



MORGAN COUNTY COMMISSION
A G E N D A
March 19, 2024
5:00 PM
150 East Washington Street, Madison, GA
2nd Floor Board Room

Pledge and Invocation

Agenda Approval

Presentations

1. Cost of Community Services (COCS) study and Critical Mass study-**pg. #2**

Minutes

2. March 05, 2024 BOC Meeting-**pg. #55**

New Business

3. 2024 Road Resurfacing-**pg. #60**
4. 2024 Road Patching and Repair-**pg. #63**
5. Budget Amendment-**pg. #65**
6. Public Comments on Agenda Items
7. Commissioner Comments



Morgan County, Georgia Critical Mass Study

By

Tom Daniels, Ph.D.

March 31, 2024



Table of Contents

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Acknowledgments | 2 |
| A Note on Research Methods and Data | 3 |
| Executive Summary | 4 |
| Chapter One: Morgan County Setting, Agriculture, and Forestry. | 8 |
| Chapter Two: What is Critical Mass, How to Measure It, and Estimating Critical Mass in Morgan County | 21 |
| Chapter Three: Factors That Will Affect the Critical Mass of the Agriculture and Forestry Industries in Morgan County | 33 |
| Chapter Four: Recommendations for Sustaining Critical Mass in the Agricultural and Forestry Industries in Morgan County | 42 |
| Appendix One: Morgan County: A Diverse Agricultural Base, 2022 | 44 |
| References | 51 |

Acknowledgments

This study would not have been possible without the help of many people who care about the future of Morgan County. The County Board of Commissioners together with the Madison-Morgan Conservancy provided financial support for the study. Christine McCauley Watts, Executive Director of the Conservancy, managed the study effort and made many contacts with key people in Morgan County. Several landowners, agricultural business owners, and agricultural leaders provided insights about Morgan County: John Ruark, Everett Williams, Whitey Hunt, Weyman Hunt, Lee Nunn, Rachel Kinsaul, Jim Markley, Leslie Erickson and Jim Cantrell, Devon Dartnell, Jay Moon, Lucy Ray, Wendy Coe, Robert Bailey, Cindi Fetch, Dr. Daniel Pike, and Keith Kelly. Reports from the University of Georgia's Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development on Georgia Farm Gate Value and the US Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture were very helpful in presenting the agricultural activity in Morgan County in recent years.

A Note on Research Methods and Data from the US Department of Agriculture Agricultural Census and the University of Georgia Farm Gate Value Report.

This study relied on two methods to gather information about the agricultural and forestry industry in Morgan County. The first method featured a review of published data on Morgan County. I used information from the US Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture, 2012, 2017, and 2022 and the University of Georgia annual Georgia Farm Gate Value Report, 2018 to 2022. In addition, I reviewed the Morgan County Comprehensive Plan 2022-2036. The second method involved interviews with agricultural leaders, farmers, agricultural support businesses, and county officials.

Every five years the US Department of Agriculture publishes the Agricultural Census of the United States. The Census contains a wealth of information about US agriculture, from land in farms to the value of farm output to the value of specific crops and livestock raised in each county. As with any large data gathering project, there are some limitations to the Census data. The Department of Agriculture mails out surveys to about three million farm families. The return rate is an impressive 60 percent. But this still leaves gaps in data about farming at the county level. So, the Census data is best thought of as an estimate of the number of farms, land in farms, and annual value of farm production by crops and livestock in a county.

Especially when for determining changes in the amount of land in farms, the survey and sample data have drawbacks. A better method would be remote sensing together with mapping based on Geographic Information Systems followed up by ground truthing to identify what land is actually in farm use. This would be a much more expensive process, but also more accurate in finding changes in farmland acreage in a county.

The University of Georgia's Farm Gate Value Reports 2018-2022 have a wealth of information on county crop and livestock production. The reports show the fluctuations in the value of agricultural and timber output from year to year. When the Farm Gate Report and Agricultural Census cover the same year, I have tended to favor the University of Georgia data as more accurate. In the case of the value of timber production, I have relied on data supplied by the Morgan County Tax Commissioner.

The Morgan County Comprehensive Plans drafted in 2004, 2017, and 2022 contain important information about Morgan County as well as specific policy goals and objectives. The recommendations in Chapter 4 of this report are designed to be consistent with those goals and objectives.

Executive Summary

Many counties across the nation have asked the question: How much land do we need to continue our farm and forestry operations well into the future? Critical Mass is generally defined as the minimum amount of farmland or forestland that will maintain the farm or forest support businesses and the overall agricultural or forestry industry. The purpose of this Critical Mass study is to estimate the amount of land and the value of crops and livestock required to sustain the agricultural and forestry industry and the farm and forest support businesses in Morgan County for the foreseeable future.

Morgan County

This report first looked at the farming and forestry activity in Morgan County from 2012 to 2022, including:

- 1) The amount of land engaged in farming and forestry;
- 2) The value of the crops, livestock, and fiber produced;
- 3) The types of farming and forestry operations; and,
- 4) The support businesses—feed mills, machinery dealers, veterinarians, processors, and transportation companies—that play a key role in sustaining the agriculture and forest products industries.

Morgan County is located in central Georgia on the eastern edge of the ever-expanding Atlanta metro region. The City of Atlanta is 50 miles to the west, Athens, home to the University of Georgia, lies 20 miles to the north, and Lake Oconee is 20 miles to the east. Morgan County is known for its rural landscape, attractive towns, and historic architecture. Morgan County covers 227,200 acres, of which 97,901 acres were in farm use in 2022, according to the US Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture. Morgan County had a population of 20,097 people in 2020, an increase of 2,229 people or 12.5 percent over the 2010 population. This is a growth rate slightly higher than for all of Georgia and well above the US growth rate of 7.4 percent. Despite this recent growth, the County's population density of 58 people per square mile indicates a rural county.

Morgan County has several types of farming operations, which all together generated more than \$173 million in sales in 2022, according to the University of Georgia's Farm Gate Report.¹ Food and fiber commodities involve agricultural and forestry supply chains, both production inputs and raw products that are transported and refined, which result in additional jobs and economic activity. The University of Georgia's Ag 2023 Snapshots estimates that Morgan County's agricultural output

¹ The US Department of Agriculture reported \$145 million in the value of agricultural production for Morgan County in 2022. My sense is that the University of Georgia Farm Gate Report for 2022 is more accurate because it includes the value of timber harvested in the county and the value of horse boarding and training. The Census of Agriculture does not include these sectors of the Morgan County agricultural economy. I have added the value of timber production figure provided by the Morgan County Tax Commissioner for 2022, which puts that total value of farm and timber production at \$174 million for 2022.

results in an additional \$392 million in economic activity and 4,665 jobs. Thus, the broader impact of Morgan County's agricultural industry on jobs and economic output exceeds \$500 million a year, a significant figure in a rural county. The leading crops are horticulture and hay (25,000 acres), corn (3,000 acres), wheat (3,000 acres), and cotton (2,000 acres). Livestock production accounts for most of the value of the county's agricultural production. The county's leading livestock sectors include chickens (broilers), beef cattle, milk cows, and horses. Morgan County is Georgia's second leading horse boarding and training county, featuring hunter-jumpers. Morgan County is sixth in the state in beef production, and fourth in the value of dairy output. Forest products accounted for \$3.4 million in sales in 2022, according to the Morgan County Tax records. That year, Morgan County ranked 34th out of Georgia's 159 counties in the annual value of farm output at almost \$174 million, which was a decrease of nearly \$38 million from 2021. Some of this decline may have been influenced by the COVID pandemic and the slowdown in the national economy and the demand for horticultural products, which is an important segment of Morgan County's agricultural industry. Even so, there has been significant recent investment in agriculture to move from \$140 million in farm output in 2018 to more than \$173 million in 2022. Such investment bodes well for the future of agriculture in Morgan County.

Critical Mass

This report focused on two measures of critical mass for Morgan County:

- 1) The minimum acres needed to maintain the agriculture and forestry industries; and
- 2) The minimum value of farm and forestry production needed to maintain the agriculture and forestry industries for the foreseeable future.

The report compares Morgan County to the other 158 counties in Georgia to show that counties with at least 75,000 acres in farms and \$100 million or more in annual farm output lost less farmland than counties with less than 75,000 acres and under \$100 million in annual farm and forestry product sales.

Among Georgia's 159 counties in 2017, 20 counties (including Morgan) had more than 75,000 acres in farmland and over \$100 million in farm product sales. But another 12 counties had less than 75,000 acres in farmland and more than \$100 million in farm output. Also, 27 counties had more than 75,000 acres but less than \$100 million in farm product sales. Only one county had between 50,000 and 60,000 acres and more than \$100 million in farm product sales. In the 60,000 to 75,000 acres category, 13 counties had less than \$100 million in farm output and only five counties had more than \$100 million.

In 2022, 27 Georgia counties, including Morgan County, had more than 75,000 acres of farmland and over \$100 million in farm product sales. Five counties with 60,000 to 75,000 acres had more than \$100 million in crop and livestock sales. Five other counties had less than 60,000 acres and over \$100 million in farm product sales. Note

that all figures are in constant dollars, unadjusted for inflation. Inflation ran at a rate of about 20 percent between 2017 and 2022 (Macrotrends, 2024).

The \$100 million in sales level is important because that level of sales helps to maintain the agricultural support businesses and counties with less than \$100 million in sales saw a loss in farmland between 2017 and 2022, whereas counties with more than \$100 million in sales and more than 75,000 acres had an increase in land in farms over that period.

If Morgan County can maintain at least 75,000 acres in farmland, it is likely that the county farmers will be able to generate more than \$100 million in annual farm product sales. It appears that 60,000 acres is the absolute minimum that Morgan County would need to maintain at least \$100 million a year in farm output, based on 2022 dollars.

Factors That Can Affect Critical Mass

Any prediction of future farming and forestry activity must recognize the potential impacts of several unknowns, such as:

- 1) The decisions of landowners about their land, especially as land passes between generations, as well as the amount of land farmers own or rent, and the property tax burden;
- 2) Changing market conditions for food and fiber commodities which may be positive or negative, but over which farmers and foresters have little control;
- 3) Population growth and the demand for land for residential and commercial development;
- 4) The value of farmland and existing farm buildings, which can influence the number of new and beginning farmers and young farms under age 35;
- 5) Changes in technology, such as the use of satellites, drones, and robots for precision farming and forestry, seed and livestock genetics, and the blending of solar energy production with food production;
- 6) Farm labor and farm support businesses; and,
- 7) The impact of climate change, which is expected to create hotter conditions over time, and may also involve periods of drought or intense rainfall. Climate change could reduce crop and livestock yields and extend the range of diseases and pests.

Critical Mass and Land Preservation: Recommendations and Goals

This report found that the value of agricultural output was a better measure of critical mass than acres in farmland. Counties with more than \$100 million in farm and forest product sales appeared to be more stable in terms of increases in farm product sales and less loss of farmland. The Morgan County Comprehensive Plans drafted in

2004, 2017, and 2022 contain important information about Morgan County as well as specific policy goals and objectives for farmland preservation. The recommendations presented here are designed to be consistent with those goals and objectives.

Recommendations. Goal: To maintain a critical mass of agricultural land and agricultural production, it would be ideal to retain at least one-third of Morgan County or 75,000 acres in agricultural production. This goal can be achieved through a combination of land preservation and agricultural zoning. Priority mapping of areas of the county and farms that would be good candidates for preservation would be helpful. But it is important to note that *land preservation is a voluntary process* and involves legally binding agreements between willing sellers of development rights (also known as conservation easements) and willing buyers—a private, non-profit land trust, a government agency, or both. It will be helpful to maintain the county agricultural zoning which can provide short- to medium-term land protection. Agricultural zoning covers more than half of Morgan County and has a five-acre minimum lot size.

Goal: Preserve 45,000 acres of farmland, forests, natural areas, or parks. Objective 1.0 of the Morgan County Joint Comprehensive Plan issued in 2004 stated: “Meet or exceed State of Georgia Greenspace goals by permanently protecting more than 20% of the county’s land area in farmland, forests, natural areas or parks” (Morgan County, 2004, p. 135). Twenty percent of Morgan County would equal about 45,000 acres.

So far, about 12,000 acres of greenspace have been preserved in Morgan County, including some 6,000 acres of private land preserved by conservation easements, according to the Madison-Morgan Conservancy. There are 5,804 acres in Hard Labor Creek State Park, and more than 110 acres in Morgan County parks.

