

GAINESVILLE-HALL COUNTY MARKET REPORT

Gainesville-Hall Market Report features stories about economic development, trends and other initiatives in that region.

FROM BUSINESS TO BEEKEEPERS, HALL COUNTY STUDENTS GAIN SKILLS

BY JANET JONES KENDALL | CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Higher ed and local public schools grow the area workforce

In Hall County, higher education institutions and public school systems are creating programs to keep the area's workforce pipeline strong.

For example, Brenau University's new Department of Physician's Assistants Studies is a new development at the school.

"We are trying to constantly pivot and be entrepreneurial about where we need to produce the graduates to help our economy and our society," said Anne Skleder, president of Brenau.

That's the goal behind the expansion of Brenau's Lynn J. Darby School of Psychology and Adolescent Counseling. Thanks to a donation from Doug and Kay Ivester, the psychology department will move to the new Gainesville Renaissance development in downtown Gainesville by early 2022.

"We want to produce our own clinicians for the community," Skleder said.

Brenau also recently started an executive women's MBA program and an online program for students in China. The university also just welcomed its first students from Panama; Brenau will send students there in January 2022.

The relationship between Hall County's businesses and higher education facilities is strong, said Tim McDonald, interim president of Lanier Technical College, which had a record enrollment of 6,660 students in 2020.

The school offers 224 programs of study. Three of its newest are construction management, diesel equipment technology and marine engine technology. Lanier Tech also recently added manufacturing boot camps, three-to-five week training programs for recent high school graduates. Partners include WorkSource Georgia Mountains, Gainesville City School System and Hall County School System.

"While these workforce develop-



Students in the Hall County Agri-Business Center learn about beekeeping.

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Brenau University started a new physicians assistant program in January 2021.

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ment initiatives have certainly played a part in Lanier Technical College's growing enrollment trend, the greater impact to our growth can be attributed to the economy of Hall and surrounding counties," McDonald said. "We are blessed to have great employment opportunities in healthcare, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and public and private service."

Lanier Tech boasts a 100% job placement rate since 2015, according to McDonald.

The University of North Georgia's Gainesville is set to increase its instructional space by 25% this fall. The new space includes an \$18.9 million renovation and expansion of its existing nursing, and film and digital media programs. It will also allow for more

continuing education.

UNG received a \$1.4 million grant in 2020 from the U.S. Department of Labor to support a workforce development initiative in Hall and five other NE Georgia counties, said Bonita Jacobs, president of UNG-Gainesville. The grant is focused on developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region and help fund business education for high school students including ethics, entrepreneurship and other topics, she added.

To accommodate increased demand for student housing, UNG-Gainesville plans a dorm complex of 560 beds, scheduled to open in fall 2022.

Enrollment at the Gainesville campus surpassed 7,500 students in fall 2020, the highest enrollment of UNG's five campuses, said Richard Oates, vice president of UNG-Gainesville.

At Gainesville High School, a \$60 million campus improvement project includes The Hub Student Success Center, a workforce development and student support program. The high school will have a new Advanced Studies Center for Workforce Development, a new cafeteria and media center, a student activities center and a new instructional building, said Jeremy H. Williams, Gainesville City School System superintendent.

"By collaborating with community agencies and local nonprofits to bring mental and behavioral health services to a centralized location," said Williams, "support services can help students reach their full potential and have positive ripple effects within families."

The Hall County School District Agri-Business Center is a new 50-acre training facility for its Career, Technical & Agri-Business Education program.

About half of Georgia's economy is based upon agri-business, "yet our [state] leaders express great concern that young people are not entering into the profession," said Will Schofield, superintendent of Hall County Schools.

The new program is expected to serve 28,000 students in fields from genetics and cattle husbandry to poultry farming and honeybee operation.

GAINESVILLE-HALL COUNTY MARKET REPORT

Location, workforce among reasons for industrial sector growth

Companies consolidate headquarters and manufacturing in area

BY RANDY SOUTHERLAND
Contributing Writer

Hall County has long provided a home for industrial operations, where companies find the sites, facilities and workforces they need to be profitable.

