



Decide DeKalb
Development Authority

Facing Forward. Moving Ahead.

End of Year Impact Report



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LEGAL COUNSEL

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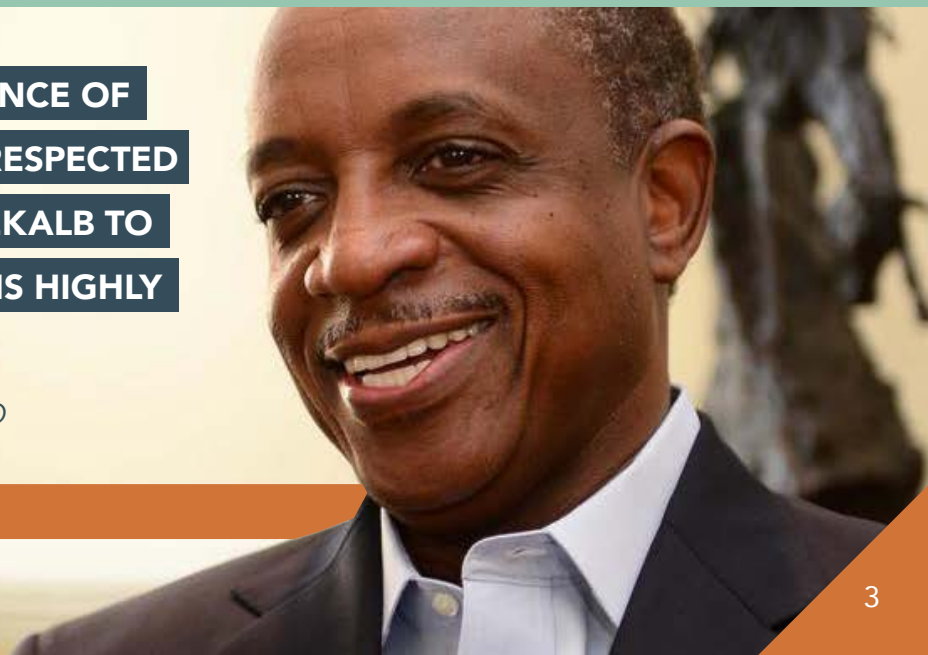
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**"WE RECOGNIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF
HAVING A STRONG AND WELL-RESPECTED
ORGANIZATION LIKE DECIDE DEKALB TO
REPRESENT OUR COUNTY IN THIS HIGHLY
COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT."**

Michael L. Thurmond, DeKalb County CEO



SKIP TO STORY





**"DECIDE DEKALB
HAS PLAYED A KEY
ROLE SUPPORTING
AND PROMOTING
THE COUNTY'S
ECONOMIC WELL-
BEING DURING
THESE CRITICAL
TIMES."**

Michael L. Thurmond
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 has been one of the most challenging, difficult times in the last 100 years of DeKalb County history. However, with the support of the Board of Commissioners, the work of our dedicated 6,200 employees, and the partnership with the DeKalb County Board of Health, we have been able to deal with the manifold health and economic challenges of the pandemic.

Decide DeKalb has played a key role supporting and promoting the county's economic well-being during these critical times. The Decide DeKalb Development Authority's focused efforts have resulted in significant project wins like the distribution centers for Amazon, The Home Depot, and the establishment of Sugar Bowl Bakery's east coast operations. In addition, your participation on the Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan will focus attention and investment in an area of the county that has been typically underserved.

DeKalb County is rising on all fronts. We recognize the significance of having a strong and well-respected organization like Decide DeKalb to represent our county in this highly competitive environment. Decide DeKalb's understanding of the economic and social needs of our county have kept DeKalb in the forefront for consideration when companies are making their strategic plans for growth and expansion.

To the leaders and team members of the Decide DeKalb Development Authority, I say thank you for all you have done on behalf of the citizens of DeKalb. We will get through this stronger together.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MLT'.

Michael L. Thurmond
Chief Executive Officer, DeKalb County

During an unprecedented time when organizations and their leaders faced an unknown future, our exceptional team at Decide DeKalb pivoted quickly to deliver essential information, funds, and resources to DeKalb County businesses and residents. In fact, I maintain that in the face of the most challenging circumstances most of us had ever faced, 2020 was one of the best years for Decide DeKalb.

DeKalb County's COVID-19 Better Business program distributed Federal CARES funds as grants and loans to address the short-term impact of COVID-19. Our Decide DeKalb Development Authority facilitated a curriculum to support recipients of these funds that included modules about business plan development, financial controls, ethical decision making, and communication.

This past year, we fueled continued expansion of the entertainment and film industries in our county. Guided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the DeKalb Entertainment Commission (DEC) advised the industry, enabling it to safely continue productions through the pandemic. Thanks in part to these efforts, Georgia now produces more films than any state in the country – a number on par with the entire country of Canada.

I am immensely proud of our entire Decide DeKalb team. Through the continued leadership of Dorian DeBarr and with the support of our Board of Directors, our staff works diligently every day to provide meaningful resources, connections, and advice to businesses and residents. I am proud, too, of our partnership with the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, who support and enable our work. And, I am continually inspired by the ingenuity and resourcefulness of our business leaders, who demonstrate their ability to creatively adapt, survive, and thrive.

On behalf of the Decide DeKalb Board of Directors, I wish you a healthy and prosperous 2021.



