



GREATER HALL

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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2020 Year-End Review

Economic Development

January 8, 2021 – Gainesville-Hall County, Georgia, USA: The Greater Hall Chamber Economic Development Council (EDC) reports 2020 year-end results of **12 new and expanding firms in their plans to add 460 new jobs and \$200 million in new capital investment** to Gainesville-Hall County. 2020 has been a year full of challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for our healthcare service providers, the hospitality industry and some small businesses. However, there have been some encouraging announcements and developments in 2020 that indicate **better than average economic performance** for Gainesville-Hall County when compared to other Metro Areas in Georgia and the Nation.

New corporate facilities announced in 2020 included the new South Hall facilities for Amazon.com, Fitueyes, ADD-USA, Dongwon Tech and the new Agile Cold Storage facility under construction on Athens Highway. **Existing industry expansions** announced during the year included expansions at Hydro, PPG, Cantrell-Gainco and Corporate Storage. The 2020 year-end results do not include projects that were previously announced and currently under construction, like Kubota's new R&D facility, Fox Factory or the expansion at Mars-Wrigley.

Some of the jobs and investments announced in 2020 have already taken place, but others, like Agile Cold Storage and Kubota's new R&D facility, will add their investment and jobs to the local economy in 2021.

There are many construction and development projects underway in Gainesville-Hall County that will extend well into 2021 that will have a further economic impact on the local economy. **Major developments underway** include the Gainesville Renaissance and Gainesville Solis developments in downtown Gainesville, the Residential Group developments in Flowery Branch, a major redevelopment at the UNG Gainesville campus. **Additional downtown developments** are in the works for 2021, including The National, a downtown hotel and conference center development in Gainesville.

Residential development grew in 2020 with a **record-setting 1,531 single-family home construction permits** issued by local governments in 2020 – a **37% increase over 2019**. Further, according to Abernathy Cochran Real Estate Group at The Norton Agency, home sales were up 17% in 2020 with the average and median home prices up 16% and 14%, respectively.

The New Year will begin with **more than 2.5 million square feet of new industrial speculative building developments underway** in Gainesville, Oakwood, Flowery Branch and Buford. Many local firms are employed in the construction and development of these new investments, and business activity for these firms is forecast to remain strong well into the New Year.

Gainesville-Hall County's past success in economic development has been a product of community leadership working together on infrastructure planning and investment to support business growth. In 2021, the initial infrastructure development in the **new +1,000 acre Gainesville 85 Business Park** will be important to developing a future place to grow for expanding existing industries and new businesses.

Georgia has earned the #1 ranking for its business environment for an unprecedented eighth year in a row, and during that time, **Gainesville-Hall County has been the top job producing Metropolitan Area in the state**. In 2020, 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. Since 2015, the Chamber's economic development program has assisted **118 new and expanding businesses that have announced 5,750 jobs and \$1.5 billion in new capital investment**.

In the most recent 12-month data, the Georgia Department of Labor reports the Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Area is finishing the year with an **unemployment rate at 3.5 percent**. More than 60 employers have job openings posted on the Greater Hall Chamber's website seeking full and part time employees. "Our Economic Development efforts adapted to the challenges of COVID-19 to offer online meetings, outreach and virtual support for small businesses, existing industries and economic development," said **David Lee, Chair of the Chamber's Economic Development Council**. "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."

With a growing demand for talent and low unemployment in the Gainesville-Hall County Metropolitan Area (3.5% as of November 2020), 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. During 2020, **Lanier Technical College reached a record enrollment of more than 5,000 students** at the new Gainesville campus. 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 private 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.

Healthcare Services in Gainesville-Hall County enhance quality of life and provide a direct economic impact for an estimated **1.8 million Georgia residents in the 18-county service area**. In October 2020, the Greater Hall Chamber released an updated report of the community's **447 regional healthcare providers that employ more than 14,725 and provide nearly \$830 million in annual wages** in the community. New medical office developments include the recently opened Medical Plaza II in Gainesville, Emory Orthopedics in Flowery Branch, an expansion at NGMC Braselton and additional service provider locations in Oakwood and Buford. NGHS recently announced **a major \$500 million**

campus expansion for the Northeast Georgia Medical Center Gainesville. Northeast Georgia Medical Center’s Graduate Medical Education Program has earned accreditation in Family Medicine, General Surgery and Internal Medicine and is seeking to add programs in OB/GYN, Emergency Medicine and Psychiatry. The GME program could grow to 170 Graduate Medical Residents by 2023, **and it is anticipated to have a \$66 million economic impact in Hall County.** Adding to the growing healthcare education programs, Brenau University recently received accreditation to offer a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies and will begin offering the degree program in 2021.

Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the 4,826 business establishments in Hall County are categorized as small, using the SBA’s definition of fewer than 500 employees. Approximately 93.6 percent employ fewer than 50. Participation in the Chamber’s monthly Small Business Seminars has grown in 2020 through virtual meetings and webinars featuring programs about PPP loans, marketing and other topics to support small businesses. In its fourth year, **30 small business owners earned the Greater Hall Chamber’s “Certified Small Business Partner” designation** for participating in at least six of the Small Business Seminars, and they will be recognized at a Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce board meeting.

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About Gainesville-Hall County

Gainesville-Hall County, Georgia is a vibrant and growing community located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Surrounded by beautiful Lake Sidney Lanier, the area offers an unparalleled quality of life and a sound economic future for business and industry. Gainesville-Hall County is home to 47 Fortune 500 firms, more than 320 manufacturing and processing concerns, and 50 international companies representing 15 foreign countries.

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