Industrial is almost 30% of the area's total employment," said Tim Evans, vice president for economic development at the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce. "It's the largest employment sector in Hall County. Between healthcare and manufacturing, that's almost half of all employment [here]."

While other counties along the I-85 and I-985 corridors attract warehousing and logistics firms, Hall County has a different industrial clientele.

"Our industrial market is very much dominated by making things, moving things [and] goods producing," said Evans, noting that average wages in manufacturing are around \$23 an hour. "It's everything from food processing to automotive and a huge concentration of metal fabrication and machinery, and equipment manufacturing."

Fox Factory, a manufacturer and designer of ride dynamics products for bicycles and powered vehicles, opened a new 350,000-square-foot plant off Atlanta Highway in Gainesville last year. It also moved its corporate offices from California and opened a research and development center in partnership with Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta.

The company chose Hall County after searching for a location "that was more amenable to manufacturing, more amenable to industrial growth and to moving our headquarters," said CEO Mike Dennison.

The move also put Fox Factory closer to its powered vehicles customer base. Within the first two months of the new facility's operation, productivity increased by more than 25% over the West Coast. "A significant difference in Hall County was that we could construct a purpose-built factory based on a modern supply chain," said Dennison.

Cantrell-Gainco Group also consolidated its headquarters and manufacturing facility in Gainesville. The company, which make processing equipment, yield enhancement and yield tracking systems for meat, poultry and fish operations, is the result of the merger of two longtime corporate residents of Hall County.



CHRIS AMATO

Fox Factory opened a new 350,000-square-foot plant off Atlanta Highway in Gainesville last year.



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Cantrell-Gainco Group consolidated its headquarters and manufacturing facilities in Gainesville.

"After the acquisition, we were in multiple facilities in Gainesville, and just decided to integrate and get under one roof," said Joe Cowman, president of Cantrell-Gainco.

The company also wanted to retain its workforce. "We have a lot of skilled positions with welding, machining, all the knowledge we have in our office people," he added. "It was really important to keep the proximity to our previous locations."

The company converted a former warehouse into a manufacturing facility that encompasses 136,000 square feet of manufacturing and office space, about 50% more space compared to its previous multiple sites. Manufacturing is set up in a "work cell" layout, and there is a dedicated R&D area, plus zones for engineering, fabrication, electronics assembly and other activities.

The consolidation allowed the company to invest in new equipment, such as a laser cutter for sheet metal, which previously had been outsourced.

Cottrell, an industry leader in manufacturing and assembling over-the-road car haulers and equipment, will establish a second manufacturing facility in Gainesville. This will serve as the company's North Campus, adjacent to their existing South Campus. Cottrell will invest \$125 million in the new 500,000-square-foot facility, which will also create new jobs.

Another example of the consolidation trend is reflected in the decision by heavy equipment maker Kubota North America Corp., to invest \$85 million in a 300-acre expansion. The company purchased the land near its current manufacturing plant in the 500-acre Gateway Industrial Centre for a new North American Research and Development

Center. The facility will include engineering, test benches, test buildings and an outdoor test area, said Evans of the Chamber, adding that the facility is slated to open next April.

Along with Gainesville, the Hall County cities of Flowery Branch and Oakwood attract manufacturing.

The county has three factors needed for winning this industry, according to Josh Harrison, CEO of Pattillo Industrial Real Estate: location, leadership and labor.

Along with a well-developed web of road and rail connections, the county has a "broad base of labor" and resources for training them, he added, including Lanier Technical College, which offers customized training for companies.

The area has also attracted industrial real estate developers for decades.

Logistics Property Company LLC has two business distribution buildings under construction in Oakwood, Ga. The Class A rear load buildings are 175,000 and 250,000 square feet, according to Jay Mitchell, senior vice president, East Region.

This I-985/Gainesville submarket is a 30-million-square-foot portion of the 180-million-square-foot Northeast Atlanta submarket. The Hall County portion includes more than 20 million square feet of logistics facilities and 10 million square feet of manufacturing and specialty facilities.