Don Bolia
Chair, Decide DeKalb Development Authority



**"GEORGIA NOW
PRODUCES MORE
FILMS THAN ANY
STATE IN THE
COUNTRY."**

Don Bolia

*Chair, Decide DeKalb
Development Authority*



**"I AM PROUD TO
SHARE HOW OUR
DECIDE DEKALB
TEAM CHOSE TO
PIVOT INSTEAD OF
PANIC."**

Dorian DeBarr

*President, Decide DeKalb
Development Authority*

While 2020 was a year like no other, I am heartened by how we came together to respond to the needs of our residents and business leaders.

The exceptional leadership of DeKalb County CEO Michael L. Thurmond and the focus of our Decide DeKalb Board of Directors and staff enabled us to quickly shift priorities to address the disruption caused by COVID-19. I particularly wish to recognize the incredible work of the healthcare organizations and workers who rapidly mobilized to care for those affected by the pandemic and who continue to serve on its frontlines. We are fortunate to have these exceptional resources within our county, including the expertise of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

I am proud to share how our Decide DeKalb team chose to pivot instead of panic. We doubled down on communication and outreach so that our constituents – businesses, organizations and residents – would have the resources they needed to move forward and succeed. Throughout this report, we'll introduce you to some of them, including:

- [DaMon Jones](#), founder and CEO of Cyber Defense International, who is partnering with Georgia Piedmont Technical College to advance DeKalb County's workforce potential
- [Tanisha Frazier](#), [Larry Hester](#), and [Darren Jones](#), three of the more than 40 people who achieved dreams of home ownership through the WE DeKalb down payment grant program.
- [Andrew Ly](#), co-owner of Sugar Bowl Bakery, and [Oya Buyan](#), general manager of EAE USA, who chose to move their businesses here from across the country and across the globe
- [Leaders](#) of The Home Depot, Briggs & Stratton, Amazon, and Gourmet Foods International who all expanded operations in DeKalb County
- [Adam Rosenfelt](#) and [Maureen Meulen](#), owners of Atomic Entertainment developing Pratt Pullman District, as well as [county and community leaders](#) collaborating on the Memorial Drive Corridor revitalization
- [Molly Coffee](#), a local director, designer, puppeteer and co-founder of Film Impact Georgia, an advocacy group for local independent filmmakers

[continued on next page >](#)

I hope you'll agree that together, these stories paint a picture of achievement and success. Together, we are powering new levels of economic development throughout DeKalb County. And together, our infrastructure, governance, and public-private partnerships continue to attract, retain, and grow world-class businesses and an educated and eager workforce to sustain them.

Sincerely,



Dorian DeBarr
President, Decide DeKalb Development Authority

2020 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BY THE NUMBERS

1,436 NEW/EXPANDED
J O B S

\$204.4 MILLION
ECONOMIC
INVESTMENT

OUTREACH TO DEKALB BUSINESSES

76 ENGAGEMENTS

2,000 EMPLOYEES
REPRESENTED

5 AVERAGE YEARS
IN BUSINESS

33% WOMEN-OWNED
BUSINESSES

67% MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES

FACING CHALLENGES WITH RESILIENCE

"COLLABORATION AND
ENGAGEMENT TOOK
US FROM, "HOW DO WE
REACT?" TO "HOW CAN WE
MAKE A DIFFERENCE?"

James Forstner

CEO, Emory Decatur Hospital, Emory Hillandale
Hospital, and Emory LTAC

It's an understatement to say that 2020 was a year unlike any other. But this year of intense challenge demonstrated that economic development in DeKalb County will always find a way to succeed.

James Forstner, CEO for [Emory Decatur](#), Emory Hillandale, and Emory Long-Term Acute Care Hospital recalls that when the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March and April, its magnitude was unprecedented. Then, a second surge hit during the summer with double the impact on DeKalb's healthcare system. However, the summer wave was also a time of extraordinary cooperation and connection. "Faced with an overwhelming number of hospitalizations, the health community came together to develop and recognize best practices. When we were straining in response to a shortage of personal protection equipment (PPE), individual community members brought us 25,000 masks. That collaboration and engagement took us from, 'How do we react?' to 'How can we make a difference?'"

Just as the pandemic was beginning to take hold in March, MedCura Health was completing renovations allowing the relocation of its administrative offices and expansion of its growing clinical services. Originally founded as Oakhurst Medical Center, MedCura Health provides affordable, accessible, quality primary care services, particularly to underserved and uninsured people who would typically turn to hospital emergency rooms for non-emergency issues. In June, the organization began to offer free drive-through COVID-19 testing, administering more than 13,000 tests by the end of the year. By November, MedCura Health replaced its Decatur location with a new state-of-the-art facility located just one block away. >

**"FACED WITH AN
OVERWHELMING NUMBER
OF HOSPITALIZATIONS,
THE HEALTH COMMUNITY
CAME TOGETHER..."**

James Forstner

CEO, Emory Decatur Hospital,
Emory Hillandale
Hospital, and Emory LTAC



MedCura Health Chief Executive Officer Jeff Taylor explains that completing renovations and opening new locations in the middle of a pandemic wasn't always easy. But he explains, "Decide DeKalb was very instrumental in helping us to meet our construction and relocation targets throughout 2020." He notes that the smooth completion of the expansion projects enabled the organization to continue its focus on providing 'Medicine with Care.' As of the publication of this report, MedCura Health is providing vaccinations by appointment to anyone over age 18.

