

**The Hall County Commission for Children  
and Families, Healthy Hall Partnership  
and United Way of Hall County**

*work session to set*

***Community Development Priorities***

**Tuesday, January 25, 2005**

**Georgia Mountains Center**

**Key Community Issues for Hall County, Georgia**

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*"Health is more than the absence of disease. It is an optimum state of well-being...health is wholeness. It includes a sense of belonging to the community and experiencing control over one's circumstances and fate."*

**--Healthy People 2010**

# KEY COMMUNITY ISSUES FOR HALL COUNTY, GEORGIA

Hall County's community vision is "to achieve fiscal and economic health, preserve natural and cultural resources and open space, foster community facility efficiency and quality, and provide for a diverse housing stock and community livability."<sup>1</sup> At the request of the United Way of Hall County, *Healthy Hall* Coalition, and Hall County Commission for Children and Families, Georgia Tech's Economic Development Institute (EDI) has identified key community issues that are recommended to be addressed through Hall County's future planning efforts to implement this vision, and developed fact sheets to provide further understanding of each issue. These fact sheets are based on a Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute (EDI) review of the 2003 *Healthy Hall* community assessment, Family Connection Partnership's (FCP) *Kids Count* Data, and Georgia Tech's<sup>2</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*.

Several of the identified issues are inter-related, meaning that addressing one issue may help address another over the long term. By the same token, by not addressing one issue, Hall County may be inhibiting its ability to address another. What is common to each of the issues is that they are all within the ability of Hall County to positively address through strategic goals and actions. Indeed, in addressing these issues, the county will yield its most promising opportunities for community vitality, quality growth, and economic development. These issues, listed in alphabetical order, are:

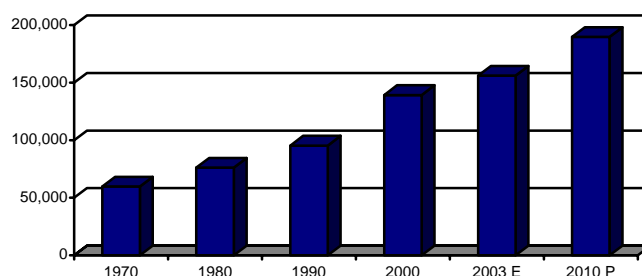
- Community Health
- Economic Base Diversification
- Education
- Governmental Relations
- Public Safety
- Unengaged Hispanic Population
- Workforce Quality
- Youth Development

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2003 E
<b>Hall</b>	59,814	76,074	95,434	139,277	156,101
<b>Cherokee</b>	31,323	52,245	90,204	141,903	166,639
<b>Henry</b>	23,931	36,488	58,741	119,341	150,003
<b>Region 2</b>	193,877	245,133	304,648	455,342	513,053
<b>Georgia</b>	4,605,421	5,486,174	6,478,181	8,186,453	8,684,715

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Addressing these issues will become increasingly important as well as challenging for Hall County as it is by and large a growing community, and its growth is expected to continue for years to come. The chart and table seen to the right were extracted from the EDI's *Economic Development Report Card* and show the steadily increasing population growth that Hall County has seen each decade. In-migration accounted for 73.9 percent of Hall County's population growth which was higher than the state average but lower than the region average.

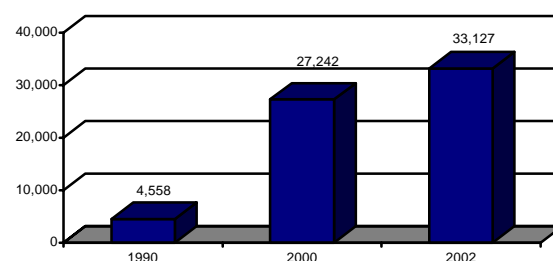
Population in Hall County, Georgia



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

During this time Hall County saw a large increase in the Hispanic population. In 1990, Hall County had approximately 4,500 Hispanic residents. In 2000, the Hispanic population grew to approximately 27,000 and in 2003; the Hispanic population is estimated at 33,000 residents. This accounts for approximately 25 percent of the county population. Also of great interest is the fact that 92 percent of the foreign-born residents entering Hall County between 1990 and 2000 are not US citizens.

Hispanic Population in Hall County, Georgia



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>1</sup> Hall County Comprehensive Plan (June 2004)

<sup>2</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

# COMMUNITY HEALTH

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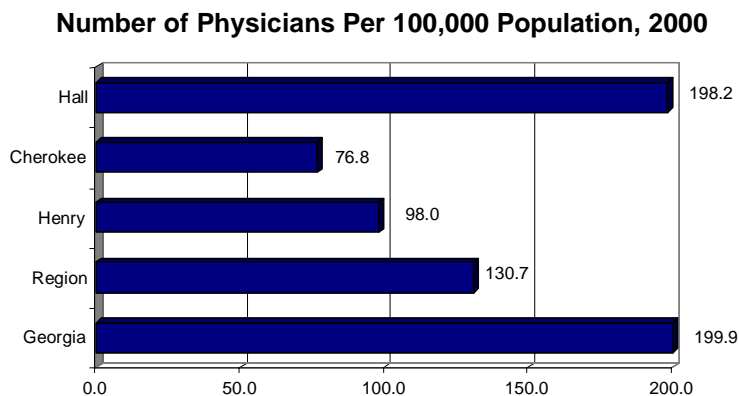
## Issue: Equitable access to quality health care is essential for Hall County's community vitality.

Healthy lifestyles and the availability of health care services are vital to Hall County's community development. Community health depends on a number of factors including availability of needed services, affordability and accessibility of such services among community residents, and the quality of care.

The following findings are based on a Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute (EDI) review of the 2003 *Healthy Hall* community assessment, Family Connection Partnership's (FCP) *Kids Count* Data, and Georgia Tech's<sup>1</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*.

### Understanding the Issue...

Hall County appears to have above average accessibility to physician care. As reported in EDI's *Economic Development Report Card*, the number of practicing physicians in Hall County increased by 71 percent from 161 in 1990 to 276 in 2000 to help meet the rising demand for health care. As of 2000, Hall County had the 11<sup>th</sup> highest number of practicing physicians in the state. The increase in the number of doctors outpaced population growth, such that by 2000, there were 198.2 practicing physicians per 100,000 residents. Hall County ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the state for its physician to population ratio and nearly matched the state's rate of 199.9.



Source: Georgia Board for Physician Workforce

Furthermore, Hall County's average weekly wage in health care and social services exceeded its peers, region, and state in 2002. This signals that the community has recruited relatively highly experienced health care and social service professionals. The county's health care and social services wages (\$712) were significantly higher than Hall County's overall average weekly wage (\$596).

Following are some other indicators related to community health reported in FCP's *Kids Count* data and EDI's *Economic Development Report Card*. Sources for report card data include the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Georgia Department of Community Health, Georgia Department of Labor, and the Georgia Board for Physician Workforce.

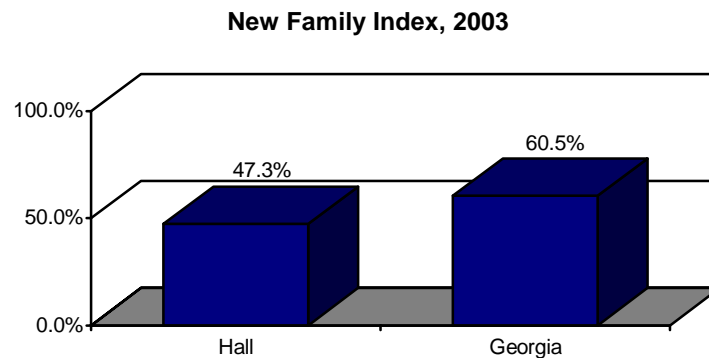
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<sup>1</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

# COMMUNITY HEALTH

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- For the ten year period of 1990 to 1999, Hall County's mortality rate was 7.8 per 1,000 population, the 31<sup>st</sup> highest in the state. Though higher than the rate for Cherokee County (5.2) and Henry County (6.6), it was lower than that of the state (8.0).<sup>2</sup>
- Hall County's infant mortality rate in 2003 was 6.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, significantly lower than the state's rate (8.5).
- Hall County's Healthy Start Index has been significantly higher than that of Georgia as a whole for several years. In 2003, the community's index was 90.9 percent compared to 71.4 percent for the state. This index refers to the percentage of infants born to residents weighing 2500 grams or more, to mothers receiving prenatal care in first trimester, and whose mothers did not drink alcohol or smoke during pregnancy
- In 2003, coinciding with above average poverty and teenage pregnancy rates, Hall County's New Family Index was 47.3 percent, compared to 60.5 percent for the state. This index refers to the percentage of first births to mothers who are 20 years or older, completed high school, or provide the father's name on the birth certificate.