"This business mix represents a diversified tenant base, which tends to create a stable industrial tenant market," said Mitchell. "The Greater Hall community offers a diversity of housing and recreational opportunities for executives and the general work force. The ability to have the small-town environment of Gainesville, coupled with the recreational opportunities of Lake Lanier and the North Georgia mountains, has proved to be a magnet for a sustained and growing work force, which is a key factor in attracting new business to our buildings."

Gainesville was proactive in ensuring that companies have the land and infrastructure to relocate there. For example, the city's 85 Business Park came about as part of a project to develop more space for its public works, water resources and maintenance operations, according to Bryan Lackey, Gainesville city manager.

The city had acquired a 1,300-acre tract of land for the project, and is in the process of developing the infrastructure around it. "It's really just taken off," he said. "It's in a great spot between Highway 60 and Highway 129, the southern arteries that flow back south out of Gainesville."



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GAINESVILLE-HALL COUNTY MARKET REPORT

VIEWPOINT

Growth is coming to Gainesville-Hall County

Population forecast to grow at 1.5% per year to more than 250k by 2035

Business and industry make long-term investments in Gainesville-Hall County because of the area's stability, skilled workforce, visionary leadership and quality of life. Since 2015, the Gainesville-Hall County area has added over \$1.5 billion in new capital investment and 5,800 jobs from 118 new and existing business expansions. The Milken Institute has named Gainesville-Hall County to its Top Ten Best Performing Cities for five consecutive years and *Site Selection* magazine named the area a Top 10 Small Metro for eight of the last ten years.

For a community with a sustained pattern of growth, there are new challenges to address, particularly in efforts to recruit, retain and develop skilled employees. To meet needs in workforce development, Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce leaders are engaged in solutions for the future of housing, infrastructure growth and the skills employers need most.



LARRY GRIFFETH LIGHT SOURCES INC
Brian Rochester (left) of Rochester & Associates is chair of the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce. Phil Sutton of Kubota Manufacturing of America is chair-elect of the Chamber.

In 2020, residential property sales were up 18% over the prior year. Population forecasts predict that Gainesville-Hall County will grow at 1.5% per year to more than 250,000 by 2035. The residential development community has responded to the market need for housing. In 2020, governments in Hall County approved over 1,500 new single family home construction permits, a 37% increase over the previous record year in 2019. Additionally, over 20 new multi-family apartment developments will deliver nearly 3,500 new units throughout Hall County in the next 12

to 24 months. This additional housing will support the live-work goals of the community, as well as generate more needs for schools, parks, greenspace, public safety and healthcare services.

We know growth is coming and we are preparing for it.

New demands on public infrastructure and services follow new residents. In 2019 and 2020, Hall County voters went to the polls and voted for Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST, at 67% approval) for infrastructure and an Education Local Option Sales Tax (70% approval) to provide funding for education and infrastructure. Transportation in particular requires continuous investments to maintain the flow of goods and people to and through Gainesville-Hall County. The Georgia Department of Labor estimates Hall County's Labor Draw Area at more than 864,000 in the commutable workforce, with some 30% of the daily workforce commuting from neighboring counties.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of quality healthcare in Gainesville-Hall County. The region's growing healthcare community is investing in the future with a \$700 million expansion planned at North-

east Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) Gainesville and a growing regional center on the I-85 Northeast Corridor at NGMC Braselton.

No plan for future growth would be complete without action toward developing the next generation workforce. Six years ago, the Greater Hall Chamber's Workforce Development Task Force was founded to increase work-based learning internships for high schoolers to gain experience and soft-skills at manufacturing facilities. That effort has grown to engage business, higher education and area school systems on skills-focused bootcamps, apprenticeships and career fairs for seventh-graders. Lanier Technical College has achieved record enrollment of more than 5,000 at its new campus and the institution is positioned for long-term growth. Brenau University and the University of North Georgia are both growing in enrollment, as well as undergraduate and graduate programs.

A proactive chamber, outstanding leadership, valuable government and educational partnerships are driving forces for success, as Gainesville-Hall County continues to grow on the foundation of community prosperity and quality of life.