The pandemic also challenged DeKalb's entertainment industry with a significant production shut-down. Thanks to the [DeKalb Entertainment Commission \(DEC\)](#), a division of Decide DeKalb, however, DeKalb County productions were among the first in Georgia to allow film/television productions to resume filming, reinforcing the state mandated requirements for COVID safety. These efforts enabled the production of more than 60 feature films, television series, and commercials within the county. DEC also partnered with non-profit arts advocate C4 Atlanta and the City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs to create and distribute a groundbreaking impact survey of the local creative community. The

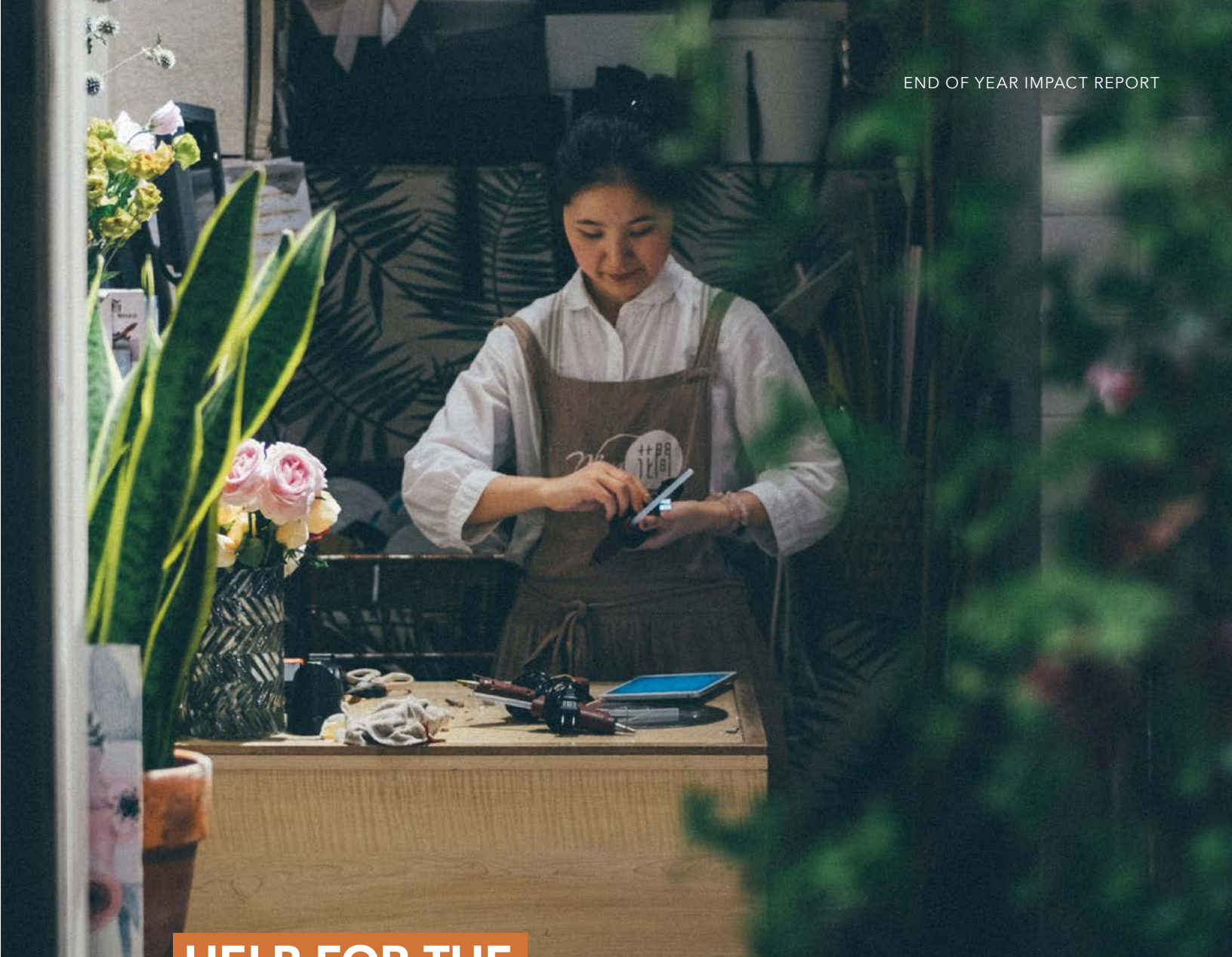
results provided essential insights to organizations and governmental entities positioned to provide much needed support through the pandemic.

Forstner states that 2020 ended with a third COVID-19 surge that was four times the size of the first. He affirms, however, that DeKalb was ready with increased testing, greater awareness of the importance of masks, the start of vaccine availability, and several months of experience. "We must remember 2020 as the year Georgia lost 15,000 lives to COVID-19, a level of loss that I dearly hope we never see again. We are still living and working through exceptionally challenging times. But I believe we've shown that when we come together, we're up to that challenge."