Goal: Preserve 15,000 acres of farm and forestland by 2045 through Morgan County, private landowners, and conservation organizations. This goal would aim to preserve 15,000 acres of farm and forestland by 2045 out of the overall goal of 45,000 acres. An important strategy is to take advantage of matching funds from the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program/ Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP/ALE) operated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency within the US Department of Agriculture. In addition, in 2023, the Georgia legislature created the Georgia Farmland Conservation Fund Program to purchase development rights (conservation easements) on farmland. Note that the 2022-2036 Comprehensive Plan Update included a goal to: “Protect agricultural, environmental, and historic resources and preserve open space” (Morgan County, 2022, p. 16). One supporting objective stated: “Identify and pursue funding sources for protection of green and open space, greenways and gateways” (p. 26). Another objective called for “Innovative Land Conservation Tools: Research and develop implementation plans for use on innovative land conservation tools. Examples include: transfer of development rights, purchase of developments rights, conservation easements, partnerships with farm steward organizations” (p. 32).

Both this goal and these objectives from the 2022 Comprehensive Plan reflect the 2004 Joint Comprehensive Plan Objective 4.0 which stated: “Support the continued existence of a viable agricultural and forestry sector in the county” (Morgan County, 2004, p. 138) and Policy 4.2 called for “Conservation easements and purchase of development rights programs to enable landowners to realize value from their land as they conserve it” (ibid.).

Chapter 1: Morgan County Setting, Agriculture, and Forestry.

Morgan County is located in central Georgia on the eastern edge of the ever-expanding Atlanta metro region. The City of Atlanta is 50 miles to the west, Athens, home to the University of Georgia, lies 20 miles to the north, and Lake Oconee is 20 miles to the east. Morgan County is known for its rural landscape, attractive towns, and historic architecture. Morgan County covers 227,200 acres, of which 97,901 acres were in farm use in 2022, according to the US Department of Agriculture’s Census of Agriculture.² Morgan County had a population of 20,097 people in 2020, an increase of 2,229 people or 12.5 percent over the 2010 population. This is a growth rate slightly higher than for all of Georgia and well above the US growth rate of 7.4 percent. Despite this recent growth, the County’s population density of 58 people per square mile indicates a rural county. The leading population centers are the City of Madison (4,447 in 2020), Bostwick (380), Buckhead (196), and Rutledge (876)(see Figure 3).

Morgan County has a diverse agricultural base featuring several types of farming operations, which all together generated more than \$173 million in sales in 2022 (see Table 1).³ The University of Georgia’s Ag 2023 Snapshots estimates that Morgan County’s agricultural output results in an additional \$392 million in economic activity and 4,665 jobs. Thus, the broader impact of Morgan County’s agricultural industry on jobs and economic output exceeds \$500 million a year, a significant figure in a rural county. The leading crops are horticulture and hay (25,000 acres), silage (4,000 acres) cotton (2,000 acres), and wheat and soybeans (about 1,000 acres each). Livestock production accounts for a majority of the value of the county’s agricultural production. The county’s leading livestock sectors include chickens (broilers), beef cattle, dairy cows (milk), and horses. Morgan County is Georgia’s second leading horse boarding and training county, featuring hunter-jumpers. Morgan County ranks third in the state in the value of livestock production, not including chickens. Morgan County is sixth in the state in beef cattle production and fourth in dairy cows and milk production. Commercial timber harvested is valued at \$3.4 million. In 2022, Morgan County’s \$173 million in farm

² The 2017 Census of Agriculture reported 88,251 acres of farmland in Morgan County. It is hard to imagine an increase of more than 9,000 acres of farmland in five years to 97,901 in 2022. But the USDA uses a sampling approach that has been criticized as not as accurate as remote sensing or farm property tax assessments as ways to determine the amount of land in agriculture.

³ The US Department of Agriculture defines a farm as capable of producing at least \$1,000 a year in farm product sales.

output ranked 34th out of Georgia's 159 counties. In 2021, Morgan County ranked 15th in the value of farm production among Georgia counties with \$211 million (see Table 2). *Much of this decline in the sale of agricultural products came from a drop in the sale of horticultural crops. The COVID pandemic and a slow down in residential construction likely contributed to the decrease in horticultural sales in Morgan County. The recovery in the national economy and home building industry post-COVID should help spur a rebound in the County's horticulture industry.*

The Structure of the Agricultural and Forestry Industries in Morgan County

A county agricultural industry consists of suitable land for growing crops and raising livestock, the number, size, and types of farming operations, the annual value of agricultural production, the number of farmers and their average age, and the agricultural support businesses, such as feed mills, machinery dealers, veterinarians, processors, and transportation companies.

Morgan County has an adequate amount of farmland. In 2022, more than 97,000 acres, or more than one-third of the county was in farm use and 22.4% of Morgan County's soils are prime farmland (Morgan County Joint Plan 2004, p. 124). As the 2025 Joint Comprehensive Plan states: "the prime soils in the unincorporated areas of Morgan County should be a major focus of any conservation efforts in this plan or other county documents and programs" (Morgan County Joint Plan 2004, p. 124).

The authors of the 2004 Joint Plan explain:

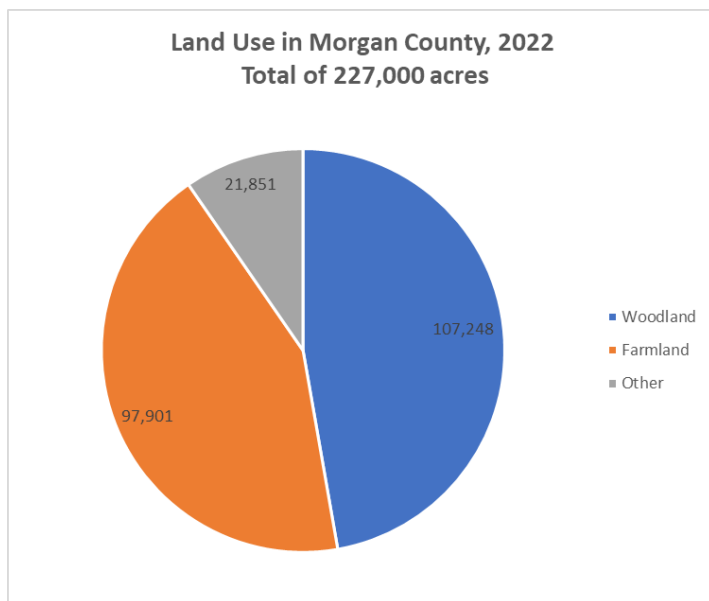
"Morgan County is in the middle part of the Piedmont Province in the gently rolling landscape of the Central Georgia region. The northern and western part of the county is higher and more sloping than the southern and eastern parts. The highest elevation in the county is 820 feet and the lowest point on Lake Oconee is 426 feet. Although the variation in topography is over 400 feet, the change is so gradual that there are almost no steep slopes over 25% in the entire county. This means that there are relatively few areas which are too costly to grade or too fragile to develop when the potential for erosion is considered" (Morgan County / Cities Joint Comprehensive Plan 2004, p. 122).

Morgan County has an extensive amount of tree cover of about 145,000 acres, of which more than 37,000 acres are found on farms. Figure 1 shows the distribution of land uses in the county, with woodland being the largest segment, followed by farms, and the other uses such as developed land, waterways, and roads.

Figure 2 displays a map of land use types in Morgan County. Again, the dominance of woodland and farmland is evident in the amount of area colored green on the map.

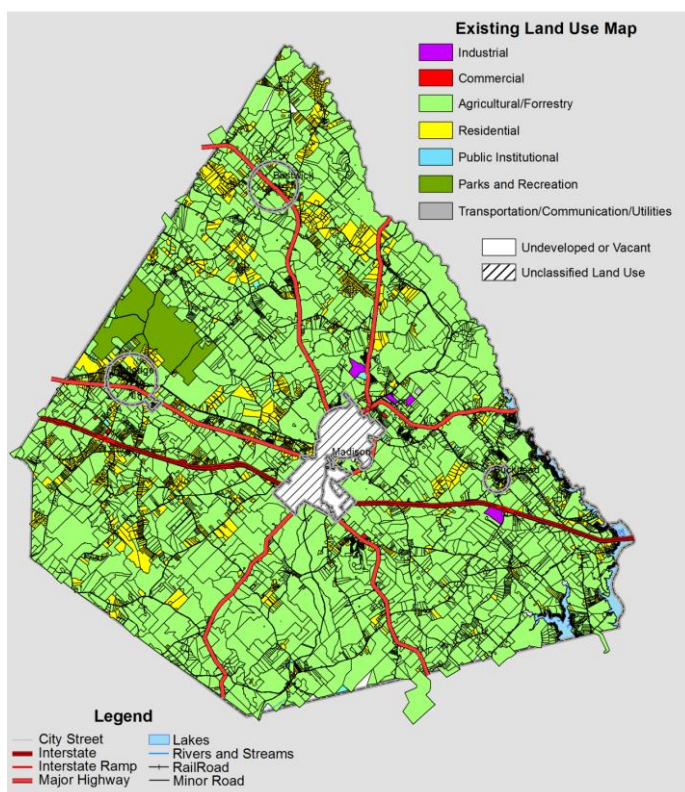
Figure 3 is a map of the character areas in Morgan County from the 2022 Comprehensive Plan. Character areas are required by the State of Georgia as part of

Figure 1. Land Use in Morgan County, 2022.



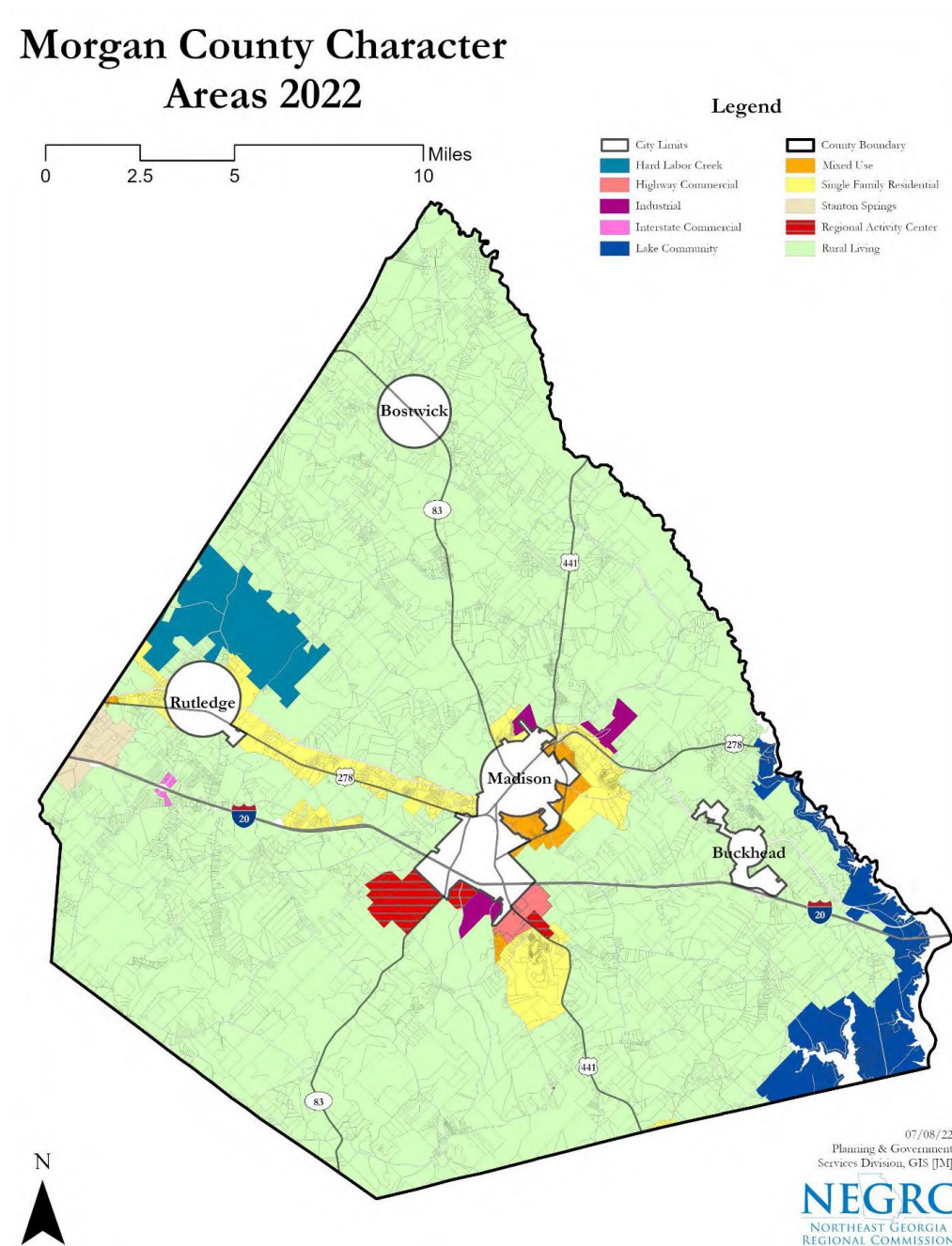
Source: US Department of Agriculture, 2022. Devon Dartnell, Georgia Forestry Commission.