Q&A

Lanier Islands gearing up for tourist season

Resort hurting from lost corporate business but leisure travelers abound

BY MELANIE LASOFF LEVS
mlevs@bizjournals.com

With the pandemic continuing and the weather improving, people are flocking to outdoor spaces for recreation. Lanier Islands and its popular attractions, including its golf course and Margaritaville, are crown jewels for tourists in Gainesville-Hall County.

A busy spring and summer season this year, though, won't make up for the business lost when Covid-19 shut down the area last March. With the closures went all corporate meeting business, which makes up about 70% of Lanier Islands' overall business, said Missy Burgess, who oversees its marketing department.

"It was devastating. It was like dominoes," she said. "All the corporate business we had on the books just started to cancel or move to the next year."



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A drone captures Lanier Islands resort at Lake Sidney Lanier (pre-pandemic). Though it closed briefly due to Covid-19, leisure tourists are heading back.

The loss of corporate clients meant layoffs at Lanier Islands, including restaurant staff and housekeepers, according to Burgess, who declined to state how many employees they lost. "We are trying very hard to get everybody back," she added, "but it's based on business levels."

As most of Lanier Islands and Margaritaville amenities, as well as the

island's golf course, are outdoors, leisure travelers have kept remaining staff busy. Weddings postponed from last year have rescheduled for 2021, and small nonprofit events and golf tournaments are starting to book as well.

Throughout the island, health and safety protocols are prevalent, such as markings every six feet for people waiting in lines, signs reminding

guests to keep distance, temperature screenings at entrances, safety training for staff and upgraded cleaning protocols. Masks are "encouraged" but not required in outdoor areas but are required indoors in public areas such as the lobby and elevators.

The area is gearing up for a new \$155 million, 300-room hotel and conference center on the site of the former PineIsle hotel, the original hotel at Lanier Islands that was torn down in 2008.

The new property could include a golf course, and will likely feature some post-pandemic design elements such as larger conference spaces and outdoor dining areas, according to previously published reports about the plans for the project. A date for groundbreaking has not been set, but grading is expected to start this fall, Burgess said.

Burgess answered questions from *Atlanta Business Chronicle* about how Covid-19 has impacted Lake Lanier and its environs, and what they are looking forward to this year.

LANIER CONTINUED ON PAGE 6B

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LANIER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4B

How has Lake Lanier fared during the pandemic? Our business levels were greatly impacted in 2020, like everyone in the hospitality business. We ended up closing our hotel for only about a month. Some of our [individual] lakehouses still stayed pretty busy because people felt safe there. The protocol was we would clean the house, but we wouldn't come back in until you left. Our property is so expansive and so much of what we do is outside, we were in a unique position on the leisure piece. The wedding business has been phenomenal. The corporate piece, like for all the people in our industry, was devastating. It could possibly be fall of 2022 or even 2023 [where corporate business comes back]. So many people are doing meetings differently. We're optimistic [it will come back] since we have had the same customers year after year, but it will be interesting to see when the group market really rebounds.

How has Lanier Islands handled the coronavirus? Guests have complimented our employees as well as thank us for all the safety measures we have put in place in the hotel, restaurants and venues. We also have



SUBMITTED

Lanier Islands villas are for individual parties rather than groups.

a page on our website that answers all questions on health and safety.

What have been your most popular attractions over the last couple of years, and what impact did Covid-19 have at these attractions?

While corporate group and large social events went away during the pandemic, our golf course stayed busy. Every day was like a Saturday. Guests enjoyed all the open space and

the ability to be socially distanced. Also, our winter snow attraction was popular because it was outside and also, since Stone Mountain did not have their snow event this year, we benefitted from being the only "snow" in town.

How are you gearing up for the spring/summer season? We are full steam ahead and looking forward to our summer season. With the success

of the vaccine roll-out, customers are feeling more confident to gather with family and friends again. We continue to follow all CDC guidelines.

What is the area looking most forward to? The most impactful project we are planning is the new hotel and conference center located on the original PineIsle hotel site. We anticipate a spring 2024 opening.