**"I BELIEVE WE'VE
SHOWN THAT
WHEN WE COME
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James Forstner

CEO, Emory Decatur Hospital,
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HELP FOR THE HARDEST HIT BUSINESSES

The year 2020 also marked Decide DeKalb's partnership with LISC Atlanta in offering the DeKalb County Small Business Relief Program. Designed to support businesses hit the hardest by the economic effects of COVID-19, the program provided no-interest loans and grants to 16 DeKalb County businesses with 50 employees or fewer, primarily owned by women, and people of color. Funding was provided by Advance DeKalb and the Greater Atlanta COVID-19 Recovery and Response Fund, a partnership between the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta and United Way of Greater Atlanta.

Dale Royal, executive director of LISC Atlanta, affirmed, "We couldn't be more pleased to assist small businesses in DeKalb County through our partnership with Decide DeKalb. LISC nationally has undertaken great efforts to aid small businesses through the COVID-19 crisis, and we are proud to be able to extend these efforts locally to the small businesses of DeKalb County." |

BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RAMP UP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

"THE RELATIONSHIPS
ARE WHAT MAKE
THE DIFFERENCE."

DaMon Ross, Sr.
CDI Founder and President

When increasing amounts of our work and lives are online – and news of data breaches, hacking, and other forms of cybercrime is increasingly common – it's easy to see why cybersecurity is one of the world's fastest-growing industries. Corporate market research firm Fortune Business Insights predicts the cybersecurity market to more than double its 2019 value, exceeding \$281.74 billion by 2027.

These are just a few of the reasons why entrepreneur DaMon Ross founded [Cyber Defense International \(CDI\)](#) at the beginning of 2020 and rapidly realized that he would need to move the business into a formal operations center. "I already loved living here in DeKalb," he explains, "but I had no idea how to navigate the business landscape." Decide DeKalb Development Authority President Dorian DeBarr and his staff immediately began helping Ross with everything from business licensing and permitting to mission-critical relationships, enabling CDI's operations center to open in June 2020.

"The relationships are what make the difference," notes Ross, who always believed that connecting to the right local college could deliver the talent pipeline his business would

need. "Cyber technology is constantly evolving," he explains. "But, if someone comes to us with the right base level of skills and knowledge, we can teach them to support our business and clients while growing a career with high potential for growth and income." Upon hearing that, the Authority's Workforce Business Analyst Brandon Ona introduced Ross to Dr. Irvin Clark, vice president of economic development at DeKalb's [Georgia Piedmont Technical College \(GPTC\)](#).

GPTC is one of 22 technical colleges in Georgia built around the nexus of technology education and economic development. "We are committed to workforce development in DeKalb County," affirms Clark. "Working with a wide range of businesses, we can deliver pretty much any training and upskilling their team members need. Likewise, we support individuals looking to advance their careers in technological fields through certifications, advanced language proficiency, and General Education Development (GED) credentials. In short, businesses have a state-owned technical resource that's committed to workforce development for them and economic development for the county and state."

It didn't take long for Clark and Ross to envision a 10-week intensive cybersecurity curriculum that rapidly prepares students for possible internships and job opportunities with CDI or other cyber protection organizations. The two worked together to create courses including Cyber Security Fundamentals and Applied Cyber Security, which Ross will teach to the first cohort of students in early 2021.

"This is a dynamic field that demands multiple skillsets because the attacks are continually evolving," says Ross. "We're constantly tasked with identifying, managing, and overcoming threats that no one has seen before – and every industry has a different threat profile. That's why we'll also support students who earn positions at CDI with mentorship and experience opportunities. It's how we'll train a flexible, highly diverse workforce both to serve our clients and build careers. I'm convinced that the best place to do that today is right here in DeKalb." |

2020 Economic Development Highlights by District

DISTRICT 1

Welcoming Amazon “Last Mile” to Doraville

The last mile of a long-distance race is where the action is, as winners cross the finish line to the applause of fans. Similarly, the new Amazon Logistics delivery station opening in Doraville is designed to power the “last mile” of Amazon’s order and delivery process, helping to increase delivery efficiency for local customers.”

“For decades Decide DeKalb has been champions for economic growth in the county while providing vital services that improves our business climate and quality of life for our residents. As a county commissioner, I am pleased to see the accomplishments they have made over the past year, I am excited to see what the future holds and the impact they will have on DeKalb County.”

Robert Patrick
DeKalb County Board
of Commissioners,
District 1

DISTRICT 2

The Sweet Taste of Expansion

When California-based Sugar Bowl Bakery decided to create an east-coast center of operations, they found the perfect location in Tucker. (See more of the story on page 23)

“Decide DeKalb is the hub of economic development activity across our county. From Stonecrest to Dunwoody and Ellenwood, and all points in between, Decide DeKalb’s ability to align business, and public interest is essential for success.”

Jeff Rader
DeKalb County Board of Commissioners,
District 2

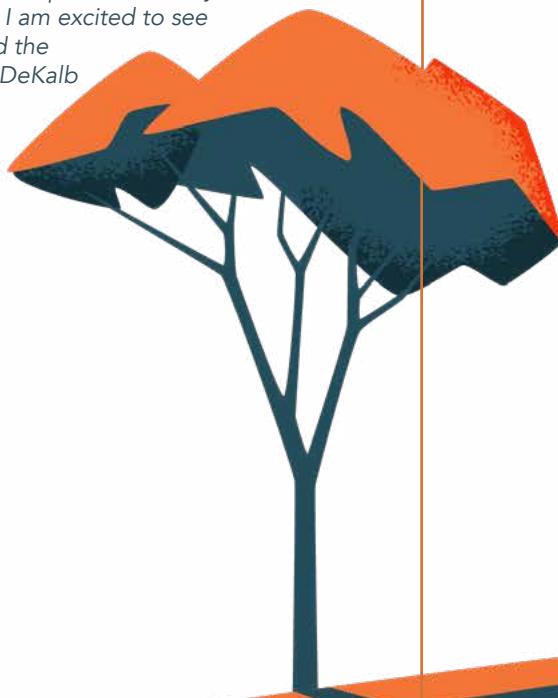
DISTRICT 3

Healthcare Expansion

DeKalb-based MedCura (formerly Oakhurst Medical Center) relocated its administrative offices from one of its clinical locations and opened a new state-of-the-art facility, all of which will allow for service expansions including vision, dental, behavioral health, obstetrics and gynecology services. (See more on page 9)