Figure 2. Land Use in Morgan County, 2017.



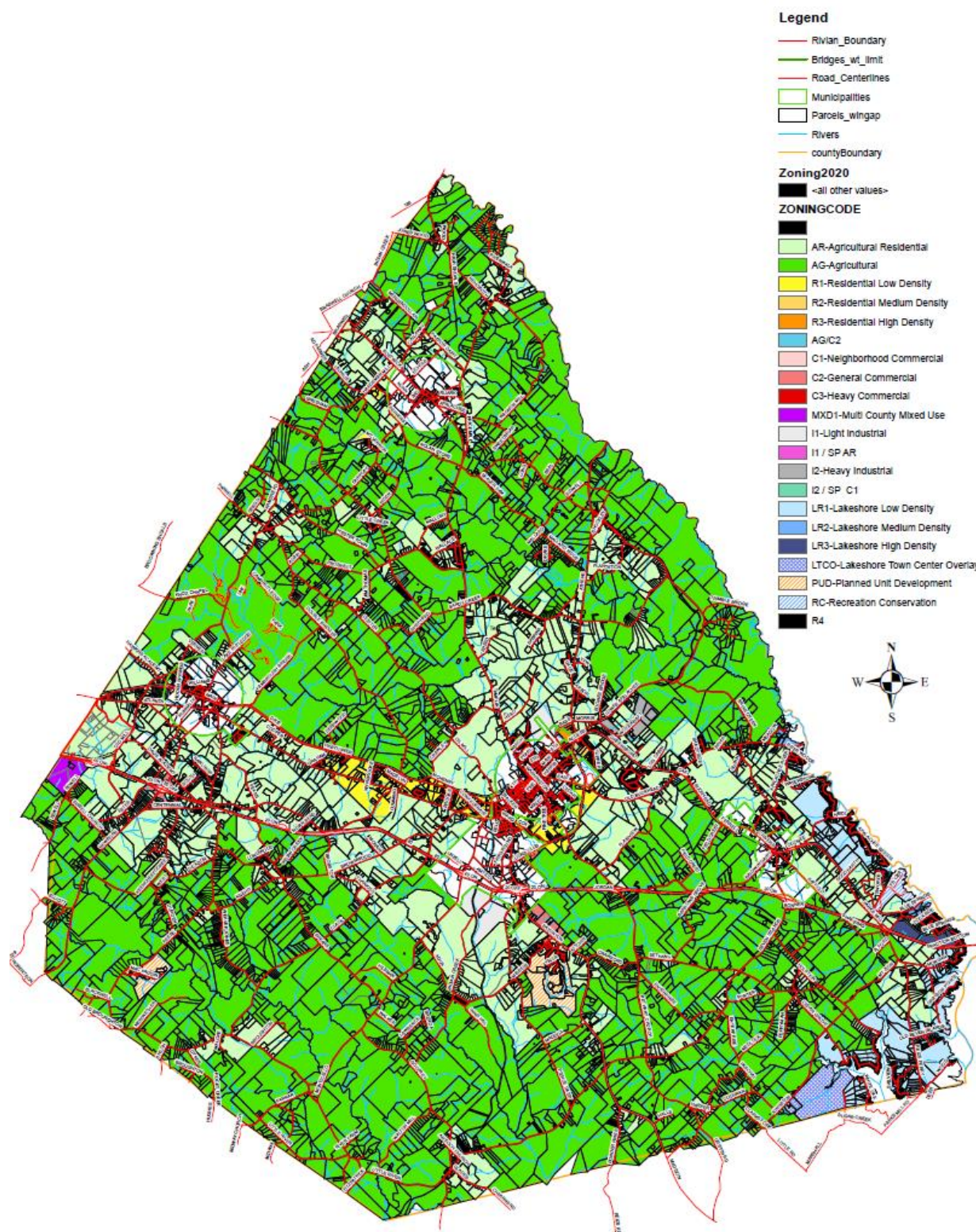
Source: Morgan County Comprehensive Plan, 2017, p. 34.

Figure 3. Morgan County Character Areas, 2023.



Source: Morgan County Comprehensive Plan 2022-2036, 2022, p. 37.

Figure 4. Zoning Map of Morgan County.



Source: Morgan County Planning Office, 2020.

local comprehensive plans. A large majority of the county is designated for “Rural Living,” which includes farms, woodlands, and rural residential land uses.

Figure 4 presents the zoning map for Morgan County. Reflecting the land use map and the character area map, a large majority of the county is zoned for agriculture (darker green), and agriculture residential (lighter green).

Agricultural Zoning in Morgan County

Agricultural zoning can help to provide protection for commercial farming operations by limiting nearby residential and commercial development that could lead to conflicts with farming operations. Morgan County has two agricultural zones: The AG Zone (AG) and the Ag Res Zone (AR). The Agricultural Zone (AG) is “comprised primarily of open farmland and land used for agricultural, livestock and poultry production. The intent of this regulation is to encourage the maintenance of the general rural character” (Morgan County, 2021, p. 4-2). The AG Zone has a five-acre minimum lot size for a dwelling unit and a 12-acre minimum lot size for an estate subdivision (p. 4-19). The AG zone applies to most of Morgan County, shown in the dark green areas on Figure 4.

The Agricultural Residential Zone (AR) is “is designed to provide the landowner an opportunity to engage in limited hobby-type agricultural activities for personal use while maintaining a low density, rural, single-family residential character” (Morgan County, 2021, p. 4-3). The AR Zone has a two-acre minimum lot size for a dwelling unit and a five-acre minimum lot size for an estate subdivision (p. 4-19).

Crops and Livestock Production Trends in Production in Morgan County, 2012-2022

Chickens, beef cattle, milk from cows, and horticulture are the major agricultural operations in Morgan County (see Table 1 and Figure 5). Poultry for meat and eggs make up 42% of the value of Georgia’s total farm output and 37% of the value of Morgan County’s 2022 farm production. Horticulture is a larger segment of the agricultural economy in Morgan County, compared to the entire state of Georgia. The same is true for milk and beef production. Timber and forestry products and row and forage crops make up somewhat more valuable segments of the agricultural economy in percentage terms at the state level than in Morgan County. For additional information on Morgan County’s crops and livestock production, see Appendix One.

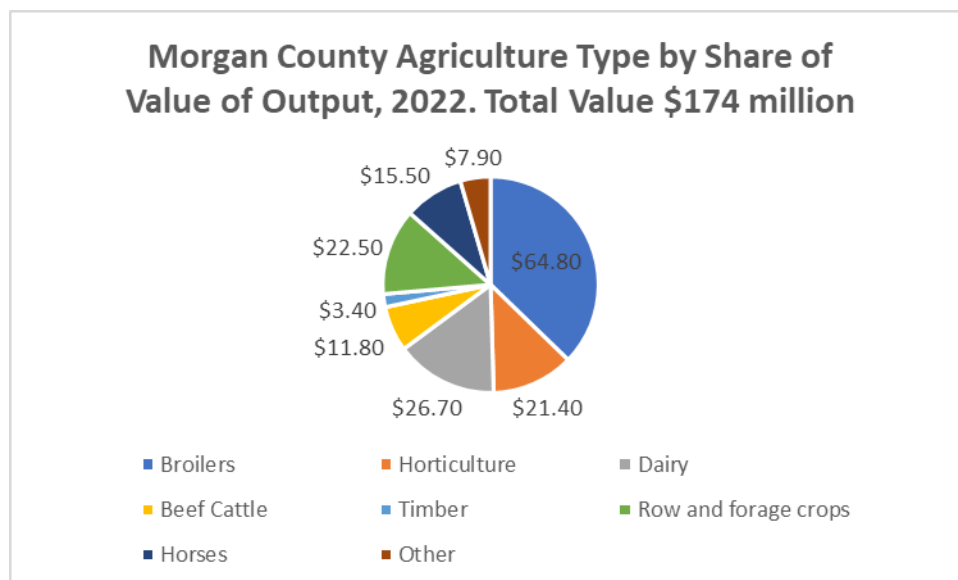
Table 1. A Comparison of Morgan County and State of Georgia Agriculture and Forestry Industries, 2022.

| Commodity | Morgan County | | State of Georgia | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | Value | Percent of County Total | Value | Percent of State Total |
| Broilers and Eggs | \$64.8 million | 37% | \$7.75 billion | 42% |
| Horticulture | \$21.4 million | 12% | \$1.36 billion | 7% |
| Dairy Cows/Milk | \$26.7 million | 15% | \$.38 billion | 2% |
| Beef Cattle | \$11.8 million | 7% | \$.73 billion | 4% |
| Horse boarding | \$15.5 million | 9% | \$.19 billion | 1% |
| Timber and Forestry Products | \$3.4 million* | 2% | \$.98 billion | 5% |
| Row and Forage Crops | \$22.5 million | 13% | \$3.31 billion | 18% |
| Other | \$7.9 million | 14% | \$3.83 billion | 22% |
| TOTAL | \$174.0 million | 100% | \$18.34 billion | 100% |

*Note that the Georgia Farm Gate Report listed \$2.9 million for timber sales in Morgan County in 2022, whereas the Morgan County Tax Commissioner reported \$3.4 million.

Source: University of Georgia Farm Gate Report, 2022, Morgan County Tax Commissioner, 2024.

Figure 5. Morgan County Agriculture Type by Share of Value of Output (\$174 million total) in 2022.



Source: University of Georgia Farm Gate Report, 2022, Morgan County Tax Commissioner, 2024.

Georgia produced forest products valued at \$977 million in 2022. In Morgan County that year, landowners sold \$2.51 million in timber and \$320,000 in Christmas trees. Morgan County ranked first among Georgia counties in Christmas tree production. The total forestry products were listed at \$2.9 million in the Georgia Farm Gate Report, but the Morgan County Tax Commissioner reported \$3.4 million in timber sales in 2022, based on the ad valorem tax on timber sales.

In 2022, Georgia farmers sold \$1.59 billion in livestock, milk, and farm-raised fish, according to the University of Georgia Farm Gate Report. The livestock category does not include poultry and eggs. Morgan County ranked third overall in the market value of livestock products sold at \$55.75 million. The county also came in sixth for beef cows, fourth for dairy cows and milk production, fourth for value of hay, second for horse boarding and training, and third for hogs.

Poultry and eggs were Georgia's leading agricultural sector in 2022 with \$7.75 billion in sales. Morgan County farmers have mirrored the growth of poultry production with broilers accounting for the largest sector of the county's agriculture at \$63.68 million in sales, according to the Georgia Farm Gate Report. The total value of poultry and eggs in Morgan County was \$64.82 million in 2022.

The total overall value of the county's agricultural output in 2022 was almost \$174 million, a decrease of nearly \$38 million from 2021 (see Table 2). Even so, there has been significant recent investment in agriculture to move from \$140 million in farm output in 2018 to more than \$173 million in 2022. Such investment bodes well for the future of agriculture in Morgan County.

Table 2. Changes in Value of Agricultural Production in Morgan County Agriculture, 2018-2022.

| Year | Value of Production | Change in Value | Percentage Change | Rank Among All Counties |
|------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2022 | \$173.55 million | -\$37.78 million | -17.9% | 34 |
| 2021 | \$211.33 million | +\$67.10 million | +46.4% | 15 |
| 2020 | \$144.32 million | +\$19.82 million | +15.9% | 23 |
| 2019 | \$124.50 million | -\$15.57 million | -11.1% | 35 |
| 2018 | \$140.07 million | --- | --- | 26 |

Source: University of Georgia Farm Gate reports, 2018-2022.