Source: Georgia Department of Human Resources

- Hall County had one hospital in 2001 with a bed capacity of 418. This hospital serves as a regional trauma center. Although the state's occupancy rate decreased from 1992 to 2001, the rate in Hall County did the opposite. While its occupancy rate rose from 55.7 percent in 1992 to 66.3 percent in 2001, the average length of stay decreased from 5.7 to 4.7 days. The hospital admitted 21,522 patients in 2001. Hall County also had seven nursing homes in 2001, with a total capacity of 581. The overall occupancy rate of these facilities was 91.8 percent, higher than the state's average of 89.7 percent.

The Healthy Hall community assessment revealed five major findings related to community health: potential ER over-usage, uninsured forgoing medical advice, perceived bias, youth lifestyle choices, and cost of health care.

### *Potential Over-usage of the ER*

- 44 percent of those earning <\$25,000 annually use the ER
- Hispanics were three times as likely to use the ER compared to White Hall County residents

### *Uninsured Forgoing Medical Advice*

- Uninsured persons needing care were less likely to seek care

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Georgia Department of Human Resources

# COMMUNITY HEALTH

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- Uninsured persons were more likely to skip recommended treatments or care
- Uninsured persons were more likely not to fill prescriptions
- Low income residents were most likely to be uninsured
- 33 percent of Hispanics are uninsured compared to 6 percent of Whites and Blacks

## *Perceived Bias*

- Hall County elderly, Hispanics, and Blacks perceived a bias among medical professionals against them.

## *Youth Lifestyle Choices*

- 29 percent responded that their children had not been to a dentist in the past year, and 33 percent stated that children did not need to go to the dentist. Sixteen percent cited the lack of money or insurance for not going to the dentist
- Youth reported learning about healthy living practices but this apparently did not always translate into having a healthy lifestyle
- Marijuana is no longer viewed as a drug by many youth

Lifestyle choices greatly impacts youth development in a variety of ways. First, a significant number of children appear not to be receiving dental care. Secondly, many young people acknowledged being taught healthy living but not living a healthy lifestyle. Finally, many youth no longer perceive marijuana as a drug. These raise implications regarding the ability of young people to be self-sufficient in adulthood.

## *Cost of Community Health*

- A primary driver behind whether or not to seek health care or not to follow health care advice is the cost of care.

The survey results confirm that community health continues to be affected by access to health care (as affected by availability of affordable care options and insurance), a challenge experienced in many communities. It also appears to be significantly affected by peer group perceptions and awareness of medical benefits and risks. These two challenges are not mutually exclusive of one another, meaning that Hall County will need to address both challenges in order to improve its community health. For example, a person's decision regarding whether or not to seek health care will be influenced by his or her peers. That is, if a person identifies and interacts within a group who all do not practice good dental care, that person may not see the effects of poor dental care. In such case, the best educational techniques could inform this person of the risk associated with poor dental care, i.e. heart disease, yet if his or her peer group as a whole doesn't practice proper dental care, such techniques may not be effective. Therefore, Hall County needs to examine mechanisms for reaching various groupings within the community and such mechanisms will likely need to vary according to the needs of each group.

# Economic Base Diversification

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**Issue: Hall County is highly dependent on a relatively low-wage industry cluster which stakeholders would like not to expand any further and which has historically kept average wages low when average wages need to rise to enable the county to attract higher-quality growth and improve the quality of life of existing residents.**

When asked to identify priority issues for Hall County, respondents to the *Healthy Hall* survey identified economy and employment related issues more frequently than any other. Hall County is at a critical stage in its economic development. It has achieved significant success during previous decades by providing opportunities for a relative low-wage workforce. However, low-wage/low-skill industries are continually being off-shored requiring the U.S. economy as a whole to rely on high-wage/high-skill industries.

It is important to recognize the interconnectivity between what some call “community development” and some call “economic development.” Effective community development sets the stage for successful economic development. Successful economic development enables even more effective community development. The two intertwine such that they are lifelines to each other. In fact, what will play a critical role in Hall County’s ability to develop, expand, or recruit higher wage industries will be its ‘community livability’ quotient, or its ability to provide a desired quality of life for its citizens, which can only be strengthened through ongoing community development efforts including addressing the challenges facing humanity.

The following findings are based on Georgia Tech’s<sup>1</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*. Data is based on reports from the Georgia Department of Labor.

## Understanding the Issue...

Hall County saw nearly 20,000 net new private sector jobs created in the 1990s, but experienced a net loss of over 1,600 jobs between 2000 and 2002. While the community’s job loss corresponds with that of the state during that two-year period, its region and peers experienced a net growth in new jobs. During the 1990s, Hall County’s job growth rate exceeded Georgia’s, but was lower than that of its peers and region.

**Net New Jobs**

	<b>Net New Jobs 1990-2000</b>	<b>Percent Growth</b>	<b>Net New Jobs 2000-2002</b>	<b>Percent Growth</b>
Hall	19,677	52.6%	(1,685)	(1.5%)
Cherokee	15,134	119.9%	2,936	5.0%
Henry	16,412	168.5%	3,794	6.8%
Region	55,087	60.1%	8	0.003%
Georgia	841,781	34.8%	(79,198)	(1.2%)
Source: Based on data from Georgia Department of Labor				

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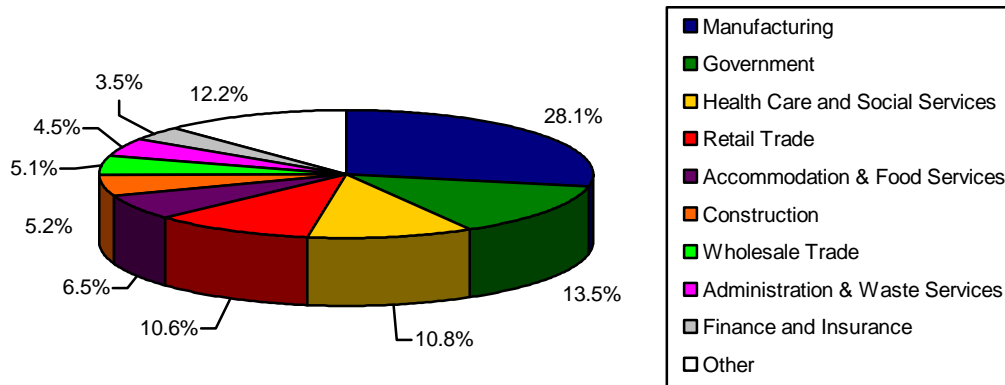
<sup>1</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

## Economic Base Diversification

Several of Hall County's larger employers (i.e., those with 100 or more employees) have closed or downsized in Hall County since 2000 resulting in a job loss of more than 1,400 jobs. The remaining job loss was by employers with less than 100 employees.