“Economic Development means better communities, better schools, and better wellness. We have to continue to thrive to make this equation a reality and a success.”

Commissioner Larry Johnson, MPH
DeKalb County Board of Commissioners,
District 3



Teeing Up Innovative New Batteries

Suppose you play golf and happen to find yourself behind the wheel of one of Club Car's newest fleet golf vehicles. Chances are that the golf car's innovative, modular lithium-ion battery will be from Briggs & Stratton's new advanced assembly plant in Tucker. The Vanguard battery charges rapidly, reduces energy consumption, requires zero maintenance, has a much longer life than traditional lead-acid batteries – and its virtually noiseless operation allows a more peaceful golfing experience. The 78,000-square-foot facility's four assembly lines opened in October to complement existing production facilities in Wisconsin and accommodate future growth.

"My focus is on enhancing a business-friendly environment that will bring good economic development and sustainable jobs in DeKalb County."

Steve Bradshaw
DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, District 4

DISTRICT 5

New Delivery Center to Help Doers Get More Done

The Home Depot began work on a 615,000-square-foot flatbed delivery center in Stonecrest, one of three new warehousing facilities expected to employ about 77 people. The project comes as a result of a collaborative effort between Decide DeKalb and the City of Stonecrest.

"I believe that everyone should have access to jobs that pay livable wages in their own communities. The Home Depot's establishment of this new facility will help make this a reality."

Mereda Davis Johnson
DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, District 5

SUPER DISTRICT 6

Gourmet Growth

Gourmet Foods International, an international food distributor, purchased an industrial building in Decatur, uniting its entire Georgia-based workforce. Originally built in 1995, the 320,080-square-foot facility offers a wide variety of products that range from basic items to a comprehensive line of gourmet and imported foods from around the world.

"It is exciting to see economic growth and development in DeKalb. Entrepreneurs and new business opportunities are the lifeblood of our community and a key part of our shared prosperity. I'm especially proud of Cyber Defense International and Gourmet Foods International, both located in Super District 6. These companies are a win-win for our county, and I'm proud they are our newest neighbors."

Edward "Ted" Terry
DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, Super District 6

SUPER DISTRICT 7

Delicious Development

Daryl Shular Hospitality Group launched four new brands in Tucker to provide both modern eateries and hospitality education in DeKalb County and the Southeast. The Shular Institute is a restaurant-based culinary education center. FarmED Kitchen and Bar serves as the group's flagship restaurant. PlatED offers virtual and hands-on cooking classes to consumers. And, Earth First Catering and Events aims to support DeKalb's growing film and business industry with top-tier catering and event planning services.

"The interest from entrepreneurs, businesses, and corporations in locating to DeKalb has never been greater. We are entering a transformative period and Decide DeKalb is leading the way for what will be a defining period of growth across DeKalb. I am excited to see several major projects manifest that will provide jobs and have a major impact on our local economy and tax digest."

Lorraine Cochran-Johnson
DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, Super District 7



WE DeKalb Delivers the Dream of Home Ownership

It might seem that Tanisha Frazier's decision to purchase a home couldn't have come at a more challenging time. It was March and she was balancing her life with her work as principal of Oakhurst Elementary School. "I wanted to own my own home. I wanted to be close to my school, our students, and their families," she recalls. "My salary disqualified me from a lot of mortgage assistance programs. But going through a divorce, I didn't have down payment funds in reserve."

Larry Hester and Darren Jones left Georgia in 2018 so that Jones could take an administrative leadership

position at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. But when he began working remotely in mid-2020, the couple decided to return to be near family. They, too, knew they would need down payment assistance to buy a home but did not qualify for other programs.

WE DeKalb (Workforce Enhancement DeKalb), a Decide DeKalb program, provided the solution for all of them. WE DeKalb offers down payment grants of three to five percent of the total loan amount to qualified applicants purchasing their primary home in DeKalb County. >

**"HOMEOWNERSHIP IS SO
IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH
GENERATIONAL
WEALTH FOR MINORITY
POPULATIONS."**

***Darren Jones, Larry Hester,**
and their Yorkshire Terrier,
Baxter, at home in
Lithonia, Georgia*



2020

WE DEKALB DOWN
PAYMENT GRANTS

BY THE NUMBERS

Southeast Mortgage of Georgia, is one of the nearly 30 lenders approved to offer the WE DeKalb grant to qualified borrowers. Executive Mortgage Loan Originator Wayne Owens explains, "Because we're in a seller's market right now, most buyers have to shoulder the burden of both their down payment and all closing costs. By covering the down payment, the WE DeKalb program can literally cut a home buyer's out-of-pocket expenses by 50 percent."