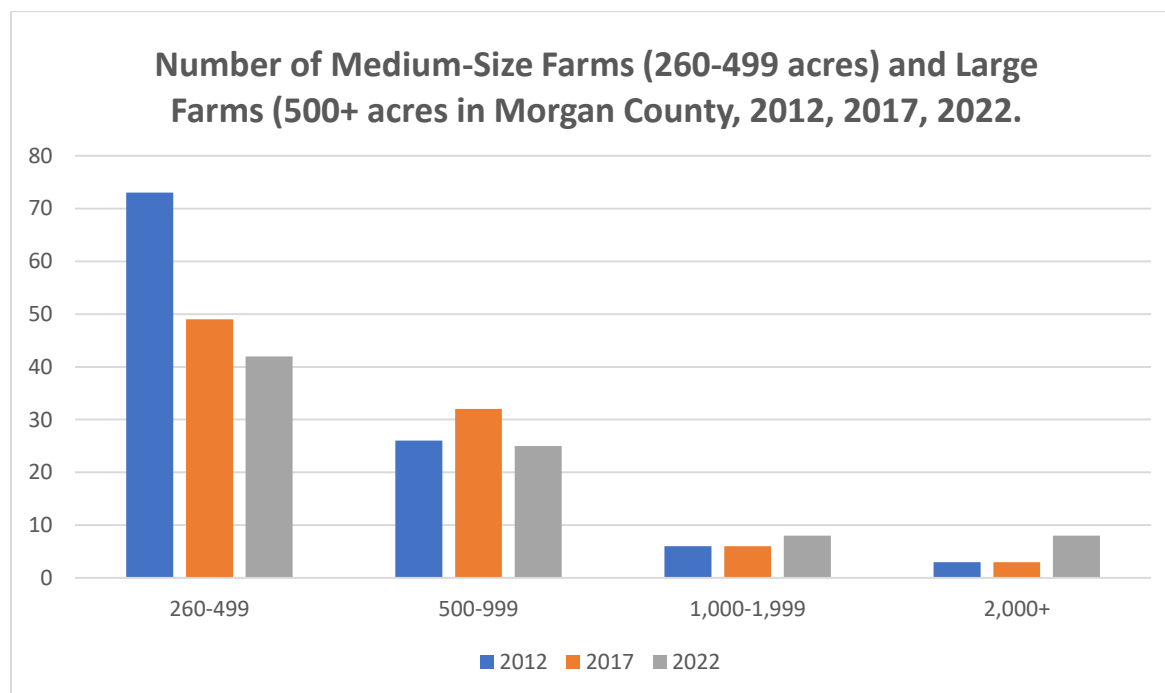
The number of farms by size is an important measure of the degree of concentration in the local agricultural economy. In Morgan County, in 2022 there were 537 farms with an average size of 182 acres; in 2017 there were 513 farms with an average size of 172 acres. Five trends stand out:

- 1) The number of medium size farms (260-499 acres) has declined from 73 in 2012 to 42 in 2022 (see Figure 6 below and Table F in the Appendix);

- 2) The number of large farms of 500 or more acres has increased from 35 in 2012 to 41 in 2022 (see Figure 6 below and Table F in the Appendix);
- 3) The acres in medium size farms (260-499 acres) declined by 1,500 acres from 2017 to 2022 (see Figure 7);
- 4) The acres in large farms of 500 or more acres increased by 8,194 acres from 38,446 acres to 46,640 acres (see Figure 8);
- 5) Farms with more than \$500,000 a year in farm product sales account for more than 90 percent of Morgan County's agricultural production (see Table 4).

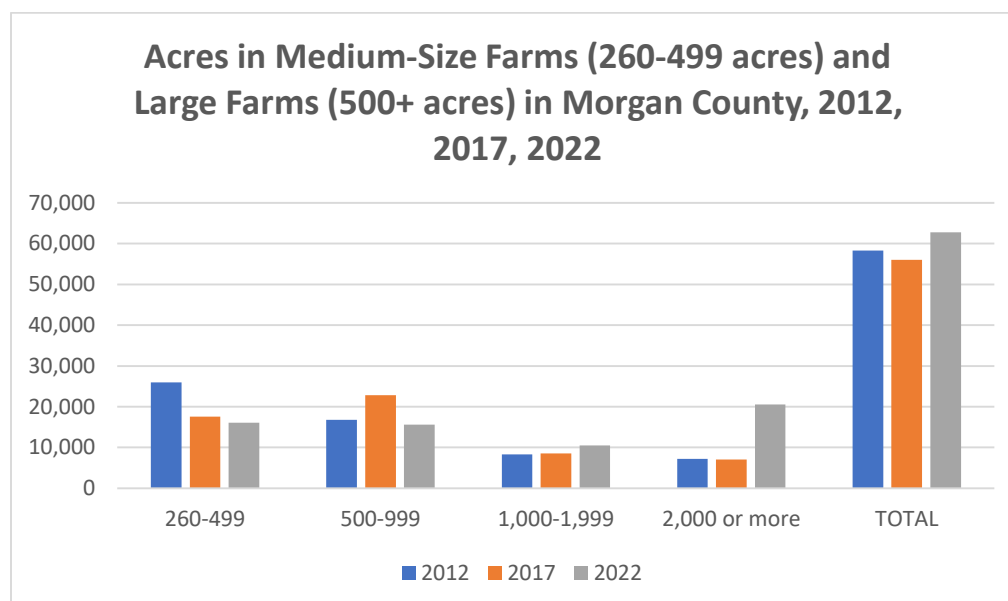
These trends in medium- and large-size farms in Morgan County are similar to national trends of declining numbers of medium-size farms and an increase in the number of large farms.

Figure 6. Number of Medium-Size Farms and Large Farms by Size in Morgan County, 2012, 2017, 2022.



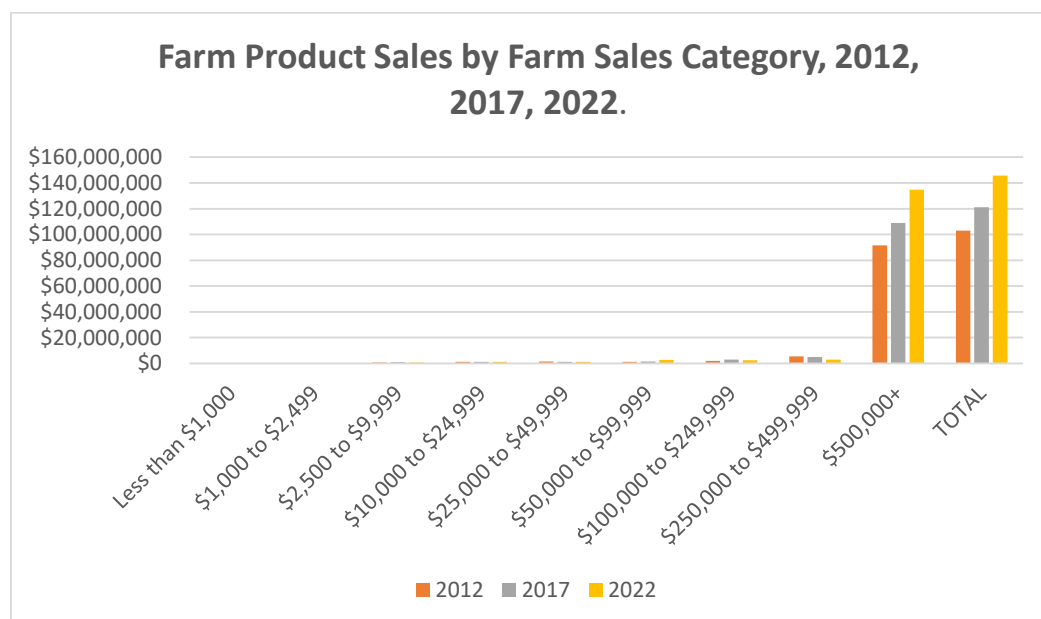
Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Figure 7. Acres in Medium-Size Farms and Large Farms in Morgan County, 2012, 2017 and 2022.



Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Figure 8. The Value of Farm Product Sales by Farm Sales Category in Morgan County, 2012-2022.



Note: Dollar amounts are not adjusted for inflation. The 2012 numbers are in 2012 dollars, the 2017 numbers are in 2017 dollars, and the 2022 numbers are in 2022 dollars.

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Change in the Land Use Mix on Farms

There are four main types of land use on farms: harvested cropland, pasture, woodlands, and other uses, such as waterways, wetlands, and farmsteads. A shift in the mix of land uses over time can signal changes in agricultural production. For example, an increase in other acres might suggest more farm buildings, such as chicken houses. An increase in pasture might suggest more cattle raising. And an increase in harvested cropland would indicate more crop production.

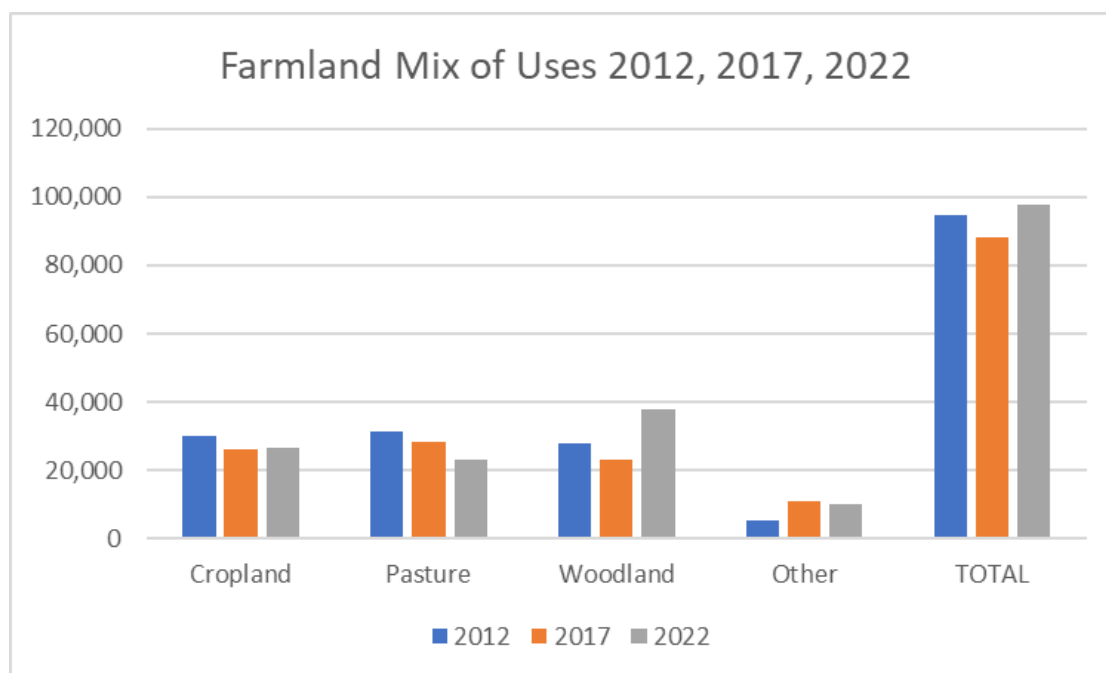
In 2012, there were 94,000 acres of farmland in Morgan County with cropland and pastureland each making up about one-third of the farmland. Woodland accounted for more than 27,000 acres and other land uses made up 5,218 acres (see Table 3 and Figure 9). From 2012 to 2017, cropland and woodland both declined by more than 4,000 acres and pasture decreased by 3,000 acres. Other land more than doubled to over 10,000 acres. Between 2017 and 2022, the acres in woodland jumped by more than 14,000 acres and pasture fell by 5,000 acres. Cropland increased slightly and other land acres decreased slightly. Note that some woodland is used for pasture, and some woodland generates timber harvests. So, some of the increase in woodland acres may reflect pastureland that has begun to revert to woodland.

Table 3. Land Use Mix on Farms in Morgan County 2012, 2017 and 2022.

| Land Use | 2012 | 2017 | 2022 |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Cropland Acres | 30,038 | 25,986 | 26,720 |
| Pasture Acres | 31,447 | 28,371 | 23,301 |
| Woodland Acres | 27,810 | 23,030 | 37,752 |
| Other Acres | 5,218 | 10,864 | 10,128 |
| TOTAL ACRES | 94,513 | 88,251 | 97,901 |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Figure 9. Change in the Land Use Mix on Farms in Morgan County, 2012, 2017, 2022.