Hall County's leading employing industries are manufacturing (28.1 percent), government (13.5 percent), health care and social services (10.8 percent), and retail trade (10.6 percent). The community's share of manufacturing jobs is relatively high for Georgia communities, and exceeded the state's share (12.3 percent) in 2002. Food manufacturing accounted for 43 percent of all manufacturing jobs, correlating with the poultry cluster in the community. However, Hall County's average weekly wage in food manufacturing (\$546) was lower than overall average weekly wage in manufacturing (\$648).<sup>2</sup>

**Employment by Industry Type in Hall County, Georgia, 2002**



Hall County is more heavily dependent on its manufacturing industry for employment than its peer counties and Georgia. Though, while over one fourth of the jobs are in manufacturing, Hall County's industry base has some diversity. More than half (52.1 percent) of Hall County's employment is in the service producing industries. However, besides health care, these are largely low-wage jobs. Health care and social services made up 20.7 percent of all service producing jobs; retail made up 20.3 percent. The average weekly wage for retail jobs (\$459) in Hall County was lower than average weekly wage for all service producing industries (\$561), but wages in health care and social services (\$712) are significantly higher than wages for all service producing industries.

The poultry industry cluster in Hall County has enormous economic impact on the county's economy but with the growth of this industry has come other problems which the community would like to mitigate through diversifying its economy. As the tourism sector and second-home industry have grown, resistance to continued growth of the poultry industry has also increased. Diversifying its manufacturing base and growing information-age business will enable the county to reduce the impacts from recessions since general downturns in the economy rarely impact all sectors equally.

A desire to raise the average wage of jobs in Hall County will require recruiting new higher-wage industry to the county or helping existing higher-wage industry to grow. EDI's analysis of existing industry in the county and its labor market region shows that opportunities exist in manufacturing and information and professional services. The high-concentration of information and professional services firms in Forsyth, north Fulton, and Gwinnett counties indicate a northern movement of these firms along the GA 400, I-985, and SR 316 corridors. Some have already located in southern Hall County. All of these represent opportunities for the county to pursue and will raise the county's average wages.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Georgia Department of Labor

## Economic Base Diversification

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Of the 10 industries selected in the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) category of information and professional services, four appear to be better prospects for growth and recruitment because they possess regional location quotients greater than 1.0 and/or they may be more export focused (bring new money to the county) than others like architectural or engineering services. These are:

- NAICS 51821 - Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services
- NAICS 54151 - Computer Systems Design and Related Services
- NAICS 54161 - Management Consulting Services
- NAICS 54169 - Other Scientific and Technical Consulting Services

In the manufacturing sector, 15 separate five-digit NAICS industries were identified as high wage with a positive outlook for job growth in the country. About 60 manufacturing firms in these industries already exist in the county out of 250 manufacturing firms in 2002 identified by the Georgia Department of Labor. Some of these 15 industries have ties to the poultry industry, but all are high wage. Before dismissing a particular industry because of its linkage to the poultry industry, county officials should examine whether other firms within the industry could be recruited that would not have to depend on the poultry industry. The pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing industry is a good example. It may be possible to recruit more pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing firms that are not tied to the poultry industry but that could take advantage of the existing industry's workforce and other countywide assets that make a business case for these types of firms.

It is important for Hall County to see these industries as the best opportunities for growing higher wage jobs. Focusing on these industries would enable the county to build upon its existing industry and capitalize on its asset base. These industries require further examination by county officials to determine their fitness for expansion in Hall County based on location requirements, including water / sewer and space needs, and the community's preference for low-impact industries.

EDI research reveals some of the major puzzle pieces necessary to move Hall County towards a high-skill/high-wage industry base. Workforce skill-set and ability is of primary importance for high-skill/high-wage industries. Hall County's proximity to Atlanta and Athens is a more plus for high-skill industries because of the access to research universities. Yet, Hall County lags behind in graduation rates overall and especially among the Hispanic population. Hall County also lags behind in proportion of the workforce with bachelors degree or greater. These are indicators that there is a large education hurdle to overcome within Hall County in order to support high-skill industries. Another issue that needs attention is the amenities desired by a high-skill workforce. Many amenities in the outdoor recreation are available in Lake Lanier and nearby Georgia mountains. Others will take time, such as a variety of cultural and night-life amenities. Finally, the vision of what type of high-skill industry mix Hall County wants is important. Very rarely has a community been able to start from scratch and start a high-skill industry base. Hall County needs to leverage its community and regional assets and glean various progressions occurring from the Atlanta economy while melding together current industry strengths.

# EDUCATION

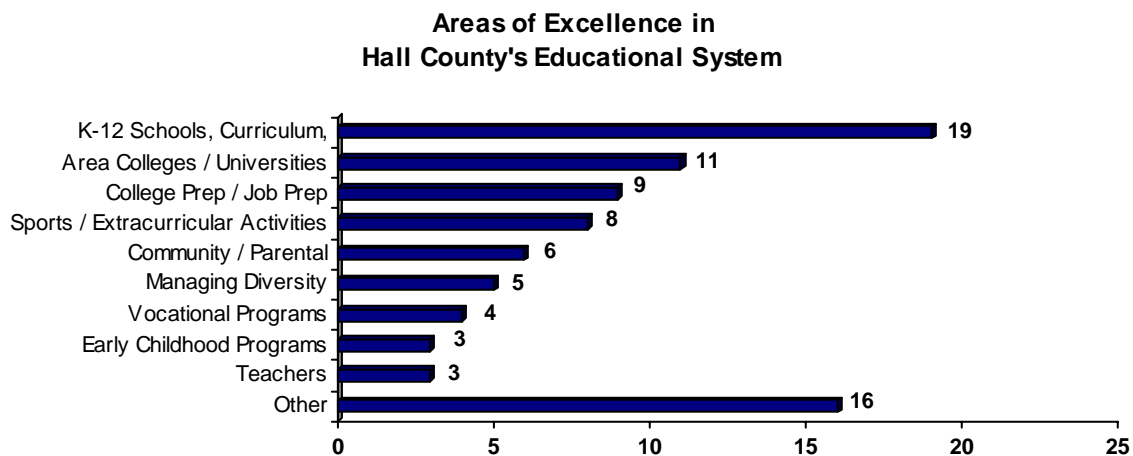
## Issue: Hall County's education system will continue to play a critical role in its ability to foster community vitality, quality growth, and economic development.

Quality education is of concern for communities worldwide; and there is room for improvement among most of these communities. Even those communities that have excelled in education concern themselves with how to sustain a quality system. The relationship of education to effective community economic development is significant and perennial.

The following findings are based on a Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute (EDI) review of the 2003 *Healthy Hall* community assessment, Family Connection Partnership's (FCP) *Kids Count* Data, and Georgia Tech's<sup>1</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*.

### Understanding the Issue...

During the assessment process conducted by EDI, stakeholders provided Hall County K-12 private schools an average rating of 3.95 on a scale of 1 to 5, with five being the highest rating. K-12 public schools received a notably lower average rating of 3.43. Overall, this reflects a relatively positive perception stakeholders have about the schools in Hall County. Stakeholder opinions about the public school system were mixed as they identified areas of strength as well as areas needing improvement. Top three areas of strength, according to stakeholder perceptions, included: specific aspects of the K-12 curriculum, college prep / job prep, and sports / extracurricular activities.



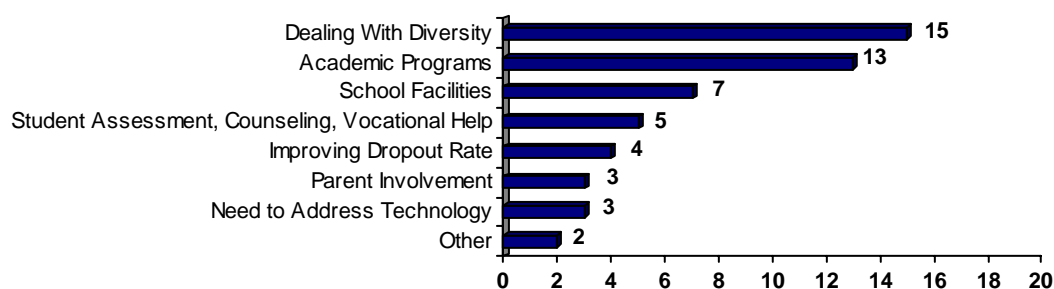
Topping the list of areas needing improvement, according to stakeholder perceptions, was the need to better deal with diversity issues. Other areas included academic programs and school facilities.