What are your goals at Lake Lanier and for the attractions as far as what this season will look like?

We are hopeful that summer will bring us back to the larger numbers we enjoyed in 2019. Phones are ringing and customers are planning their summer vacations. We're very weather-driven. We have the confidence of the leisure traveler market and we will do really well this summer. As some people are not traveling as far away and not going on destination vacations, that's one of our taglines: We're a "different world close to home." You don't have to fly or go on a cruise ship. We offer here all the experiences you want an hour away from your house. When you're on the water and all you can see is water and the Blue Ridge Mountains, you feel like you've gone to a destination.

VIEWPOINT

Envisioning the future for live and work

Vision 2030 was created to advocate for Gainesville-Hall County's 'Big Ideas'

A good vision tells the story about a community and its preferred future.

For generations, residents found what Gainesville and Hall County had to offer a perfect combination: a beautiful lake, placement at the foothills of the North Georgia mountains, family neighborhoods and an easy drive into a metropolitan city.

The work of the future seemed almost effortless.

In 2004, with the rapid growth from metro Atlanta approaching the region, community leaders had the forethought to realize that a vision was needed to stand in contrast to what might be inevitable with growth: Gainesville and Hall County might lose their story.

They knew there needed to be a bigger story, a "picture" of what could be, fueled by input and the conviction of the citizens.

With that in mind, leaders within the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce started the process of discover-



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Tate O'Rourke (left) of Jackson EMC is the chair of the board of Vision 2030. Elizabeth Higgins is Vision 2030 executive director.

ing the kind of future their community wanted. They gave residents the opportunity to express their goals, objectives and values through focus groups, meetings, letters and printed photos. Then, a list of aligned goals, or "Big Ideas," set the stage for a vision.

Vision 2030 was created to advocate for that vision.

Today, Vision 2030 works to position Gainesville-Hall County as the most enviable community in Georgia by the year 2030, as a coordinated group of volunteers leading long-term initiatives defined by the citizens. Acting as a change agent, the group champions these initiatives and propels them forward through collaborative partner-

ships with government, education, businesses and nonprofits.

Volunteers in individual working committees focus on 13 Big ideas, the strategic action steps for creating the vision for the year 2030. The Big Ideas range from education to greenspace, public art to transportation, healthcare to next-generation leaders.

Smaller initiatives within the Big Ideas are the mainstay of Vision 2030's work. A big idea that everyone can embrace comes to life with the creativity of the working committee and the awareness of ever-evolving changes in a community.

Our education consortium supported a culture of learning with educational and developmental opportunities by focusing on workforce development. They created a Career Path Fair to pique interest in students through a visual process and job opportunities in different businesses within the county. The Wisdom Project 2030 senior leadership program prepares our citizens ages 55 and up to use their wisdom and talents in creative ways through action and advocacy.