Frazier found both her home in Stone Mountain and the WE DeKalb grant through realtor Deja Pulley. "I've lived in DeKalb since first coming to Georgia and knew I wanted to stay here. We started looking at homes in April. I found out about the WE DeKalb program in May, and I closed on my home in June."

Jones and Hester discovered the WE DeKalb program through an online search. Jones says that the program was part of what convinced them to focus their search on DeKalb County, ultimately enabling them to find a new townhome in Lithonia, near Hester's parents. They moved in right after Thanksgiving and are preparing to adopt a child by the end of 2021.

"Homeownership is so important to establish generational wealth for minority populations," declares Hester. "That's why the WE DeKalb program's incentives stood out for us. It made our dream become a reality."


Frazier affirms, "Just knowing we have a program like this to bring people to DeKalb makes me feel so good about the future. And because it's not a loan, it made me feel like homeownership was within my reach. When I wanted it, it was right on time for me." |

46



Households who
purchased homes using
WE DeKalb grants

\$9 MILLION



Total dollar value of
mortgage loans to
WE DeKalb grantees

\$354,000

Total dollar value of
WE DeKalb grants

\$7,700

Average dollar value
of **WE DeKalb** grants



"WE'VE HEARD 'REVITALIZATION' BEFORE. WHY IS MEMORIAL DRIVE DIFFERENT?"

Why do many community revitalization efforts stall out after an enthusiastic start, while only a few increase momentum and accomplish results? Planning and follow-through distinguish most successful efforts. But true excellence includes one more factor: community engagement.

Those three success factors are why DeKalb County Senior Planner Larry Washington and Long-Range Planning Manager Cedric Hudson say excitement about DeKalb's Memorial Drive revitalization program is so high. The corridor running from I-285 to Stone Mountain has largely gone without improvement for 25 years. However, thanks to a thorough process of thoughtful engagement with the area's residential and business community, the corridor is poised for growth.

Hudson explains, "This is the first time we've had real community involvement, led by the significant involvement of District 4 Commissioner Steve Bradshaw. He didn't just talk about change. He was present at every public meeting, listening to people's concerns, showing his commitment." Washington adds that in addition to formal meetings with residents and other community stakeholders, the planning process also included pop-up meetings and communication across multiple social media platforms. "We even went door-to-door through neighborhoods," he recalls. "Deep outreach is what made this effort so successful."

Having moved to the area in the early 1990s when the area was more vibrant, Commissioner Bradshaw feels a deep, personal connection to the revitalization effort. >

"I've seen the slow downward spiral. But, I also know it doesn't have to be that way," he says. "We can do more than return Memorial Drive to its former brilliance; we can exceed it. And, the time to do it is now."

Funded in part by the DeKalb County Department of Planning and Sustainability and Commissioner Bradshaw's community development budget, the pre-planning process yielded a detailed [study report](#) produced by Pond & Company in conjunction with DeKalb County in early 2020. The report clearly outlines the Memorial Drive corridor's history, composition, challenges, and strengths. It identifies opportunities for improvement. Most significantly, it defines a clear action plan to improve perceptions, create demand, and encourage healthy redevelopment of the area.

Nationwide, community revitalization efforts often take years of adjustment and revision before they are officially adopted. So, it's notable that when the study report was first presented to the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners in September 2020, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the action plan.

Shortly after that, approximately 70 volunteer champions of the study's action plan formed six Community Action Groups (CAGs). "We have everyone from engineers, architects, and grant writers to business leaders, professors, and students, working together to tackle specific efforts related to the action plan," declares Hudson. The groups, which range from "Trees and Trails" to redevelopment and the arts, are highly diverse, and Washington affirms, "Their diversity is their strength. They're united by their commitment to accountability and taking our initiatives forward."

With support from the DeKalb County Community Development Department, banners, monuments, and gateway features will be installed throughout the area in the second quarter of 2022, reflecting a rebranding effort. The community also will see markers throughout the corridor focusing on unsung heroes, which will take a deeper dive into the contributions of individual cultural groups that together will update the story of Memorial Drive. "Visible change won't happen overnight," notes Commissioner Bradshaw, "but we expect the results to be transformative." |



**"WE CAN DO MORE
THAN RETURN
MEMORIAL DRIVE
TO ITS FORMER
BRILLIANCE; WE
CAN EXCEED IT."**

Steve Bradshaw

*DeKalb County Board of
Commissioners, District 4*



BROWNFIELDS REMEDIATION FOR RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

When Adam Rosenfelt and Maureen Meulen, founders and owners of Atomic Entertainment, first visited [Pullman Yard](#) in Atlanta's Kirkwood neighborhood, they were inspired. Where some saw a largely dormant site, they envisioned a 27-acre haven for entertainment. The 12 historic buildings would anchor the area while highlighting its notable past.

It would become home to immersive art experiences. A museum would highlight America's Pullman Porters' heritage and legacy as well as the first organized African American labor union. They imagined noteworthy restaurants, where visitors might find themselves dining next to celebrity actors, directors, and other artists in town for upcoming movies, commercials, and television productions shooting at the soundstage on site. They renamed the site the Pratt Pullman District, as a nod to

the site's history and because, as Rosenfelt puts it, "We visualized a creative city within a city."