Source US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture, 2012, 2017, 2022.

Employment in Agriculture and Farming-Related Jobs with an Eye to the Future

According to Woods and Poole Economics, there has been a declining percentage of farming-related jobs in Morgan County (see Table 4). Even so, from 2020 to 2040, the number of farm-related jobs is expected to remain roughly constant at around 685-693, given the anticipated growth in Morgan County's population and workforce (see Table 3). Forestry-related jobs tripled between 1990 and 2010 and were expected to continue to increase by 2020 and 2040 (see Table 5). The increase in forestry-related jobs appears to be related to investments by Georgia Pacific in its plant in Morgan County (Georgia Pacific, 2014). Landowners should see a steady demand for timber.

Table 4. Percentage of Jobs in Farming and Number of Jobs in Farming in Morgan County, 1990-2040.

| Year | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 | 2040 |
|----------------------------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Percent of Jobs in Farming | 12.2% | 7.4% | 6.6% | 5.5%* | 4.0%* |
| Number of Jobs in Farming | 821 | 639 | 689 | 693* | 685* |

*Forecast

Source: Morgan County Comprehensive Plan, 2017, p. 180-182.

Table 5. Percentage of Jobs in Forestry and Number of Jobs in Forestry in Morgan County, 1990-2040.

| Year | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 | 2040 |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Percent of Jobs in Forestry | 0.8% | 1.4% | 1.6% | 1.4%* | 1.2%* |
| Number of Jobs in Forestry | 54 | 121 | 162 | 176 | 208 |

*Forecast

Source: Morgan County Comprehensive Plan, 2017, p. 180-182.

Farm Support Businesses in Morgan County

A local agricultural economy consists not only of the farmers who produce crops and livestock but the infrastructure of farm support businesses that supply feed, seed, machinery, and other inputs as well as veterinarians, processors and transporters. Many farm support businesses serve a region of several counties and sometimes one or more entire states. Leading agricultural support businesses in Morgan County include: Godfrey's Feed, AgPro farm machinery, Youngblood Tractor, Piedmont Equine Associates, Bostwick Cotton Gin, among others.

Georgia is the number one state for volume of timber production and for acres of woodland in private ownership (Georgia Forestry Association, 2023). Timber is an important crop in Morgan County. The Georgia Pacific operates a large plywood plant in Madison. International Paper Company has a wood chip plant in Madison. Timber covers a majority of the land in Morgan County, estimated at 145,000 acres, or 64% of the county. Timber harvests in 2020, 2021, and 2022 averaged 8,544 acres with an average fair market value of \$3,014,000 (see Table 6).

Table 6. Timber Harvested in Morgan County 2020, 2021, and 2022.

| Year | Acres Harvested | Fair Market Value |
|-------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 2022 | 9,108 | \$3,415,000 |
| 2021 | 9,984 | \$2,509,000 |
| 2020 | 6,543 | \$2,119,000 |
| TOTAL | 25,635 | \$9,043,000 |

Source: Morgan County Tax Commissioner, 2024.

Chapter Two: What is Critical Mass, How to Measure It, and Estimating Critical Mass in Morgan County

“The critical mass concept is based on the idea that a certain amount of agricultural activity must be sustained in order for the agricultural economy in a county area to remain viable. As production levels decline below a given threshold, costs will rise, and support businesses will close or relocate” (Carpenter and Lynch, 2002, p. 1).

Critical Mass is generally defined as the minimum amount of farmland or forestland that will maintain the farm or forest support businesses and the overall agricultural or forestry industry. Some definitions also include the number of farms needed to maintain the agricultural industry. For the purposes of this study, critical mass is the minimum number of acres of farmland and the minimum dollar value of annual agricultural production needed to maintain the farm support businesses and the overall agricultural industry in Morgan County.

The first measure of critical mass is the amount of land in farms and the change of land in farms in recent years (see Table 7.) If farmland acres are declining, the number of acres taken out of farming and the rate of decline are both important. If farmland acres are increasing, then the change in the value of crop and livestock sales are key measures to ensure that increasing acreage is consistent with a higher value of farm output. This would indicate a strengthening agricultural economy. In Morgan County from 2012 to 2022, the Census of Agriculture reported an increase of 3,000 acres and more than \$42 million in the value of farm output. These figures bode well for the stability of the farmland base and the strength of the local agricultural economy.

Next, changes in the number of farms can indicate trends in the health of the local agricultural economy. In particular, the number of farms indicates whether a decline in farmland acres is linked to a decline in the number of farms. If farmland acreage is declining and the number of farms is increasing, that may suggest that farmland is being subdivided into smaller parcels which may not be as productive. Table 8 shows that the number of farms in Morgan County decreased from 2012 to 2017

along with the decline of more than 6,000 acres. But from 2017 to 2022, land in farms rose by more than 9,000 acres and the number of farms grew by 4.7%.

Table 7. Change in Land in Farms in Morgan County, 2012-2022.

| Year | Land in Farms | Change in Acres | Percentage Change | Percent of County Land |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 2012 | 94,513 | --- | --- | 41.6% |
| 2017 | 88,251 | -6,262 | -6.6% | 38.9% |
| 2022 | 97,901 | +9,650 | +10.9% | 43.1% |
| 2012-2022 | | +3,388 | +3.6% | |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

For Morgan County, the number of farms is somewhat misleading in determining critical mass because of the small number of large farms with annual sales of more than \$500,000 that dominate the County's agricultural economy. For example, in 2012, these large farms accounted for 89% of the farm product sales; 90% in 2017; and 92.5% in 2022 (see Figure 8 above on page 17).

Table 8. Change in the Number of Farms in Morgan County, 2012-2022.

| Year | Number of Farms | Change in Number | Percentage Change |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 2012 | 572 | --- | |
| 2017 | 513 | -59 | -10.3% |
| 2022 | 537 | +24 | +4.7% |
| 2012-2022 | 537 | -35 | -6.1% |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

There are many small farms that each produce under \$10,000 a year in farm sales and contribute relatively little to Morgan County's overall crop and livestock production. Acreage in farms is a better measure of critical mass. But the best measure is the annual value of farm output in a county.

Critical Mass Acres in Farmland and Annual Value of Agricultural Production

Counties with less farmland than others often have a higher rate of farmland loss over time. Similarly, counties with a lower value of farm output than others tend to see a higher rate of farmland loss over time. So, where are the tipping points for farmland acres and value of farm output? In other words, when does the decline in farmland acres result in a decline in the value of agricultural production?

This report compares Morgan County to the other 158 counties in Georgia to estimate a critical mass of farmland and an annual value of agricultural production. Morgan County had 88,000 acres of farmland and \$121 million in crop and livestock

sales in 2017. **Two benchmarks for determining a critical mass for agriculture were a minimum of 75,000 acres of farmland and \$100 million in farm product sales** for all 159 Georgia counties. In 2017, 20 counties (including Morgan) had more than 75,000 acres in farmland and over \$100 million in farm product sales. But another 12 counties had less than 75,000 acres in farmland and more than \$100 million in farm output. Twenty-seven counties had more than 75,000 acres but less than \$100 million in farm product sales. Finally, 100 counties had both less than 75,000 acres and less than \$100 million in sales.

A follow-up analysis was made of the 18 Georgia counties with 60,000-75,000 acres of farmland. Thirteen counties had less than \$100 million in farm output and five counties had more than \$100 million. In the 50,000-60,000 acres category, 12 counties had less than \$100 million in farm product sales and only one county, Banks, had more than \$100 million. Thus, it appears that 60,000 acres is the absolute minimum amount of farmland needed to maintain a thriving county agricultural industry in Georgia. However, at least 75,000 acres in farm use provide an added likelihood of \$100 million or more in agricultural activity and a stronger future for the overall agricultural industry.

For 2022, the US Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture reported 97,901 farmland acres in Morgan County and \$145 million in the value of farm output. The benchmarks of 75,000 acres and \$100 million in the value of farm production were applied to the 159 Georgia counties. In 2022, 27 counties (including Morgan) had more than 75,000 acres in farmland and over \$100 million in farm product sales. Another 10 counties had less than 75,000 acres in farmland and more than \$100 million in farm output. Twenty-three counties had more than 75,000 acres but less than \$100 million in farm product sales. Finally, 99 counties had both less than 75,000 acres and less than \$100 million in crop and livestock sales.

A follow-up analysis was made of the 18 Georgia counties with 60,000-75,000 acres of farmland. Five counties had less than \$100 million in farm output and five counties had more than \$100 million. Below 60,000 acres, only five counties had more than \$100 million in farm product sales. As in the case of 2017, it appears that 60,000 acres is the absolute minimum amount of farmland needed to maintain a thriving county agricultural industry in Georgia. However, at least 75,000 acres in farm use provide an added likelihood of \$100 million or more in agricultural activity and a stronger future for the overall agricultural industry.

Between 2017 and 2022, the Georgia counties with more than \$100 million in the value of farm output gained 42,000 acres of farmland. Counties with less than \$100 million lost 28,000 acres of farmland. There was a wide range of gains and losses in farm acres among both the counties with more than \$100 million in farm production and counties with less than \$100 million.

The counties with more than \$100 million in farm output in 2022 and more than 75,000 acres gained 57,000 acres of farmland between 2017 and 2022, according to

the Census of Agriculture. Farms with more than \$100 million in farm output but less than 75,000 acres lost a total of 15,000 acres.

If Morgan County can maintain between 60,000 and 75,000 acres in farmland, it is likely that the county farmers can also continue to generate more than \$100 million in annual farm product sales. The farmers may be able to continue to produce more than \$100 million in farm product sales if the amount of farmland dips below 75,000 acres. But 60,000 acres appears to be the absolute minimum amount of farmland needed to sustain farming into the foreseeable future with annual crop and livestock sales of more than \$100 million, based on 2022 dollars.

Regional Agriculture and Forestry Overview

An assessment of the critical mass of Morgan County's agriculture and forestry industries includes a regional perspective. This is especially important for agricultural and forestry support businesses and the availability of land for farm and forestry operations to sustain the support businesses, which in turn enable the primary producers of farm and wood products to remain profitable. This is a symbiotic relationship. When farms and forest operators close their businesses, the farm and forestry support businesses lose customers and have a harder time remaining open. If the support businesses close, then the remaining farm and forestry operators must travel farther for supplies and services. This adds to the cost of running their businesses and puts pressure on them to shut down and sell their land, often for residential or commercial development.

For the purposes of this study, the region in which Morgan is the center includes the six contiguous counties: Greene, Jasper, Newton, Oconee, Putnam, and Walton (see Figure 10). Figure 11 shows that Morgan County is the center of agricultural activity in its region. Of the six adjacent counties, not one had more than \$100 million in total farm product sales in 2022 (see Table 9).

Together, Morgan County and the six adjacent counties saw the total value of agricultural production grow by \$128 million or 40% between 2012 and 2022 in constant dollars unadjusted for inflation (see Table 9). But three counties—Newton, Oconee, and Putnam—experienced a decline in the value of farm output over that time period. Jasper County was the largest contributor to the growth in the dollar value of the region's agricultural production at \$60 million, followed by Morgan County at \$42 million and Greene County at \$32 million, and a smaller increase of \$8 million in the farm crop and livestock sales in Walton County.