Business walls, public parks and

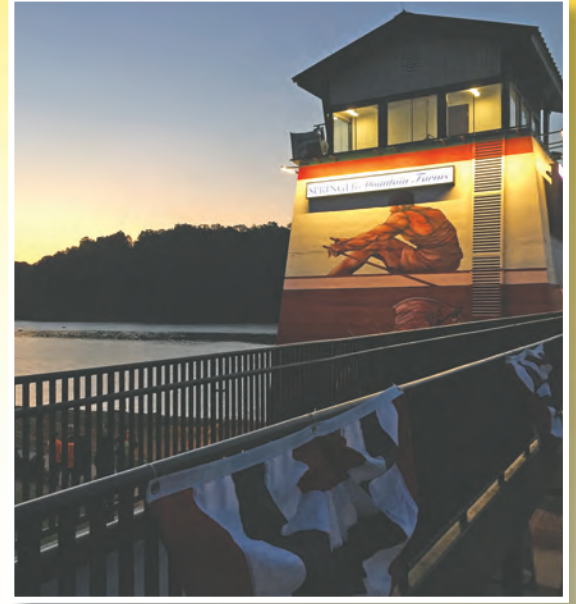
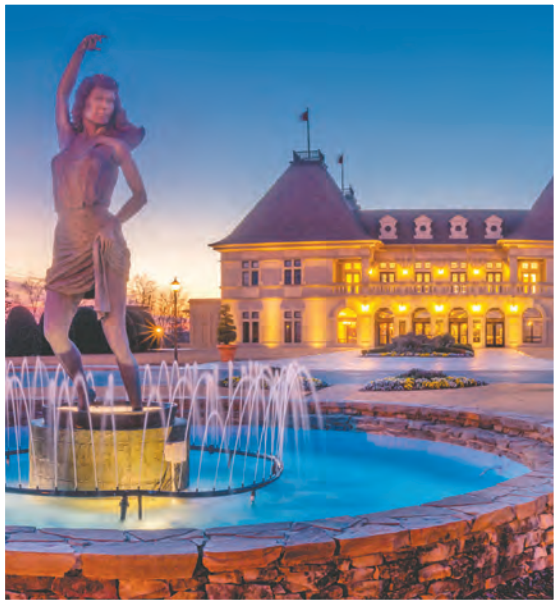
parking lots throughout Gainesville and Hall County are now adorned with public art. Proceeds from a millennial-driven Public Art Block Party, where guests eat, drink and buy original art for \$100 or less, provide a new piece each year. Walking and biking trails will eventually cover a 35-mile path from one end of the county to the other thanks to the advocacy of the greenspace committee.

The future is not just about the amenities in Hall County. We are a community of family and friends. With the help of our inclusion and "MillennialZ" committees, we continue to open dialogue with diverse voices, and create space for the distinct values of different community groups to be represented. Together, these committees created a welcome video on the Vision2030 website to provide old and new residents a better sense of belonging and trust, and a path to get involved.

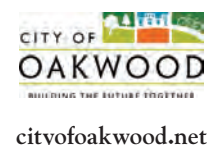
The good news is that good work continues toward 2030, but it won't end there.

The next generation of leaders will tell their story and the vision will live on.

Working and Growing Together.



Hall County is one of Georgia's most dynamic and vibrant economic regions. The area's five major cities – Gainesville, Buford, Oakwood, Braselton and Flowery Branch – offer unmatched quality of life, award-winning schools and significant incentives for growing and relocating businesses. Come see what has us positioned as one of the major growth areas in the state.



/// **GAINESVILLE-HALL COUNTY** MARKET REPORT ///

Hall County's city downtowns thrive

Mixed-use and streetscape projects in Gainesville, Flowery Branch, Lula

BY DOUG DELOACH
Contributing Writer

Judging by the new construction, redevelopment and renovation in downtown Gainesville and other cities across Hall County, the north Georgia region is revitalizing.

One example is Gainesville Renaissance, a mixed-use property on the city square, which will include 20,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, eight condos and a pocket park.

"You can sit out on the square and watch the construction, which is kind of fun," said Tim Evans, vice president of economic development at the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce.

The fun will soon extend to the nearby site of a seven-story Courtyard by Marriott hotel. The 130-room hotel will anchor of a \$50 million redevelopment project, which includes 111 Green St., and the Walton Jackson Building. The four-building complex, dubbed



RENDERING | SUBMITTED

A rendering of the farmers market being planned in downtown Flowery Branch, Ga.

The National, includes convention and meeting space, apartments, an outdoor plaza, and dining areas. Ground-breaking for The National is scheduled for this month, with an estimated completion December 2022.

Also in Gainesville, Atlanta-based developer Terwilliger Pappas recently broke ground on Solis, a \$48 million project comprising 10,000 square feet

of retail and restaurant space, plus 220 apartments, which is scheduled for completion in May 2022. Terwilliger Pappas also plans to purchase and develop 5,000 square feet of retail/restaurant space and 180 apartments on a property known as Midtown City Block.

City officials also plan to launch the second phase of the Midtown Green-



SUBMITTED

Aerial view of Solis Gainesville.

way, which will connect downtown Gainesville and Lake Lanier to the University of North Georgia (UNG) Gainesville campus and Elachee Nature Science Center.