Today, Rosenfelt and Meulen's vision for Pratt Pullman District is becoming a reality – in part because of support via Decide DeKalb's longstanding relationship with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its [Brownfields](#) program. The program enables Decide DeKalb to provide reimbursement loans to developers prepared to identify and remediate environmental issues while renovating property in ways that can reinvigorate the community.

At the former Pullman Yard, contaminants from a decades-old cleaning and stripping railcars had leached into the soil. Meulen recalls, "Our foremost concern was to clean up the site to make it welcoming and hospitable as a place for people and their >



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SEE THE PRATT
PULLMAN DISTRICT
FOR YOURSELF AT
[THE 360-DEGREE
IMMERSIVE VINCENT
VAN GOGH EXHIBIT](#)

PRATT PULLMAN DISTRICT

families to live and work safely. The Brownfields program made that possible for us." The process, which began in March 2020, turned out to be more complicated than initially expected, notes environmental engineer for EPA District 4, Wanda Jennings. However, she notes, "Those kinds of discoveries are what drive progress, as well."

A few miles east, where Covington Highway meets I-285, developer Stan Sugarman of Stryant Investment is using Brownfields support to transform a former dry cleaner into a 4,000-square-foot center of operations for two food truck operators, a caterer, and a cheesemaker. "Nobody wants to have to do remediation but Decide DeKalb's support diminished risks and made it easier to get construction moving forward."

Rosenfelt agrees, "We found Decide DeKalb very open not only to our needs, but also to our ideas for how to apply their assistance. Any business has unique issues. But finding a development partner eager to pursue solutions is paramount to success."

Jennings affirms, "Decide DeKalb's use of our grants is transforming distressed areas to attract jobs and promote economic development. That's what the Brownfields projects are designed to do, and it's why the relationship between the EPA and the Decide DeKalb Development Authority is such a powerful partnership." |

**"ANY BUSINESS
HAS UNIQUE
ISSUES. FINDING
A DEVELOPMENT
PARTNER EAGER
TO PURSUE
SOLUTIONS IS
PARAMOUNT TO
SUCCESS."**

Adam Rosenfelt

*Co-founder and co-owner
Atomic Entertainment*

Image:

Adam Rosenfelt and Maureen Meulen, founders and owners of Atomic Entertainment



DEKALB WELCOMES THE WORLD

"THE PERIMETER AREA
IS SO INTERNATIONAL.
GLOBAL COMPANIES ARE
HERE. WE FEEL LIKE WE
BELONG."

Oya Buyan
EAE USA General Manager



**Andrew Ly
and Family**
co-owners,
Sugar Bowl
Bakery

When EAE Group, a nearly 50-year-old, family-owned, global leader in electrical technology based in Turkey, planned to launch a United States subsidiary, its leaders could have chosen any place in the country. "New York, New Jersey, and California seemed attractive places for [EAE USA](#) because there are so many technology customers in those areas," explains EAE USA General Manager Oya Buyan. "But ultimately, the Perimeter area of DeKalb County made so much sense for us."

Proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and the Port of Savannah, lower taxes, and a more affordable cost of living influenced the company's decision to choose DeKalb County for its headquarters. Buyan also notes that EAE USA was drawn to the area's new investments in datacenter, infrastructure, construction, manufacturing, and automotive industries, as well as to major international companies that call the area home. EAE USA, which opened its doors in June 2020, expects to expand with local manufacturing and warehousing facilities and new employees, particularly those with electrical and mechanical engineering backgrounds.

[Sugar Bowl Bakery](#) is another company with roots outside of the United States that expanded its operations into DeKalb County. Co-owner, Andrew Ly, describes how he and his five siblings came to the US from Vietnam in 1979. "We had no money and didn't speak the language. Then, in 1984, we bought a coffee shop – and in the evenings, we baked. The business expanded one day at a time until we had seven locations and four or five manufacturing plants around San Francisco."

When the 2008 economic crisis hit, the family sold its retail locations to focus on marketing their baked goods to large outlets like Costco and Safeway. President Joel Feldman says the company recognized that facilities in the eastern part of the US would enable them to get its products to nationwide customers faster. In late 2019, the company discovered a former commercial bakery that had recently closed operations in Tucker. "The officials representing Tucker and DeKalb were so welcoming and supportive. That's what finally sealed our decision to bring operations here in February 2020."

In less than a year, Sugar Bowl Bakery ramped up two production lines in DeKalb, with more expansion planned for the future. Feldman adds that moving into a

space with bakery capabilities offered multiple advantages, both structurally and because the area already had a base of potential employees. "Ninety-five percent of the employees at the Tucker location were already in Georgia," he says, praising Georgia Quick Start, the nation's top-ranked workforce training program, for providing significant assistance in bringing their workforce up to speed.

Ly notes that DeKalb's deep diversity played a major role in the decision to move to Georgia. "I love the multicultural nature of DeKalb. We've always sought to provide opportunities to people, regardless of their ability to speak English, because that was my family's experience, too."

Oya Buyan also affirms the value of DeKalb's cultural diversity, "The Perimeter area is so international. Global companies are here. We feel like we belong." |



Sugar Bowl Bakery

Reimagining DeKalb's Entertainment Ecosystem

The 700 billion-dollar US entertainment industry – including film, television, music, and digital gaming/entertainment – has successfully found a home in DeKalb County for many excellent reasons: A wide variety of talented, experienced professionals ranging from camera operators and sound engineers to costumers and makeup artists. Thirteen soundstages representing more than one million square feet of production space. Tax credits for film, television, music, and digital entertainment productions. And, of course, the support of the [DeKalb Entertainment Commission \(DEC\)](#) team, a division of Decide DeKalb.