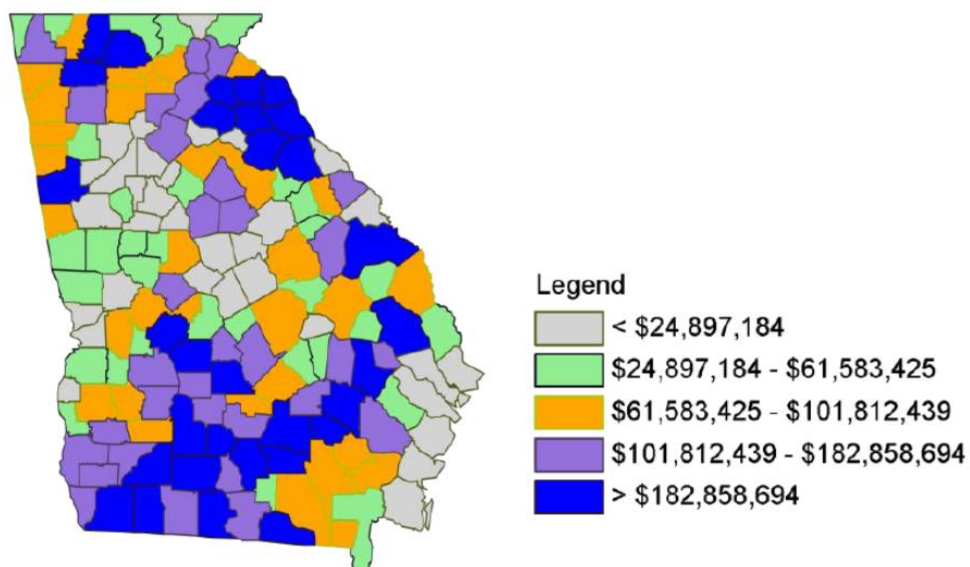
The revenue for large farms with annual sales of \$500,000 or more grew faster than the total value of farm output in the four counties—Greene, Jasper, Morgan, and Walton—where the value of agricultural production increased between 2012 and 2022. In short, in those counties where the value of agricultural production rose, large farms accounted for a greater share of the farm output sales.



Figure 10. County Map of Georgia and Morgan County Region Inset. Source: Georgia Secretary of State, 2023.

Total Farm Gate Value Map: 2022

GA = \$18,337,447,590



Total Farm Gate Value Map: 2021

GA = \$14,693,935,618

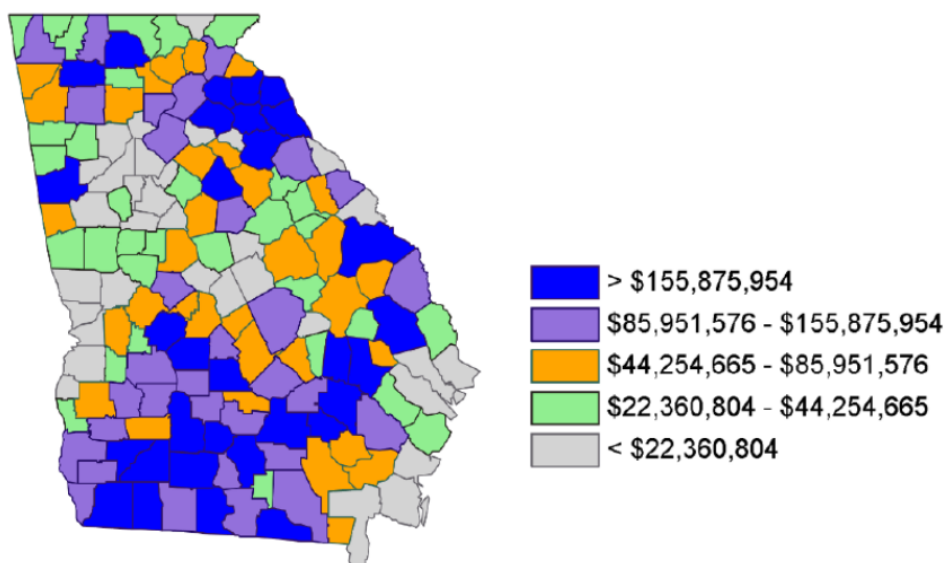


Figure 11. Value of Farm Sales by County in Georgia, 2021 and 2022.

Source: University of Georgia, Georgia Farm Gate Report, 2021, p. 13 and 2022, p. 13..

Table 9. Value of Farm Production and Large Farm Production (\$500,000+ a year), 2012-2022, in Morgan County and the Six Adjacent Counties.

| <u>County</u> | <u>2012</u> | 2017 | 2022 | Change 2012-2022 |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| <u>Greene</u> | | | | |
| All Farms | \$47.8 million | \$79.1 million | \$80.5 million | +68.3% |
| Large Farms | \$42.2 million | \$75.2 million | \$78.9 million | +86.9% |
| <u>Jasper</u> | | | | |
| All Farms | \$25.2 million | \$27.0 million | \$85.8 million | +240.6% |
| Large Farms | \$21.7 million | \$24.0 million* | \$81.0 million | +273.3% |
| Morgan | | | | |
| All Farms | \$103.0 million | \$121.0 million | \$145.8 million | +41.6% |
| Large Farms | \$91.6 million | \$108.9 million | \$134.9 million | +47.3% |
| <u>Newton</u> | | | | |
| All Farms | Not reported* | \$12.1 million | \$10.0 million | -17.4% |
| Large Farms | Not reported* | Not reported* | Not reported* | --- |
| <u>Oconee</u> | | | | |
| All Farms | \$73.7 million | \$42.1 million | \$53.1 million | -28.0% |
| Large Farms | \$69.5 million | \$37.4 million | \$46.2 million | -33.5% |
| <u>Putnam</u> | | | | |
| All Farms | \$38.0 million | \$34.7 million | \$32.5 million | -14.5% |
| Large Farms | \$35.0 million | \$28.7 million | \$25.5 million | -27.1% |
| <u>Walton</u> | | | | |
| All Farms | \$29.4 million | \$26.6 million | \$37.4 million | +27.2% |
| Large Farms | \$22.2 million | \$20.2 million | \$30.2 million | +36.0% |
| <u>TOTAL</u> | | | | |
| All Farms | \$317.1 million | \$342.6 million | \$445.1 million | +40.4% |
| Large Farms | \$282.2 million | \$303.4 million | \$396.7 million | +40.6% |

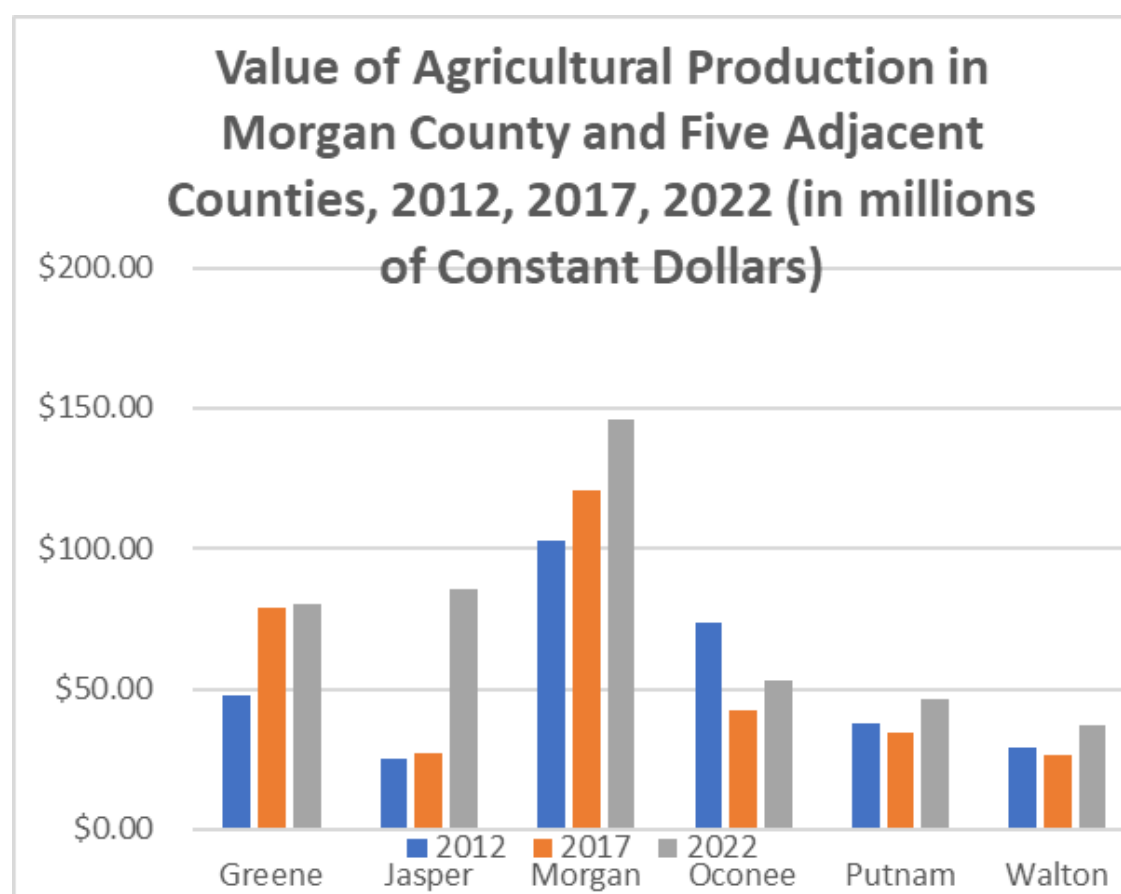
*Note, exact numbers not available because of disclosure issues. All dollar figures are in current dollars, not adjusted for inflation.

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

From a regional perspective, the growth in the value of farm output in Greene and Jasper Counties will tend to support agricultural activity in Morgan County through greater availability of farm support businesses. In addition, it is important that only Oconee and Greene Counties separate Morgan County from a block of seven counties in northeast Georgia, each of which produced more than \$182 million in farm product sales in 2022. These seven counties will have farm support businesses, such as feed and machinery dealers, processors, and transporters that farmers in Morgan County can access if they need to.

In 2017, of the seven counties in the region, only two—Greene and Morgan—were producing more than \$50 million a year in gross sales of farm products. In 2022, only Morgan County had more than \$100 million in farm product sales, making Morgan the leading agricultural producer in the region. Large farms with annual sales of \$500,000 or more dominate the agricultural industry in six of the counties, not including Newton County, which did not report sales for large farms (see Table 9 and Figure 13).

Figure 12. The Value of Agricultural Production in Morgan County and Five Adjacent Counties, 2012, 2017, and 2022.

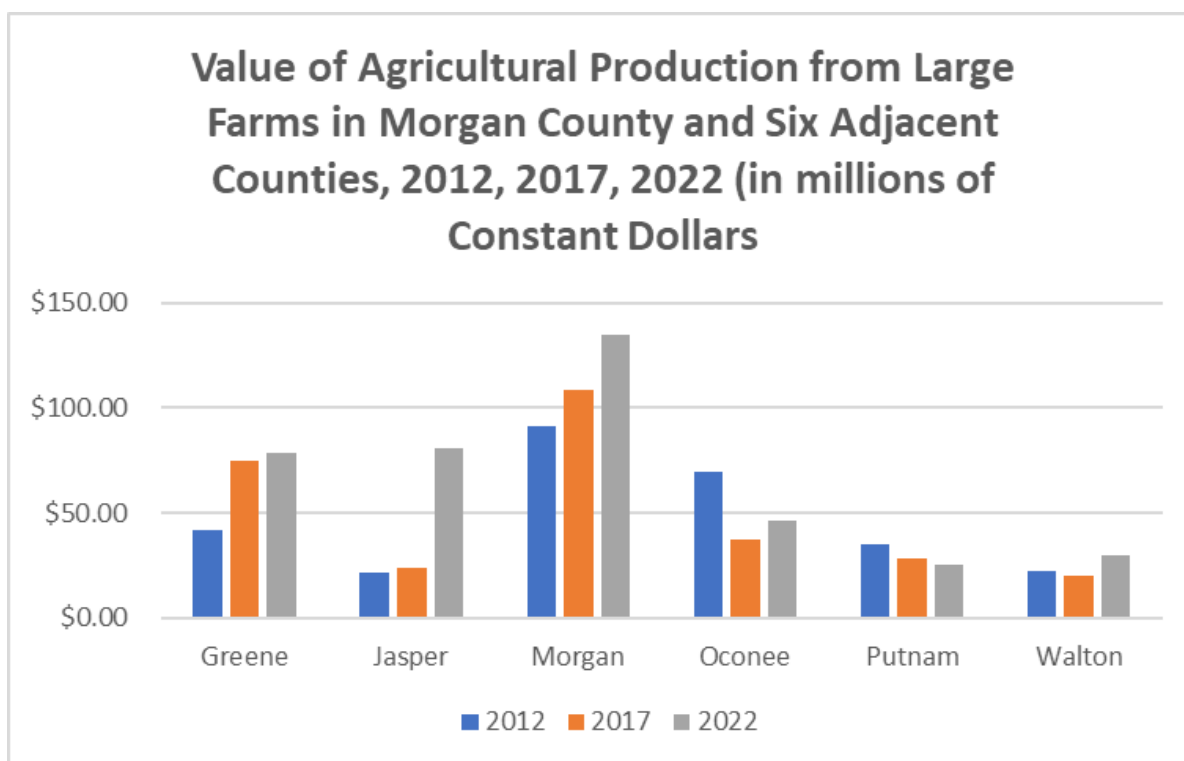


Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Note: Newton County was not included because of data reporting gaps.