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

# EDUCATION

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## Areas Needing Improvement in Hall County's Educational System



Recent findings from FCP's *Kids Count* and EDI's *Economic Development Report Card* help to characterize the state of Hall County's public school system. Sources for this data include the Georgia Department of Education and U.S. Census Bureau.

- In 2003, the majority (70 to 80 percent) of fourth and eighth graders exceeded standards for math, reading comprehension, and language arts. However, their performance lagged the state for every subject except 8<sup>th</sup> grade math.
- Hall County's eleventh grade students performed on par with those in the state as 95 percent met or exceeded standards when taking the Georgia High School Graduation Test in English / language arts for the first time. Ninety percent of the community's eleventh graders met or exceeded standards when taking the test for math, just below the state's rate (91 percent).
- Hall County had a decrease in its high school dropout rate in 2002-2003, though continues to post a higher rate than that of its peers and state.
- Hall County's high school graduation rate (62.7 percent) in 2002-2003 reflects a drop since 2000-2001 (64.5 percent), and was just below the rate for the state (63.3 percent).
- In 2002, while more than half of Hall County's high school students were eligible for the HOPE scholarship, the community's share was lower than that for the state as a whole.
- The average SAT score for Hall County students who took the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) in 2002-2003 was higher than that for the state. The county's average SAT score in 2002-2003 was 985, reflecting an increase over 2000-2001 (980) and 2001-2002 (979).
- Hall County students have been about as likely to pursue vocational education as students in the region, but appear to lag behind in preparation for a four-year college or university. In 2002, college prep diplomas were awarded to 49 percent of high school graduates in Hall County, not as high as the proportion awarded in the state (51 percent), Cherokee County (66 percent), and Henry County (58 percent).
- Just under half (46.7 percent) of Hall County's 2001 high school graduates enrolled in a Georgia public college or technical school in 2002. This was just above the state average (45.8 percent) and the region average (46.0 percent).
- Hall County students have less access to technology in schools than students in many other counties.
- Hispanic residents are lagging in educational performance. In 2002-2003, the graduation rate for Hispanic students in Hall County was 41.6 percent, compared to 62.7 percent for the overall student body.

## EDUCATION

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- Hall County was revealed to have an above average percentage of its teaching faculty with master's degrees (62 percent) in 2001. Public school teachers within the community appear to be fairly seasoned professionals as the average years of experience exceeded 12.

Hall County's youth development challenges greatly affect the educational environment. The county's juvenile arrest rate has been on the rise. And, when compared to the state, Hall County has an above average teenage pregnancy rate and a lower percentage of first time mothers who have completed high school. Overall, the community has a greater percentage of teens not working or in school.

Continually improving the education system is vitally important for Hall County because tomorrow's economy is expected to become increasingly more knowledge based. Low-wage/low-skill industries are continually being off-shored requiring the U.S. economy to rely on high-wage/high-skill industries. These industries need large knowledge capital workforce pools. Therefore, future community vitality depends largely on the ability to transform their workforce to a higher-skill workforce.

# GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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## **Issue (Part A): Hall County's lack of consistency in county leadership affects its abilities to provide a long-term committed vision and to engage its citizens in the implementation of related initiatives and efforts.**

The need to commit to a long-term vision that is based on citizen input and unfettered by changes in county politics is critically important for Hall County. The county has an opportunity to do this by pursuing its vision for the community through citizen- and partner-based efforts. The widespread articulation of this vision will enable citizens, other stakeholders, external partners, and potential investors to have a shared sense of place and knowledge of what the community wants to become - which is vitally important for enabling them to make a long-term investment in the community that is Hall County. The engagement of these parties in the development and implementation of community plans related to this vision will provide future county leaders the foundation upon which to build when their time comes, and, therefore, help foster continuity in county initiatives and efforts. Without their buy-in to long-term goals, any community and economic development effort will prove to be futile. Factors affecting a local government's ability to achieve buy-in include consistency in county leadership, effective communication and outreach with citizenry and partners, and civic spirit.

The following findings are based on Georgia Tech's<sup>1</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*.

### **Understanding the Issue...**

Hall County stakeholders cited several issues relating to lack of consistency in county leadership. While county leadership issues ranked third on the list of most serious issues affecting SR 365 development, such issues affect the development of Hall County as a whole. These issues include the instability of the County Commission due to electoral turnover, political infighting and discord, and a lack of common vision among the Commissioners. Several stakeholders explained that these issues are apparent at the county level and not within the cities.<sup>2</sup>

No matter a community's size, stability in local governance greatly impacts its potential to achieve quality economic development. It directly translates into the necessary leadership support for such development. Following are some further results from the community stakeholder interviews:

- Notably, Hall County stakeholders and partners provided high ratings for community leadership support for economic development.
- Economic development efforts within the county have been chiefly attributed to the cities by stakeholders, statewide and regional economic development partners, and private developers - the latter two most often relating them to the City of Gainesville and efforts by the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce.
- The county is perceived as relatively inactive in terms of its economic development efforts, outside of its development regulations and road construction.
- Several stakeholders and partners complimented Hall County on its current efforts to gather input and create a plan for fostering economic development along the SR 365 corridor - explaining that such efforts have been lacking in previous administrations.<sup>3</sup> Preferences for

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<sup>1</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

<sup>2</sup> For further information, see Georgia Tech EDI report, "Development Potential of the SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: Summary of Interviews with Community Stakeholders."

<sup>3</sup> For further information, see Georgia Tech EDI report, "Development Potential of the SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: External Viewpoints on Marketability."

# GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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quality growth among Hall County's leadership reveal the desire to provide a quality living environment for residents of the community.

Hall County has enjoyed fairly high voter participation, signaling great interest in governance issues by its electorate...and civic spirit. Another indicator of this interest is the level of participation in the stakeholder interviews conducted by EDI in March 2004. At the request of the Hall County Board of Commissioners, sixty two stakeholders devoted time from their work day to share input on how they'd like the county to proceed with developing SR 365. However, while the county enjoys great interest by its citizens in its local governance, it does not enjoy great engagement. That being said, with this interest, Hall County appears to have great potential for engaging its citizens in its vision and plans, once they are set.

Elections are greatly affected by the level of understanding the voting public has about local government issues, such as economic development. Indeed, lack of understanding about economic development was identified by stakeholders as affecting the level of citizen support for economic development. This lack of understanding may also be a contributing factor to the anti-growth sentiments reported to be somewhat prevalent among some of the citizenry. For example, just as is the case with unmanaged growth, anti-growth policies do not necessarily equate to "smart growth" policies.

Hall County's county leadership issues signal the need for expanded community outreach generally. Greater community understanding and buy-in of the county's vision and plans could help to achieve greater consistency in county leadership, even in the midst of electoral turnover. Stakeholders recognized the need for greater community outreach by Hall County government. They called for actions such as seeking greater, regular input from citizens and stakeholders, improving communication with citizens, educating voters about the need for economic development, and developing a shared vision based on citizen input.

A strong and consistent county leadership vision, backed by ongoing supportive policies and plans, is ever so important for helping Hall County - a community that continues to be in transition from what was once a largely rural, agrarian society, heavily reliant on the poultry industry, to a more urbanized society that is becoming increasingly reliant on a diversified economic base - define its identity for internal and external stakeholders alike.

## **Issue (Part B): Lack of effective intergovernmental relations hamper Hall County's potential for future community economic development.**

Effective intergovernmental relations are critical for fostering community and regional unity, so essential for efficiently capitalizing on assets and resources to enable greater community and economic development.

The following findings are based on Georgia Tech's<sup>4</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*.

### **Understanding the Issue...**

The ability to conduct effective intergovernmental relations is greatly affected by the lack of consistency in county leadership experienced by Hall County. Concerns relating to intergovernmental relations - mainly between the county and the cities - were the fourth most frequently mentioned threat to Hall County's ability to develop the corridor. Lack of community unity was one of two most frequently mentioned barriers for economic development of the SR 365 corridor cited by statewide and

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<sup>4</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

## GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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regional economic development partners. However, this barrier is also a threat to Hall County's economic development potential as a whole.<sup>5</sup> The perceived lack of community unity signals a likely disconnect in terms of communication and collaboration among governmental units within the county.