In Flowery Branch, Ga., Bill Andrew, city manager, only has to look out of his office window to check on the progress

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Tate O'Rourke
Business Development
Manager,
Jackson EMC

Karen Reece
Vice President,
Eskimo Cold Storage

Steve Williams
President,
Eskimo Cold Storage

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of one of the city's major projects; The Residential Group, LLC is developing a two-story commercial and residential building one block off Main Street.

The city owns the first floor, which has bays that can be converted into restaurant or retail space. The second floor will be apartments or condos.

Other downtown Flowery Branch projects in development include a farmers market behind the depot on Main Street, streetscaping with deeper sidewalks to accommodate restaurant seating, and a park.

"We're building a half-acre park with amphitheater seating that blends into a woonerf, a Dutch word for an open or 'living street,'" Andrew said.

A woonerf is a curbless roadway on which pedestrians, bicycles and motorized vehicles can move, with the latter restricted to a walking pace.

One block off Main Street, Buford, Ga.-based HillGrove Homes is building 18 townhomes. The residential development includes what Andrew called a "land swap." Flowery Branch owns the tract of land on which HillGrove is building the townhomes and the company owns about 1.3 acres, on which the city will build a park.

In 2019, the city of Lula, Ga., renovated the building, grounds and stage of the Lula Depot Community Center, which for 45 years has hosted the city's signature Railroad Days event. The renovation makes the facility more compatible for large events, civic gatherings and business meetings. The project was completed early in 2020, a few weeks before the coronavirus pandemic ended public assembly.

The Depot Community Center has reopened, and the 2021 Railroad Days is slated for April 30 and May 1. Plans for a Movies at the Depot series are being finalized. Additionally, streetscape projects have made downtown

Lula safer for pedestrians while private investors have renovated downtown buildings.

"The inventory of existing commercial buildings is running out," said Mayor Jim Grier, "and soon new buildings will be needed for additional commercial activity."

Lula's Planning Commission and City Council are finalizing a Gateway Corridor Overlay to preserve greenspaces and make development more sustainable, said Grier.

"We're updating our zoning and development standards to protect what we have," he added, "and encourage what we need."

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AT A GLANCE

GAINESVILLE

- **Gainesville Renaissance:** 20,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, eight condominiums and a pocket park, and Brenau University's Lynn J. Darby School of Psychology and Adolescent Counseling.
- **Courtyard by Marriott:** 130-room, seven-story hotel will anchor a \$50 million redevelopment project including convention and meeting space, apartments, an outdoor plaza and dining areas.

- **Solis Gainesville:** \$48 million mixed-use development that will include 10,000 square feet of retail or restaurant space, and 220 apartments.
- **Terwilliger Pappas** plans to purchase the Midtown City Block to build 5,000 square feet of retail or restaurant space, and 180 apartments.
- **City of Gainesville** to commence construction of a second downtown parking deck.
- **Streetscaping improvements** and second phase of the Midtown Greenway.

FLOWERY BRANCH

- **Two-story commercial and residential building:** The Residential Group LLC is developing the project, which will house restaurant or retail on the first floor and apartments or condominiums on the second.
- **Farmers' market:** Being developed in a fixed open-air structure behind the depot on Main Street.
- **Pine Street Park:** Half-acre park with amphitheater seating adjacent to a "living street," which can be closed to motor traffic for events.
- **Townhomes:** Buford, Ga.-based HillGrove Homes is building 18

townhomes one block off Main Street.

LULA

- **Depot Community Center:** Its renovation was completed and the city's annual Railroad Days event is scheduled for April 30 and May 1.
- **Streetscaping**
- **Downtown building renovations**
- **Gateway Corridor Overlay:** The city is finalizing this project, which affects zoning, setbacks and driveway specifications, to encourage sustainable and amenable future development.

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GAINESVILLE-HALL COUNTY MARKET REPORT

Healthcare heavyweights grow in NE Georgia

Northeast Georgia Health System, Emory open facilities in the region

BY GARY MCKILLIPS
Contributing Writer

The healthcare industry in the Gainesville-Hall County area is expanding.