DEC's collaborative, supportive infrastructure stimulates the growth and success of creative ventures in film, television, music, and digital entertainment. As DEC Director Shelbia Jackson puts it, "Productions don't like surprises or complications. They like cooperation. They like availability and responsibility, and responsiveness. That's what we deliver."

Local director, designer, and puppeteer, Molly Coffee, shares her appreciation for DEC's support of the local creative community. She recalls how she and Jackson first connected over gaps and opportunities that both recognized within the local film industry. "That was the start of the relationship and the start of my co-founding [Film Impact Georgia](#), a non-profit advocacy organization for local independent filmmakers."

"I BELIEVE WE HAVE THE
OPPORTUNITY, ULTIMATELY, TO
CREATE A MORE SUSTAINABLE
ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY HERE."

Molly Coffee

Director, Designer, Puppeteer and
Co-founder of Film Impact Georgia



Image courtesy of Michael Rivera

Jackson notes that while the county's resources for pre-production, production, and post-production make it a magnet for the entertainment industry, "that's where it begins, not where it ends." She explains, "We build deep relationships with studios, with networks, with professionals, inviting their advice and expertise. We work with a lot of small businesses that support productions with everything from catering to generators. We're a creative education resource – from creative arts in our schools and the [DeKalb Student Film Festival](#) to our collaboration with university film, theatre, and business. Put it all together, and it's a complete ecosystem for entertainment economic development."

Following a strong start to the year with 26 active productions and February's annual DeKalb Student Film Festival, 2020 put that ecosystem to the test. Starting in March, what first appeared to be a two-week shut-down for film production extended through the summer. "Thankfully, our down time wasn't idle," notes [Eagle Rock Studios Atlanta](#) Vice President of Studio Operations Beth Talbert. "We started looking for ways to support our clients, initially thinking it would be as simple as supplying productions with masks and gloves. That transformed to using the shut-down time to implement many facility improvements to accommodate COVID-19 production protocols including such things as air purification systems, hand-washing stations, and touchless doors.

A high level of energy and activity extended to other DEC-supported initiatives and activities, as well. For instance, the commission created an online COVID-19 Resource Guide. The annual AJC [Decatur Book Festival](#), sponsored in part by the DEC, shifted to an online format to reach hundreds of visitors with readings, panel discussions, and workshops for people of all ages. DEC also pivoted its annual October [entertainment expo](#) to offer a virtual monthly version that ran from May to October with eight online masterclasses and information sessions. The virtual expo gave some 9,000 people exposure to DeKalb's capabilities and resources – more than the 2018 and 2019 DEC Entertainment Expos combined.

Despite the shut-down, by the end of 2020, DeKalb County hosted the production of more than 60 television series and feature films, including [Stranger Things](#), [Loki](#), [Doom Patrol](#), [Lovecraft Country](#), [MacGyver](#), [The Underground Railroad](#), [Willy's Wonderland](#), and [Dear Evan Hansen](#).

Coffee believes that as exciting as the commercial film industry's opportunities are to DeKalb, 2020 showed that building creative talent from the ground up here is equally important. "We have the opportunity to support and start more creative film work here, to grow our local film infrastructure and, ultimately, create a more sustainable entertainment economy."

"The year 2020 challenged us, but it did not define us," affirms Jackson, "Looking ahead to the future, I can see that our challenges have only made us stronger." |

2020 DEKALB ENTERTAINMENT AT A GLANCE

15

Virtual Events

75

Film Permit Applications



68

Film, television, commercials, and interactive entertainment productions

2020

Financials

Statement of Net Position

TOTAL ASSETS	7,200,153
CURRENT ASSETS	4,601,952
NON-CURRENT ASSETS	2,531,351
DEFERRED OUTFLOWS OF RESOURCES	66,850
TOTAL LIABILITIES	2,965,206
CURRENT LIABILITIES	1,235,206
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	1,730,000
TOTAL NET POSITION	4,234,947
NET INVESTMENT IN CAPITAL ASSETS	68,201
UNRESTRICTED	4,166,746

Statement of Revenue

TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE	3,902,908
ANNUAL ADMINISTRATIVE FEES	363,524
APPLICATION AND ISSUER FEES	261,500
PROGRAM INCOME	269,375
DEKALB COUNTY INTERGOVERNMENTAL INCOME	1,278,789
LEASE INCOME	50,050
OTHER FEES AND CHARGES	1,679,670



TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES **2,618,311**

SALARIES, WAGES, BONUSES	818,470
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS, PAYROLL TAXES	143,245
BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	337,026
CONSULTING SERVICES	488,902
DUES, SUBSCRIPTIONS	76,287
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	152,199
RENT, UTILITIES	141,656
DEPRECIATION	362,037
OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	98,489

CHANGE IN NET POSITION **1,187,987**
NON-OPERATING REVENUES (EXPENSES)

INTEREST INCOME	14,406
INTEREST EXPENSE	-111,016
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	-96,610

These financial statements have not been subjected to an audit, review, or compilation engagement, and no assurance is provided on them.





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