Private developers discussed the "unorganized and confusing efforts" of the many governmental units involved in Hall County's development landscape as being a key disadvantage. Relating to this, they also reported the indecision by local government leaders to be a factor, and discussed the need to have agreement and cooperation by all the local government units.<sup>6</sup>

Hall County's discord among local government units hinders its potential for economic development in many ways. It reduces its ability to adopt and implement a truly shared economic development vision for the community as a whole, and to help its citizens adopt and buy-in to the shared sense of place that's so critical for having that long-term investment in the community's future. Such discord negatively impacts the county's ability to reach consensus in its decision making efforts. This, in turn, reduces its ability to allocate and share resources in the most efficient manner. The discord, whether real or perceived, provides a negative perception to outside investors and the statewide and regional economic development partners who may bring such investors to the community. And, unfortunately, such a perception already exists calling attention to the need for the county to address this issue in a demonstrative fashion. Hall County's leadership must understand how internal division hampers community progress, and that future efforts will require everyone working together, to realize the fullest potential for success.

The need for improved intergovernmental relations does not stop at the county border. County borders are more apparent to those within Hall County than to those outside the community whom the county wishes to attract as investors. In addition, the development trends occurring in neighboring counties greatly impact those of Hall County and vice versa. Indeed, growth from metro Atlanta or nearby areas was the fifth most frequently identified opportunity by community stakeholders. While Hall County is part of a joint development authority with Dawson, Forsyth, and Lumpkin counties, the authority is reported to be largely inactive and underutilized. Hall County ties to metro Atlanta counties - Gwinnett and Forsyth, to name a couple - are becoming ever stronger as its economy continues to grow and mature. While it is its own designated metropolitan statistical area, Gainesville-Hall County's future economic development potential is highly linked with that of metro Atlanta.

Given the presence of many different agendas, the need to create a sense of regionalism among Hall County and its neighbors - and to develop some type of framework and agreement for working together - was identified as an important next step by statewide and regional economic development partners. Developing a similar type of framework and agreement for working together is also warranted for jurisdictions within Hall County as well. To this end, Hall County's joint municipal association has been a forum for elected officials to convene. At this time, a similar forum for staff does not exist. However, the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce is reported to host a leadership summit each year.

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<sup>5</sup> For further information, see Georgia Tech EDI report, "Development Potential of the SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: Summary of Interviews with Community Stakeholders."

<sup>6</sup> For further information, see Georgia Tech EDI report, "Development Potential of the SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: External Viewpoints on Marketability."

# PUBLIC SAFETY

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## **Issue: Safety inside and outside the home is vital for Hall County's community prosperity.**

Safety inside and outside the home affects the perception of the community by internal and external stakeholders alike, the ability to "sell" Hall County to businesses and residents as a place to want to live, and the ability to retain those who have already chosen Hall County. The *Healthy Hall* community assessment revealed that safety is a key concern among community residents.

The following findings are based on a Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute (EDI) review of the 2003 *Healthy Hall* community assessment, Family Connection Partnership's (FCP) *Kids Count* Data, and Georgia Tech's<sup>1</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*.

### **Understanding the Issue...**

Issues relating to safety, crime, and gangs were the second and third most frequently identified by community residents participating in the *Healthy Hall* community assessment. *Healthy Hall* reveals differences in opinion concerning safety among various racial groups within Hall County. Following are key findings from a survey of 500 community residents:

- The most frequently identified safety concern for Hall County residents appears to be associated with shopping. Nearly half of Hispanics surveyed and a third of whites and blacks expressed this concern.
- Hispanics and Blacks expressed are concerned about safety within their neighborhood.
- There is an overall high approval rating of law enforcement in Hall County though Hispanic participants expressed greater distrust of law enforcement and Blacks were least likely to give law enforcement a high approval rating.
- Minority races were more cognizant of gang activity than Whites. Blacks appeared to be most aware and Hispanics second most aware. Hispanics stated they fear gangs the most. Males believe they are most likely to be beaten by a gang.
- Hispanics were twice as likely to express concern about school safety as their White counterparts.
- A third of Hall County residents believe that keeping a loaded gun in the home is a good idea.

Another concern raised through the *Healthy Hall* community assessment was alcohol and drug use among community youth. The level of drug and alcohol use as well as its relationship to more serious criminal activity, especially among youth, may be a factor in the increased juvenile arrest rate. *Healthy Hall* shows that of Hall County 10<sup>th</sup> graders who completed a written survey administered by Hall County schools...

- 36 percent smoked pot.
- 18 percent used illegal drugs.
- 65 percent drank beer or wine.
- 39 percent drank liquor.
- 20 percent believed smoking pot is safe or pretty safe.
- 21 percent believed drinking beer or wine is safe or pretty safe.

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<sup>1</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

# PUBLIC SAFETY

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- In 2003, Safety / Crime and Gangs were identified through the *Healthy Hall* assessment as the number two and three issues facing Hall County overall, as opposed to the 1998 assessment when gangs ranked third but crime ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in terms of urgent issues. This reflects quite an increase in the concern for safety by the residents of Hall County.

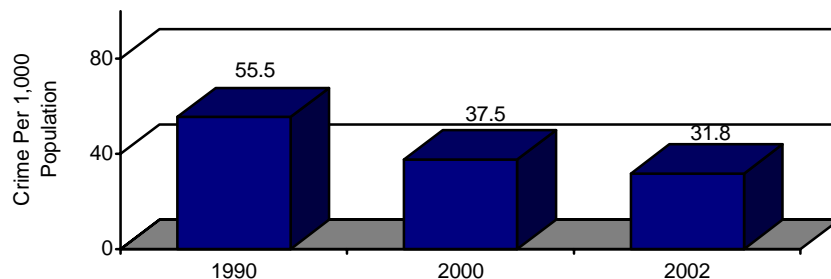
While alcohol and drug use is hardly a new issue facing youth, the survey results indicate a marked desensitization among a significant share of teens over the related safety hazards. In Hall County, given there appears to be a lack of awareness among 1 in 5 teens about the hazards of alcohol and drug use, this raises concerns regarding the level of inhibition for other types of criminal activity.

FCP's *Kids Count* data reveals that Hall County has a higher violent teen death rate than the rate for Georgia. Hall County violent teen death rate (for teens ages 15 to 19) has tended to be in the range of 60-79 per 100,000 while the state's rate has been in the range of 55 to 59 per 100,000. This would coincide with the reports of gang activity revealed in *Healthy Hall*. However, even though the rate appears high, the actual number has been less than 10 for several years.

*Kids Count* also reveals above average rates of child abuse and child neglect within Hall County. In terms of actual crime rates, as reported in EDI's *Economic Development Report Card*, the overall crime rate for Hall County have been lower than that for Georgia as a whole. Hall County's crime rate decreased markedly from 1990 (55.5 per 1,000 population) to 2002 (31.7 per 1,000 population) though its 2002 rate was above the average of its region.

While the county's juvenile arrest rate has been on the rise in recent years, it has been consistently lower than the rate for Georgia as a whole over several years.

**Crime Rate in Hall County, Georgia**



Source: Georgia Criminal Information Center

The indicators appear to validate public safety concerns relating to Hall County's youth, when considering the various indicators together. As perceived threats to safety vary among racial groups and such perceptions should be examined to determine whether exposure to actual threats also vary among racial groups. Given the relatively low and declining crime rate, however, it is possible that the perception is greater than the reality but such conclusion cannot be reached without further investigation.

An increasingly critical issue facing the State of Georgia and Hall County is the increase of Methamphetamine-related crime. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) supervises the Hall County Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad, which is one of 13 multi-jurisdictional task forces. Gainesville also houses one of three Regional Drug Enforcement Offices in the State which "investigates major drug cases such as trafficking, smuggling, clandestine and major drug distribution organizations." Methamphetamine and drug related crimes continue to challenge Hall County and the State. In a

## PUBLIC SAFETY

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recent United Way Survey (December 2004), the increase in Methamphetamine-related crime was listed by law enforcement staff as one of the critical issues facing Hall County today and in the future.