The agricultural industries in Newton, Oconee, and Putnam appear to be in decline and the agricultural industries in Walton County showed little growth between 2017 and 2022 (see Table 9 and 10).

Figure 13. Value of Agricultural Production from Large Farms with Annual Sales of \$500,000 or more in Morgan County and the Six Adjacent Counties, 2012, 2017, and 2022.



Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

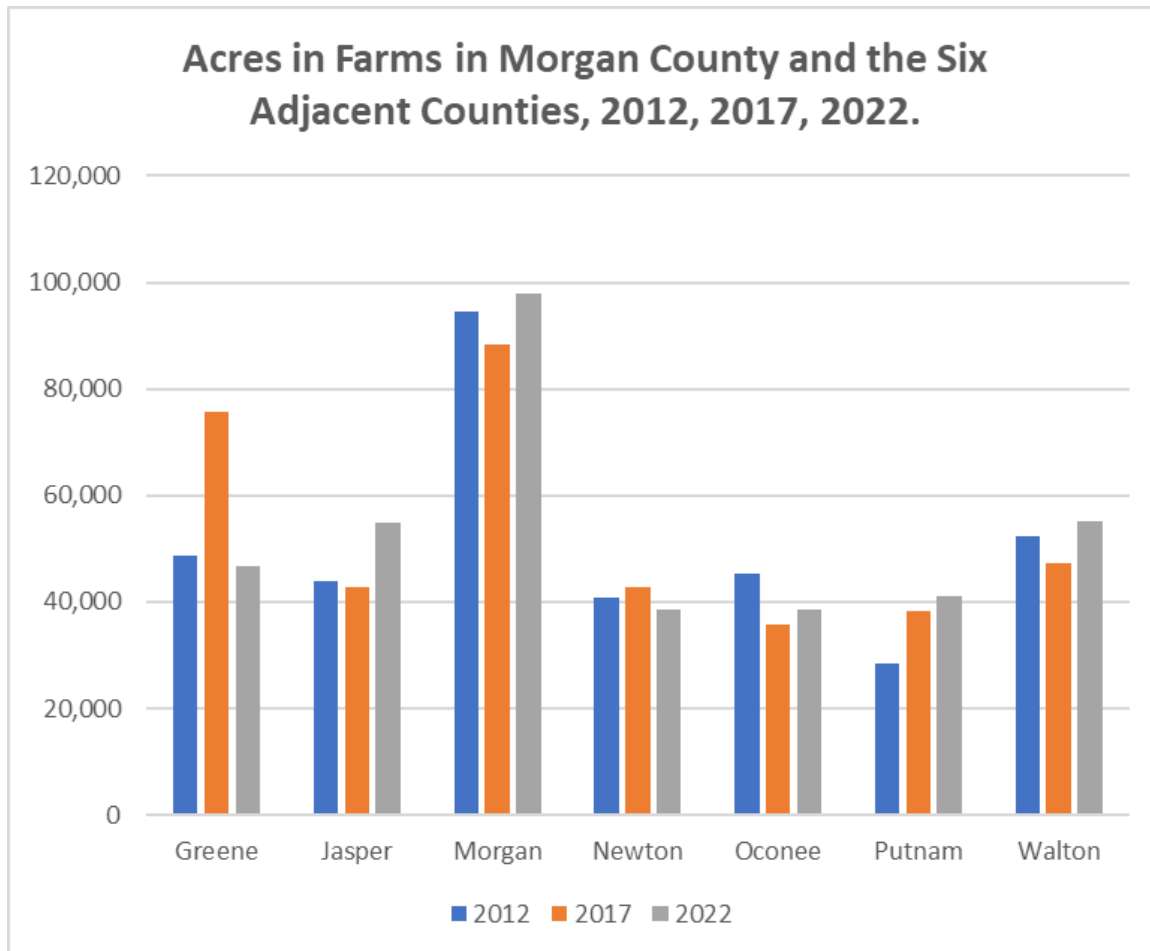
Table 10. Number of Farms and Land in Farms 2012-2022 in Morgan County and the Six Adjacent Counties.

| <u>County</u> | <u>2012</u> | <u>2017</u> | <u>2022</u> | <u>Change 2012-2022</u> |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| <u>Greene</u> | | | | |
| Number of Farms | 193 | 248 | 222 | +15.0% |
| Farm Acres | 48,569 | 75,682 | 46,778 | -3.7% |
| <u>Jasper</u> | | | | |
| Number of Farms | 239 | 251 | 293 | +22.6% |
| Farm Acres | 43,819 | 42,870 | 54,987 | +25.5% |
| Morgan | | | | |
| Number of Farms | 572 | 513 | 537 | -6.1% |
| Farm Acres | 94,513 | 88,251 | 97,901 | +3.6% |
| <u>Newton</u> | | | | |
| Number of Farms | 285 | 292 | 274 | -3.9% |
| Farm Acres | 40,722 | 42,767 | 38,686 | -5.0% |
| <u>Oconee</u> | | | | |
| Number of Farms | 375 | 329 | 292 | -22.1% |
| Farm Acres | 45,285 | 35,667 | 38,713 | -14.5% |
| <u>Putnam</u> | | | | |
| Number of Farms | 165 | 186 | 161 | -2.4% |
| Farm Acres | 28,498 | 38,277 | 41,183 | +44.5% |
| <u>Walton</u> | | | | |
| Number of Farms | 477 | 437 | 406 | -14.9% |
| Farm Acres | 52,459 | 47,416 | 55,131 | +5.1% |
| <u>TOTAL</u> | | | | |
| Number of Farms | 2,306 | 2,256 | 2,185 | -5.2% |
| Farm Acres | 353,865 | 370,930 | 373,379 | +5.5% |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Morgan County accounted for just over one-quarter (26.7%) of the farmland in the region in 2012, slightly less than one-quarter (23.8%) in 2017, and 26.2% in 2022 (see Table 10 and Figure 14). The reported increases in farmland acres in Greene (27,000+ acres) and Putnam (10,000+ acres) Counties from 2012 – 2017 look suspect, given a large surge in the value of farm production in Greene County and a decrease in the value of farm production in Putnam County.

Figure 14. Acres in Farms in Morgan County and the Six Adjacent Counties, 2012, 2017, and 2022.



Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Chapter 3: Factors That Will Affect the Critical Mass of the Agriculture and Forestry Industries in Morgan County.

Any prediction of future farming and forestry activity must recognize the potential impacts of several unknowns, such as:

- 1) The decisions of landowners about their land, especially as land passes between generations, as well as the amount of land farmers own or rent, and the property tax burden;
- 2) Changing market conditions for food and fiber commodities;
- 3) Population growth and the demand for land for residential and commercial development;
- 4) The value of farmland and farm buildings, which can influence the number of new and beginning farmers and young farms under age 35.
- 5) Changes in technology;
- 6) Farm labor and farm support businesses; and,
- 7) The impact of climate change.

Decisions of Landowners. The agricultural industry in Morgan County is mostly concentrated among a small number of operators. Out of 537 farms, the largest 31 farms accounted for more than 90 percent of the value of the farm output in 2022. The decisions of these large farm operators will have a major influence on the future of land use and agricultural activity in Morgan County. This is not to say that small and medium-size farms are unimportant. Collectively, small and medium size farms make up about half of the farmland in Morgan County. Also, many of the large farm operators rent land from the owners of smaller farms. Small and medium-size farms also help to keep the farm support businesses going. But given that the annual value of crop and livestock sales are the key measure of critical mass, the large farms dominate Morgan County's agricultural economy.

One influence on the decisions of farm operators to continue in agriculture is the amount of farmland controlled by owner-operators and the amount of rented land. Generally, owner-operated land is more stable from year to year, whereas rented land may more readily change from farmland to residential or commercial land uses. It is not uncommon for rental agreements to last for only a few years, and some depend on an annual renewal. This can make decisions and outcomes about long term investments in machinery, equipment, labor, and specific crops and livestock difficult to figure out. The loss of rented farmland can reduce the former renter's overall crop production and revenue. Nationwide, about 40 percent of farmland is rented. The more farmland that owners operate, the greater control they have over what to do with the land base that supports them.

Extensive farming operations involving row crops and cattle grazing tend to lease more land than they own. Whereas horticultural, fruit, nut, and vegetable growers tend to own more land than they lease. So, the percentage of land leased often depends on the farm product being produced. For retaining land in agricultural production, preserving the land that farmers lease can be as important as preserving the land that farmers own.

In 2017, 24% of Morgan County farmland was rented; in 2022, 24.7% was rented (See Table 11). This relatively low amount of rented farmland and high amount of owned farmland indicates good stability. In sum, Morgan County farmers are less dependent on rented land than farmers across the country.

Table 11. Tenure. Owners, Part-owners, and Owned and Rented Land in Morgan County, 2012-2022.

| LAND TENURE | 2012 | 2017 | 2022 |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Full Owners | | | |
| Number of Farms | 418 | 383 | 405 |
| Acres | 48,524 | 42,327 | 54,974 |
| Part Owners | | | |
| Number of Farms | 141 | 118 | 103 |
| Acres | 43,078 | 44,199 | 36,573 |
| Owned Land Acres | 18,997 | 23,124 | 18,734 |
| Rented Land Acres | 24,081 | 21,075 | 17,839 |
| Tenant Land Acres | 2,911 | 1,725 | 6,354 |
| TOTAL Farm Acres | 94,513 | 88,251 | 97,901 |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Another factor influencing decisions about land and the future of farming in a county is the age of the farm operators. Across the United States, the average age of a farm owner is just over 58 according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, and about one-third of US farmland is owned by people over 65. In Morgan County, the average age of farm operators was 61.4 years old in 2022, slightly older than the average age of farmers in all of Georgia (see Table 12). Generally, older farm operators are less likely to invest in their farm operations or to seek to expand their operations through buying or leasing additional land.

Table 12. Average Age of Farm Operators in Morgan County and State of Georgia, 2012-2022.

| Year | 2012 | 2017 | 2022 |
|---|------|------|------|
| Average Age of Farmers in Morgan County | 61.1 | 58.7 | 61.4 |
| Average Age of All Georgia Farmers | 59.9 | 57.9 | 59.0 |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Only 8.8% of American farmers were younger than 35 in 2022. But the number of young farmers increased by 11,000 or 3.9% between 2017 and 2022, according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture.

A 2022 survey conducted by the National Young Farmers Association indicated some of the biggest challenges are “access to farmland and capital, student loan debt, access to healthcare, affordable housing and the increasing impacts of climate change” (National Young Farmers, 2022, p. 6).

Another potential factor is the property tax burden. Affordable property taxes are essential for maintaining land in agriculture. Virtually every state offers some form of preferential property tax assessment and taxation for agricultural land. Georgia offers three types of preferential property tax assessment for agricultural and forestry land.

1. Agricultural Preferential Assessment allows the assessment of agricultural property (land and up to \$100,000 in farm buildings) at three-quarters of the fair market value. Most counties assess property at less than fair market value, such as at 40 percent of fair market value. In the case of Agricultural Preferential Assessment, farmland would be assessed at three-quarters of 40 percent or 30 percent of fair market value. Qualifying agricultural property must remain in agricultural use for 10 years. Note that fair market value can change quickly as development pressures increase;

2. Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA) applies to agricultural and forest land which is assessed according to soil type at its current use value rather than the fair market value. Qualifying agricultural property must remain in agricultural use for 10 years, under a covenant agreement. Note that the value of CUVA cannot change by more than 3% a year. In Morgan County as of 2022, there were a total of 146,425 acres enrolled in CUVA or about 64% of the entire county (Morgan County Assessor, 2024); and

3. Forest Land Property Assessment (FLPA) provides an assessed at current use value rather than fair market value. The property can be used for the subsistence or commercial production of trees, timber, or other wood and wood fiber products but excludes the value of any residence located on the property. This preferential assessment requires a 15-year covenant agreement between the taxpayer and local board of assessors and is limited to forest land tracts consisting of more than 200 acres owned by an individual or individuals or by any business entity registered in Georgia. This program provides reimbursement to counties from the state for deferred tax revenue.