The North Georgia Health System (NGHS) recently announced several additions and expansions to its facilities, and the LHC Group has joined with NGHS in home healthcare.

In addition, Emory has opened a new Orthopaedics and Spine Center in Flowery Branch as part of the Atlanta Falcons training complex. These and other improvements have the potential to touch 1.8 million people in Gainesville and Hall County, according to the Hall County Chamber of Commerce.

Healthcare employs 14,725 in Hall County with an annual payroll \$829 million, according to a Greater Hall Chamber report from October 2020.

Atlanta Business Chronicle in February reported that the expansion of NGHS's North Georgia Medical Center in Gainesville is one of the biggest healthcare projects the state has seen in many years. The estimated \$700 million project, scheduled for completion in 2024, will create a new patient tower, which will add 150 new inpatient acute-care beds to the existing 557.

"The hospital's emergency department, one of the largest in the state, will be relocated to the new tower, increasing the overall space and making patient movement more efficient," said Carol Burrell, CEO of the North Georgia Health System. "The tower will also become a convenient destination for advanced heart care, and will create new operating rooms and interventional suites to perform advanced surgeries and procedures including those related to complex strokes, neurosurgery, cancer and vascular disease."

NGHS also plans a new Cancer Center in Braselton later this year. Future plans call for expanding Braselton's emergency department and building an office for specialty physicians and ambulatory surgery care.

Another new hospital along GA-400 is also planned, although the exact location has not been announced, said Burrell, adding that medical office plazas are also planned throughout the region. The first is scheduled to open near I-985 in Buford, Ga., in the spring of 2022 followed by one on U.S.-129 next summer and a third location after that in Bethlehem, Ga.

Last fall, NGHS also expanded into home healthcare services by partnering with LHC Group, headquartered in Lafayette, La. "While NGHS and LHC have worked together in the past, this



RENDERING/SUBMITTED

A conceptual rendering of the future tower at North Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) Gainesville.



SUBMITTED

Carol Burrell, president and CEO of Northeast Georgia Health System, third from left, at the groundbreaking of a new hospital in Buford, Ga. last winter.

new partnership increases our ability to coordinate, communicate and work together to help more individuals," said Nikki Clark, vice president of sales for LHC in Georgia.

LHC provides nurses, therapists, medical social workers and aides to patients in their homes. NGHS wanted to partner with the organization to fill a gap in their care, said Burrell.

"As we're reinvesting in the overall health of our region," she added, "we've started referring to them as 'growing the greater good' projects."

Also making a major investment in Hall County is Emory Healthcare, which recently opened a new Orthopaedics and Spine Center and a Sports Performance and Research Center (SPARC), both in Flowery Branch at the IBM Performance Fields, home of the Atlanta Falcons.

GAINESVILLE-HALL COUNTY HEALTHCARE HIGHLIGHTS

- Regional center for healthcare services for 1.8 million people
- 447 providers
- 14,725 employees (14.7% of Hall County workforce)
- \$829 million in annual payroll
- Largest provider is Northeast Georgia Medical Center (4,865 employees)

Source: Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce, Healthcare Providers Overview, 2020-2021 Geographic Study of Gainesville-Hall County

According to Dr. Scott Boden, professor and chair of the department of orthopaedics at the Emory School of Medicine, the new facilities are part a new long-term relationship between Emory and the Falcons. The Orthopaedics and Spine Center is 29,000 square

feet and serves the general public as well as the Falcons.

"The majority of the patients seen there are everyday patients living in Flowery Branch and surrounding communities that have any kind of a musculoskeletal problem," Boden said.

SPARC, however, is a new concept. "It is probably one of the most sophisticated sports science and movement laboratories anywhere in the world," he added.

The facility uses augmented reality and biofeedback training to help prevent movement patterns that create a risk for injury. SPARC, with 156 high-speed digital motion-capture cameras for this purpose, is for professional athletes. Student athletes will be part of funded studies there that focus on preventing injuries in high-performing athletes, Boden explained.

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