*Healthy Hall* revealed safety concerns to be top of mind for at least a third of Hall County's residents overall though they did not appear to express imminent threats or dangers. Threats to public safety, whether real or perceived, can cause greater fragmentation along ethnic and racial lines, adversely affect the community's ability to retain residents, and, therefore skilled workers for its business and industry, and hinder Hall County's ability to attract and retain employers due to negative perceptions concerning safety issues.

# UNENGAGED HISPANIC COMMUNITY

## Issue: Hall County has a growing but unengaged Hispanic community.

Hall County's Hispanic population has experienced tremendous growth. The number of Hispanic residents in 2000 was nearly six times what it was in 1990, and, by 2002, it jumped another 21.6 percent. As of 2002, the community's Hispanic population accounted for 21.8 percent of the total population. Hall County ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state for its share of Hispanic population which appears to be growing by more than 2,000 people annually. The Hispanic population continues to represent a critical support base for Hall County's existing industry, and its growth presents opportunities for workforce development to support future industry.

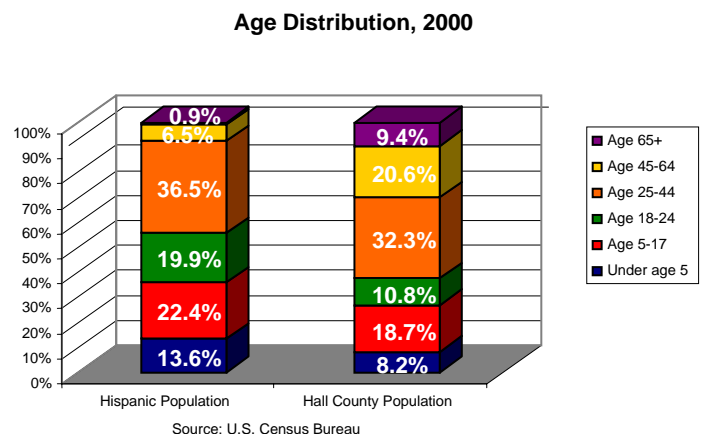
The following findings are based on a Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute (EDI) review of the 2003 *Healthy Hall* community assessment, and Georgia Tech's<sup>1</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*. Sources for data include the U.S. Census Bureau and Georgia Department of Education.

### Understanding the Issue...

Most Hispanic residents of Hall County appear to be recent immigrants. In 2000, 48 percent of the foreign-born population living in Hall County had entered the United States since 1995. Of those foreign-born Hall residents who entered the U.S. between 1990 and 2000, 92 percent of them are not U.S. citizens. This raises concerns about civic participation and how to engage the Hispanic community when they do not have the right to vote.

The growth of the county's Hispanic population has contributed to the growth of its young population. The demand for child care, education, health care and other public services is greatly affected by the growing number of Hispanic families with young children. Following are some statistics:

- Generally, Hispanics in Hall County tend to have larger households than other residents as the average household size for these residents was 5.16 in 2000, compared to 2.89 for the county as a whole.
- There has been a higher share of young people among the Hispanic population than the general population overall. An estimated 13.6 percent of the Hispanic residents were under age five in 2000, and 22.4 percent were between the ages of 5 and 17, compared with 8.2 percent and 18.7 percent respectively for the county. Over 55 percent are 24 years or younger.
- In 2000, 92.5 percent of Hispanics in Hall County were under the age of 45, compared to 70 percent in overall Hall County.



Language and cultural barriers affect the ability of Hispanic children to achieve academically. As one indicator of this, in 2002-2003, the graduation rate for Hispanic students was 41.6 percent, compared to 62.7 percent for the overall student body. In 2001-2002, Hispanic students made up 22 percent of

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

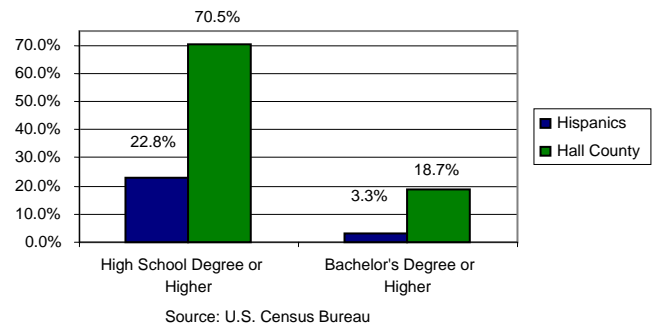
# UNENGAGED HISPANIC COMMUNITY

the K-12 public school enrollment in Hall County in 2001-2002, but represented 38.5 percent of the retained students.

Following are some further statistics:

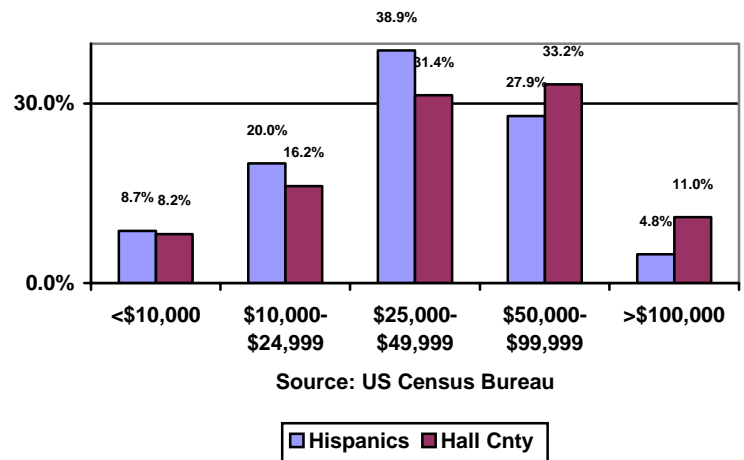
- Education rates among Hispanics have been significantly lower than the county population overall, as only 23 percent had a high school degree or more advanced degree in 2000, compared to 71 percent for the county overall.
- Hispanic graduation rate is 41.6 percent compared to 62.7 percent overall Hall County graduation rate.
- Only three percent of Hispanic adults have a Bachelors degree or higher compared to 19 percent for the county overall. Efforts targeted to improve the educational attainment of Hispanic residents are critical to growing a quality workforce.

**Educational Attainment of Adults in Hall County**



Low self-sufficiency among Hispanics - as indicated by high poverty rates, low household incomes, and low homeownership rates - coupled with their low educational attainment and the language and cultural barriers they face for integrating within the society at large will impact the county's ability to achieve its goals of high quality economic development if not addressed to a greater degree. It is critical for Hall County's leadership to consider how best to support the needs of its Hispanic population, to continue to advance their educational attainment, and to help them to become vested members of the community. Efforts are required to help instill a sense of community among new and existing Hispanic residents.

**Households by Income in Hall County, 2000**



*Healthy Hall* revealed a lack of regular health care among Hispanic residents whether by choice or circumstance due to lack of insurance. Hispanic residents revealed a perception of bias among medical staff which may affect their willingness to seek regular medical care.

Regardless of reason, Hispanic residents appear to not engage primary care services on a regular basis, turning to ER treatment instead, and this could lead to easily treatable and/or diagnosable health problems to become major health issues. This could also affect their ability to be self-sufficient later on in life.

Results from the *Healthy Hall* community survey reflect the lack of community engagement. For example:

- 33 percent of Hispanics reported they were uninsured. (Though, Hispanics were three times more likely to use the emergency room than white Hall County residents.)
- 28 percent of Hispanics indicated they has not seen a doctor in the past year
- Hispanic males were most likely to express distrust of law enforcement.
- Hispanics perceive some biasness from medical office staffs.
- 21 percent of Hispanics perceive the lack of adequate transportation.

