also maintains a 100% career placement record for its graduates.

Lanier Technical College’s move to the new campus is providing room to grow for the University of North Georgia (UNG) Gainesville Campus. The 1960’s era Lanier Tech Campus will be repurposed and integrated into a long-term plan for UNG Gainesville. Those plans will begin to take shape in 2019.

With unemployment approaching an historic low for the Gainesville-Hall County Metropolitan Area (2.9% as of November 2018), the Greater Hall Chamber, businesses and educators remain focused on Work Based Learning and apprenticeships for high-skilled career paths in demand by area businesses. The Chamber’s Workforce Development Task Force is a partnership with Lanier Technical College, Hall County Schools, Gainesville City Schools, Brenau University, the University of North Georgia and area businesses. The mission is to ensure businesses can acquire the talent and skills they need for sustainable growth and to replace highly skilled workers as they retire.

The Chamber’s Workforce Development Task Force recently reached a new milestone with 40 Work Based Learning high school students working at 17 industries and many healthcare service providers throughout Hall County. Gainesville City Schools, Hall County School, Lanier Tech and many businesses are collaborating to give high school students valuable career experience and the opportunity to develop important work skills. This spring, the Workforce Development Task Force will double the size and impact for the Second Annual 7th Grade Career Path Fair at UNG Gainesville and Lanier Tech. Twelve hundred 7th grade students will hear from 50 participating businesses about future career opportunities.

Healthcare Services in Gainesville-Hall County enhance quality of life and provide the community with a direct economic impact. Gainesville-Hall County is a regional center for medical and wellness services with 373 healthcare service providers employing more than 12,500 and providing nearly \$750 million in annual wages. New medical office developments are underway in Gainesville, Oakwood, Flowery Branch and Braselton. Northeast Georgia Medical Center has invested in a new Graduate Medical Education Program set to

begin in 2019. The residency program is expected grow to more than 170 Graduate Medical Residents by 2023 and is anticipated to have a \$66 million economic impact in Hall County.

Some of the greatest employment gains come from small businesses. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the 4,417 business establishments in Hall County are categorized as small, using the Small Business Administration's definition of fewer than 500 employees. Approximately 96.6% organizations employ fewer than 50 people. Participation in the Greater Hall Chamber's monthly Small Business Seminars has grown in 2018. In its second year, 23 small business owners earned the Chamber's "Certified Small Business Partner" designation for attending at least six of the Small Business Seminars. These companies will soon be recognized at a Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meeting. Brenau University has recently acquired management of the Business Incubator at Featherbone Communiversity, and the incubator is growing in new directions for start-up entrepreneurs, Brenau students and the small business community.

Gainesville-Hall County's population continues to grow at almost 2% per year. Cresswinds on Lanier, Mundy Mill and Sterling on the Lake residential developments remain among the top selling in Georgia. New residential developments are underway to replenish a dwindling supply of available housing.

The year ahead will include completion and construction on a number of transportation improvements for Gainesville-Hall County including the completion of US 129 South of Gainesville, completion of a new Tumbling Creek Bridge, completion of the new Exit 14 interchange on I-985, continued work on bridge replacements and the much needed widening of Spout Springs Road in South Hall County. The Greater Hall Chamber will host its Annual Transportation Forum on March 7 at the University of North Georgia Gainesville.

2019 will be another big year of tourism events and attractions such as the 22nd Annual Petit Le Mans at Road Atlanta, The Atlanta Botanical Gardens Gainesville and Lanier Islands. Recent investments in the Lake Lanier Olympic Park are leading to additional events like the ACA National Championships in August 2019. Don Carter State Park is adding a 12.5-mile network of hiking and equestrian trails. Hall County is answering a growing need for a heritage welcome center in the restoration of the historic Healan's Head's Mill just off Highway 365 in North Hall County.

*For more information on the Greater Hall Chamber's Economic Development Division, contact Vice President **Tim Evans**, 770-532-6206 x 107, tim@ghcc.com, or **Shelley Davis**, Vice President of Existing Industry, 770-532-6206 x 108, sdavis@ghcc.com.*

About the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce

Founded in 1908, the Greater Hall Chamber is dedicated to supporting an aggressive business environment and making a positive contribution to the community by serving as a resource for information, a voice for business and a valuable link to government. The Chamber serves the entire Hall County area, including the cities of Gainesville, Flowery Branch, Oakwood, Clermont, Gillsville, Lula, Braselton and Buford. GreaterHallChamber.com

About the Gainesville-Hall County Economic Development Council

The Gainesville-Hall County Economic Development Council is a public-private partnership of the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce, Hall County and the Cities of Gainesville, Flowery Branch, Lula and Oakwood. The Economic Development Council provides one-stop marketing and economic development services to support the community's efforts in existing industry retention, workforce development, small business development, business recruitment and retail development.