# UNENGAGED HISPANIC COMMUNITY

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Hall County is no stranger to the unengaged Hispanic community and has taken steps to mitigate this issue. For example, some schools in Hall County have achieved great accomplishments in reducing the barriers to a good education experienced by Hispanic students. President Bush recently recognized the relatively new Gainesville Elementary School for such an accomplishment. The majority of Hispanic students in three other elementary schools in Gainesville are also meeting and exceeding standards. This performance reflects great efforts among area educators to address the needs of Hispanic students and such efforts should be continued and replicated elsewhere in the county.

Hall County houses a number of other services to engage the Hispanic community. Much effort appears to be available through the school system. For example, the school system houses an international division with the key purpose to deal with school diversity issues. Still, stakeholders identified “dealing with diversity” most frequently when asked about areas needing improvement within the school system indicating a potential need to expand such efforts. In terms of examples of other public services, Hall County government employs a Spanish speaking court reporter and the North Georgia Medical Center employs bilingual staff. The Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce also created a committee to serve the growing number of Hispanic-owned businesses. The continued growth of the Hispanic population will continue to generate a high demand for such services.

Lack of engagement by the Hispanic population may also be attributed to foreign national status not affording voting privileges. Efforts to increase other forms of civic participation should be pursued.

## *What Hispanic Residents Bring to Hall County*

Hispanic residents provide an essential employment group in Hall County’s poultry and construction industry, enabling them to sustain and expand their operations. They also have brought new opportunities in ethnic retail, dining, and services. Hall County is home to a number of Hispanic entrepreneurs owning small retail establishments, mainly restaurants. Hispanic owned restaurants provide differing ethnic and racial groups the ability to share and enjoy Hispanic culture. Such restaurants and other Hispanic-related amenities contribute to the community livability quotient for Hall County. The growth in demand for such establishments will correspond with the growth in Hispanic population, providing greater access to Hispanic-related amenities for Hall County and its surrounding region.

There is not doubt that Hispanic entrepreneurship is a growing economic development opportunity for Hall County. The existence of Hispanic entrepreneurs not only increases local buying power but also encourages other Hispanic residents to spend more of their income here rather than send it elsewhere. It makes good business sense for Hall County to support and enhance the vitality of this entrepreneurial group.

The greater availability of civic participation and discussion, trans-racial and ethnic group interaction, engagement of children through youth development initiatives, and pro-activeness among leadership within Hall County will help to expand engagement of Hispanics into the greater Hall County community as it continues to grow.

# WORKFORCE QUALITY

## Issue: Hall County's future economic development potential is greatly affected by the availability of a high quality workforce and the presence of lifestyle amenities that are attractive to this workforce.

When asked to identify priority issues for Hall County, respondents to the *Healthy Hall* survey identified economy and employment related issues more frequently than any other. Hall County is at a critical stage in its economic development. It has achieved significant success during previous decades by providing opportunities for a relative low-wage workforce. However, low-wage/low-skill industries are continually being off-shored requiring the US economy as a whole to rely on high-wage/high-skill industries. These industries need large knowledge capital workforce pools. A high quality workforce is important to every industry, and ranks as the third most important site selection factor by corporate site selectors.<sup>1</sup> Higher wage industries typically utilize highly skilled processes that require highly skilled employees. These industries are attracted to communities that house an abundance of such workers. In turn, highly skilled workers are attracted to communities that house such industries. In other words, there is a positive correlation between the presence of highly skilled workers and higher wage industries with each impacting the growth of the other.

Generating a high quality workforce rests on Hall County's abilities to continually:

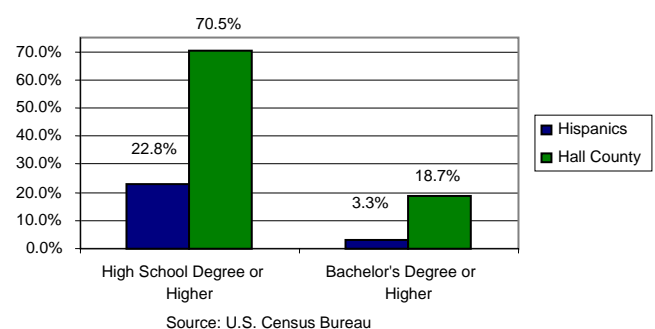
1. upgrade the skill set of its current workforce,
2. attract highly skilled employees from outside Hall County, and, over the long term,
3. utilize its educational system for preparing the future workforce. (See Education Issue Fact Sheet.)

The following findings are based on a Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute (EDI) review of the 2003 *Healthy Hall* community assessment, Family Connection Partnership's (FCP) *Kids Count* Data, and Georgia Tech's<sup>2</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*. Sources for data include Georgia Department of Labor, Georgia Department of Education, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

### Understanding the Issue...

While county stakeholders identified the area's workforce as being a leading strength for economic development when asked by EDI, they also recognized the county's lack of "prepared" workforce [for higher wage industries] as being one of the most serious issues to deal with. Hall County does appear to lag behind the state, its region, and peers for the level of preparedness among its current workforce, as reflected by its proportion of residents (25 years and older) with high school degrees or higher and bachelors degrees or higher.

Educational Attainment of Adults in Hall County



More than half (62 percent) of Hall County's working residents were in management, professional, service, sales, or office occupations - in other words, white collar occupations - in 2000. However, this was a lower proportion than the state (73 percent). While the largest share of residents held management and professional occupations, a significant proportion (24 percent) of Hall County's employed residents was in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. The

<sup>1</sup> Source: Area Development Magazine's Annual Corporate Site and Facility Planning Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

# WORKFORCE QUALITY

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community had a higher share of such workers than the state (16 percent), its region (19 percent), and 93 other counties in Georgia.

Hall County had the 11<sup>th</sup> highest proportion of private industry employment in the state. Private industry accounted for the vast majority of employed residents (82 percent), while government accounted for 12 percent in 2000. In addition, 6.1 percent of Hall County's employed residents, totaling over 4,000, were self-employed, a proportion greater than Georgia's average of 5.9 percent, indicating a fair amount of entrepreneurial spirit.

Social and youth development issues greatly impact the availability of a quality workforce in Hall County. *Kids Count* data reveals that Hall County has above average teenage pregnancy rates. The data also indicates that the county has a much lower percentage of first time birth mothers who have completed high school than the state.

While Hall County has the 10<sup>th</sup> largest work force in Georgia, the county's tight labor pool was cited as a key disadvantage by statewide and regional economic development partners. Hall County's unemployment rates have been prevalently low signaling a relatively small pool of available workers. The county also enjoys an above average labor force participation rate, suggesting a high propensity to work among those residents who are able to work and a low availability of "untapped" potential workers who are not yet engaged in the workforce. Therefore, while some efforts should be extended to train the relatively small pool of untapped workers, importing new talent is ever so important for Hall County.

The county is fortunate in its proximity to the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) because of the large, highly trained workforce that exists in the Atlanta MSA. However, its ability to attract workers from the metro Atlanta area rests on Hall County's community livability, which is called for in its overall vision.

In order to retain and maintain a high-skilled workforce, Hall County needs to expand amenities desired by a high-skilled workforce and leverage the primary, secondary, and post-secondary educational institutions in the area and region. Following are some of the general guiding principles for fostering community livability:<sup>3</sup>

- Complete and integrated communities that contain housing, shops, places of work, schools, parks and civic facilities essential to the daily life of residents.
- Community design that allows for housing, jobs, daily needs, and other activities to be within easy walking distance of each other or transit stops.
- A diversity of [quality] housing types to accommodate citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups.
- A range of job types to accommodate the needs of community residents.
- A center focus that combines commercial, civic, cultural, and recreational uses.
- A well-defined edge, such as agricultural greenbelts or wildlife corridors, permanently protected from development, and a continuous system of greenbelt / wildlife corridors to be determined by natural conditions.
- Streets, pedestrian paths, and bike paths that contribute to a system of fully connected and interesting routes to all destinations.
- Land use planning that is integrated within the larger transportation network built around access to alternative forms of transportation other than freeways.

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<sup>3</sup> For further information, see report by Georgia Tech's COGRD, "Development Potential of the SR 365 Corridor in Hall County, Georgia: A Quality Growth Study."

## WORKFORCE QUALITY

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- Materials and methods of construction should be specific to the community, to encourage the development of local character and community identity.
- Designated areas for infill redevelopment.
- An open process for developing plans.

Apparent in these guiding principles is a feature that is intrinsic to community livability - that is, the availability of "lifestyle" amenities that enable people to live, work, and play in one area. Arts, cultural, entertainment, and recreational opportunities are ever so important for attracting and retaining a quality workforce. Therefore, efforts to grow Gainesville's arts, theater and cultural offerings and quality dining and entertainment options should continue. Efforts to promote and develop outdoor and nature-based recreational assets should be expanded. Enhancing Hall County's community livability is critical to its ability to attract workers from outside the community - particularly from areas such as those in metro Atlanta that already possess several community livability-related advantages.

Hall County's public and private schools for pre-K through 12 can serve as excellent resources for developing quality workforce capital in the future, though stakeholder feedback and various indicators reveal opportunities for improvement. In terms of upgrading the skill set of its current workforce, the county houses several programs that could be utilized for doing so - located at Lanier Technical College, Brenau University, and Gainesville College. During the EDI assessment process, stakeholders provided an average rating of 4.11 (out of a 1 to 5 scale, with 5 being the highest) when asked how well these post-secondary institutions meet the community's needs. Denoting high satisfaction with these institutions, eighty three percent of stakeholders had provided a rating of 4 or 5. Hall County is also in close proximity to regional assets such as North Georgia College, Georgia Tech, and University of Georgia. In other words, Hall County has a large number of post-secondary institutions that can help maintain and expand the necessary skills necessary for a high-skill workforce.

# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

## Issue: Youth development greatly affects Hall County's future community and economic development potential.

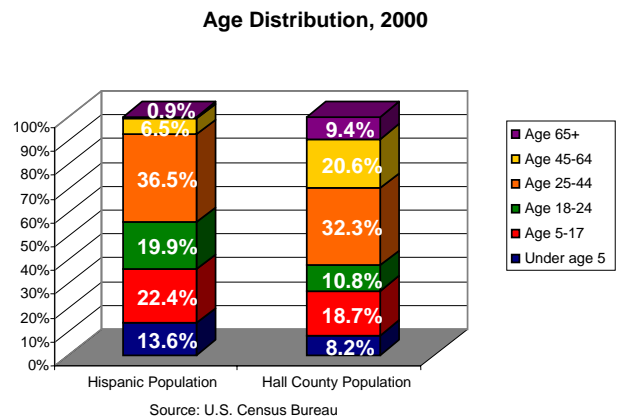
The ability of a community to develop its youth is a major economic development issue for every community. There is a direct link between youth development and quality economic development - effective youth development is an asset whereas ineffective youth development is a liability. How so? Among other things, youth development affects the ability to develop quality leaders for the community, the ability to foster social capital (the social "glue" which binds a community together) among area residents, the ability to prepare a qualified workforce, and the ability to foster lifelong learning which is essential for maximizing the potential investment that can be made by a community's youth. Youth development capabilities are ever so important for communities wishing to attract higher wage industries which are increasingly reliant on attracting and retaining a quality workforce.

The following findings are based on a Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute (EDI) review of the 2003 *Healthy Hall* community assessment, Family Connection Partnership's (FCP) *Kids Count* Data, and Georgia Tech's<sup>1</sup> 2004 series of reports relating to its strategic assessment of the *Development Potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia*.

### Understanding the Issue...

Hall County's young population is growing, raising significant implications for Hall County's school system and other public services. It also signals the potential for growing future workforce capital.

The median age in Hall was 32.2 in 2000, lower than that of its peers and the state. While the county's population of residents age 65 and over grew by 27 percent between 1990 and 2000, this growth was slower than the growth of younger residents. Its school-age population (age 5-17) grew by 50 percent to 26,100 in 2000. Hall County's growing Hispanic population is a significant contributor to its growing young population. These demographic trends make effective youth development ever so important for Hall County.



Early childhood development is a critical community development and economic development issue for all communities and Hall County is no different. In October 2004, Hall County was home to 81 child care facilities, but did not house any that have earned State of Georgia recognition for being a "center of distinction," "home of distinction," or "home of merit." However, Hall County did have three National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited child care facilities. Given Hall County's growing young population, the availability of quality licensed child care will continue to rise in importance.

Recent measures shown in FCP's *Kids Count* data and EDI's *Economic Development Report Card* for Hall County indicate that youth development is an area needing significant improvement. Sources for this data include Georgia Department of Human Resources, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and Georgia Department of Education.

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Tech faculty from the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) assessed the development potential of SR 365 in Hall County, Georgia.

# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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Following are some telling indicators:

- Hall County's rate of child abuse has been consistently higher than the rate for the state since 1999. In 2003, the community's child abuse rate was 5.5 per 1,000 while Georgia's rate was 3.9 per 1,000. (The child abuse rate is the number of substantiated incidents of child abuse, determined by the Division of Family and Children Services of the Georgia Department of Human Resources, divided by the number of children less than age 18.)
- Hall County's child neglect rate has risen in recent years, and has been consistently higher than Georgia's rate overall. In 2003, the county's rate was 23.2 per 1,000 while the state's rate was 17.2. (The child neglect rate is the number of substantiated incidents of child neglect, as determined by the Division of Family and Children Services of the Georgia Department of Human Resources, divided by the number of children less than age 18.)
- The county's juvenile arrest rate increased from 2.13 percent in 1990 to 2.63 percent in 2000, and, while still lower than the state's rate, reflects an increase in juvenile delinquency. In 2002, the reported rate was 3.2 percent.
- The teenage pregnancy rate (birth to teenagers aged 10-19 per 1,000) in Hall County has dropped in recent years but remained higher than the rates of its peer counties, region, and state. The teenage pregnancy rate for teenagers 15-17 years of age was 53.9 per 1,000 versus 40.1 per 1,000 for Georgia as a whole.
- Hall County's rate of teen violent deaths has exceeded that of Georgia in recent years. In 2002, the community's rate was 79.5 per 1,000 teen's ages 15 to 19 while Georgia's rate was 55 per 1,000 teens.
- Hall County had a decrease in its high school dropout rate in 2002-2003, though continues to post a higher rate than that of its peers and state.
- High school graduation rate dropped in 2002-2003, and was just below state rate.
- Hall County had an above average rate of youth 16 to 19 years of age not working and not in school in 2000.

Youth development concerns were echoed in the *Healthy Hall* community assessment. Focus group participants noted a "perceived loss of respect for traditions and elders" and "little interaction between races in social settings." They called for greater availability of "safe structured activities for children" and "better and/or walking access to safe clean parks."

Based on several indicators affecting the potential for future youth development, it is likely that the current challenges will be exacerbated if they are not addressed. For example, according to *Kids Count*:

- Babies born to mothers with less than 12 years of education in Hall County has exceeded that of the state two-fold for several years. In 2003, this was the case for 46.1 percent of the babies born in Hall and 23.5 percent of the babies born in Georgia as a whole.
- Coinciding with this, Hall County posted a below average rate of first births to mothers who have completed high school.
- Hall County's repeat teenage birth rate (for teens 15 to 19 years of age) has exceeded that of Georgia's as a whole for several years.
- New Family Index (mothers over 20yrs, finished high school, and have fathers on the birth certificate) is lower than the state average since 1999.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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These indicators along with Hall County's demographic trends call for greater attention to fostering effective youth development now through advocacy and outreach to youth about potential hazards affecting their future, mentoring to young parents, and expanding special services for children at-risk.

Successful youth development is so critical to fostering the social capital needed for community development, betterment, and innovation. The greater social capital a community has, the greater skill-set and knowledge set the youth of tomorrow have built up which allows for greater high-skill/high-wage economic growth. A community maximizes their ability to achieve quality growth when they maximize their social capital.