Georgia Code Section 48-5-7.4 allows for up to 2,000 acres of real property of a single owner to be enrolled in the Agricultural Preferential Assessment or the Conservation Use Valuation program. US citizens and family farm corporations that earn at least 80% of their income from farming are eligible; and there is a 10-acre minimum size. For more details about preferential farmland and forestland taxation, see

White County (no date), Georgia Department of Revenue (2023) and Sheehan (2012) sources in the References at the end of this report.

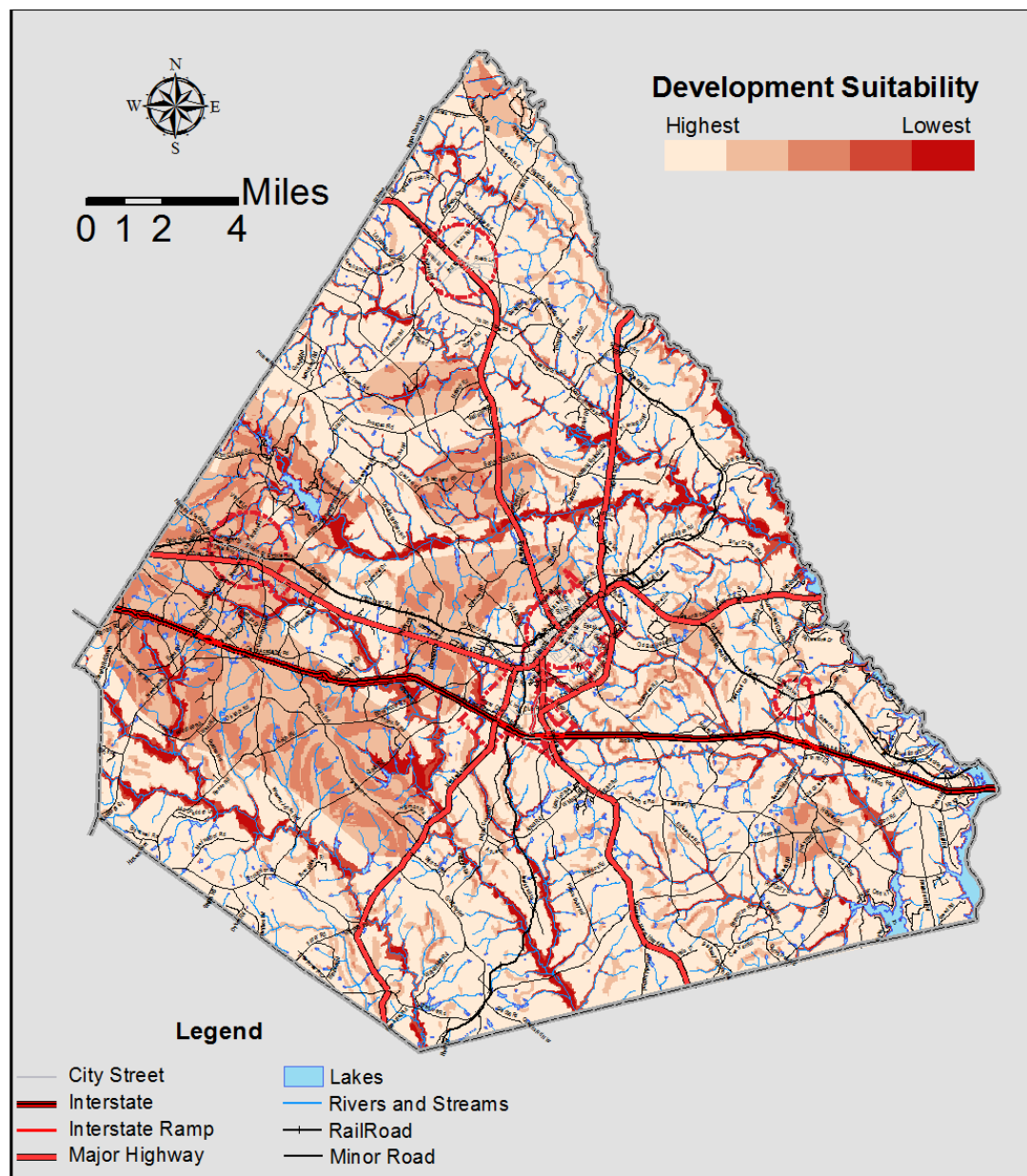
Changing market conditions for food and fiber commodities. Consumer tastes and preferences for food can change over time. The recent rise of the chicken industry in Morgan County is a promising development for the future of the county's agricultural industry. Horticulture has grown into a thriving agricultural sector, and the horse boarding sector in Morgan County ranks second in the state.

The timber industry is likely to see increased demand for wood for mass timber buildings, cardboard for packaging, and wood pellets for biomass energy production. Mass timber buildings have a much lower carbon footprint than steel-framed buildings. The increasing popularity of on-line shopping has created a greater demand for cardboard for shipping products; this trend seems likely to continue. Biomass energy production from wood pellets may or may not result in higher local demand for wood, depending on the locations of the pellet mills. Solar and wind generation appears to have much greater growth potential. The demand for wood for home construction will depend on the national population growth rate.

Population growth and the demand for land for residential and commercial development.

Morgan County can expect to experience continued population growth, given the recent attraction of major companies, such as Rivian, and the proximity of the county to the expanding Atlanta metro region and Athens. The 2017 Comprehensive Plan reported that Woods & Poole Economics projected a total county population of 24,865 by 2040 (Morgan County, 2017, p. 14). But recent population growth trends suggest that this estimate may prove to be too low. For example, the US Census Bureau estimated the county's 2022 population at 21,031, an increase of 4.5 percent over the 2020 population of 20,096. Population growth translates into a demand for residential and commercial development. Farmland is often the easiest land to develop because of its generally level topography and deep, well-drained soils. In short, Morgan County can expect to see some farmland converted to houses, stores, offices, and factories in the foreseeable future (see Figures 16 and Figure 3 on page 11). Figure 16 shows the areas of development opportunities and constraints in Morgan County. Figure 3 divides the county into character areas, which indicate future land use intentions. The majority of future growth is slated to occur around greater Madison in the center of the County. The northern one-third of the County will likely continue to be predominantly rural, as will the southern part of the County below I-20.

Figure 16. Development Suitability in Morgan County.



Morgan County Comprehensive Plan, 2017, p. 28.

The Value of Farmland and Farm Buildings. Rising farmland values and building costs are often a major obstacle to young farmers looking to take over a family farming operation as well as to new and beginning farmers. Farmland values can be influenced by the demand for housing and commercial space but increases in commodity prices can also push up what farmers are willing to pay for farmland. The estimated average market value of farmland and farm buildings in Morgan County surged after 2017 (see Table 13). In 2022, the average farm in Morgan County had a market value of more than \$1 million, an increase of \$250,000 and 31% over 2017.

Table 13. Estimated Average Market Value of Farmland and Existing Buildings in Morgan County 2012-2022.

| | 2012 | 2017 | 2022 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Average Value per Farm | \$722,206 | \$803,842 | \$1,056,624 |
| Average Value per Acre | \$4,371 | \$4,673 | \$5,796 |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

The number of new and beginning farmers and young farms under age 35 provides an indication of the degree to which a younger generation of farmers is coming into the Morgan County agricultural industry (see Table 14 and Table 15). It is not easy to match the young farmers or new and beginning farmers with the size of the farm operation. Also, several new and beginning farmers are not young farmers, and some young farmers are not new and beginning farmers. New and beginning farmers rely less on rented land than young farmers. Still, the number of young, new and beginning farmers along with the average age of the farmers in Morgan County, helps to gauge the emergence of the next generation in farming. *A serious gap in critical mass over the long run in Morgan County appears to be the need for younger farmers who could take over from retiring farm operators.*

Table 14. Young Farmers in Morgan County, 2017 and 2022.

| Year | 2017 | 2022 |
|-----------------------------|--------|-------|
| Total Farms | 44 | 55 |
| New and Beginning Producers | 59 | 69 |
| Acreage | 11,133 | 7,759 |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2017, 2022.

Table 15. New and Beginning Farmers in Morgan County, 2017 and 2022.

| Year | 2017 | 2022 |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|
| Total Farms | 142 | 157 |
| New and Beginning Producers | 219 | 248 |
| Acreage | 17,462 | 23,368 |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2017, 2022.

Changes in technology. Agriculture is a dynamic industry. Changes in technology have brought major increases in crop and livestock production. Recent years have seen the use of satellites, drones, and robots for precision farming and forestry, Artificial Intelligence, seed and livestock genetics, and the blending of solar energy production with food production—known as agrivoltaics. Generally, technology improvements have favored larger farm operation whose operators have the capital to adopt the technologies.

Farm labor and farm support businesses. Farm labor is often cited as a key element of a farming operation and a local agricultural economy. As farming technology becomes more sophisticated so must farm labor. The proximity of Morgan County to the University of Georgia and its College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences of is an advantage. Data from the Morgan County 2017 Comprehensive Plan projected no increase in farm employment between 2010 and 2040. To some degree, the demand for farm labor is tied to the age of the farm owners. Older farmers nearing retirement generally are not looking to expand their operations and so are not looking to hire new labor.

Farm support businesses are essential infrastructure for a local agricultural economy. These businesses supply a variety of inputs to farmers—feed, seed, fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides and machinery as well as veterinary, processing, and transportation services. When a county begins to lose farm support businesses, farmers must travel farther to purchase inputs, repair equipment, or access processors. The added time and travel expenses erode the profitability of the local farming operations. So, maintaining vibrant farm support businesses is critical to continuing overall farming viability.

The impact of climate change. The impacts of climate will depend in part on global emissions of greenhouse gases. Higher emissions point to more extreme weather events. Lower emissions could avoid at least some extreme weather. In the coming decades, climate change is expected to create hotter conditions and may also result in periods of drought or intense rainfall. Climate change could reduce crop and livestock yields and extend the range of diseases and pests. Climate change will likely make soil and water conservation practices more important for maintaining soil health,

minimizing erosion, managing manure and fertilizer applications, and controlling water use.

Critical Mass by Farming Enterprises

Morgan County's agricultural industry stands out for its diversity of farming enterprises, acres in farms, and value of agricultural production. There are seven main agricultural sectors as shown in Figure 5 on page 14. Yet, it is useful to examine the leading farming enterprises in terms of their future prospects.

Broilers are the county's leading agricultural segment. This situation does not appear likely to change in the near future. Broiler production involves contract farming with a major chicken supplier. An advantage of broiler production is that feed is provided by the contracting company rather than grown within the county. This means that a large amount of agricultural value can be created on a relatively small amount of land.

The dairy industry in Morgan County is highly concentrated in a few large dairy farms. Nationally, the number of dairy farms fell by almost 40% between 2017 and 2022, according to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, but the number of farms milking more than 2,500 cows increased. It is unlikely that new dairy farms will emerge in Morgan County in the near future.

Horticulture in Morgan County should do well as the greater Atlanta region continues to grow and the demand for landscaping and plants rises along with new home construction.

Horse boarding and training appears likely to remain popular. Morgan County ranks second among Georgia counties in this agricultural sector.

Beef cattle are raised across Morgan County. Nationally, cattle numbers have recently decreased in the major beef producing states in the Great Plains and Florida. This bodes well for Morgan County beef producers in the short to medium term. In addition, a slaughterhouse is slated to be built in Morgan County soon.

Horse boarding and beef cattle are closely related to row and forage crops. As long as horses and beef continue to be popular, row and forage crops should retain most of their acreage.

Timber covers a major of the land in Morgan County, estimated at 145,000 acres. Timber harvests in 2020, 2021, and 2022 averaged over \$3 million in fair market value per year. The presence of a large plywood plant operated by Georgia Pacific and a chip plant owned by International Paper in Madison suggests that the local demand for timber for chips and plywood will continue well into the future.

Additional Critical Mass Gaps and Solutions?

It is fair to ask: What are the gaps in critical mass in Morgan County agriculture? And, what would enhance the critical mass of agricultural production in Morgan County?

There are two ways to answer these questions: 1) The additional farm support businesses and infrastructure, sited either in Morgan County or in a nearby county, would bolster the Morgan County agricultural economy; and 2) New agricultural-related businesses that could thrive in Morgan County.

One way to increase the dollar value of Morgan County's agricultural production is through the value-added processing of crops and livestock. The imminent opening of a slaughterhouse in the county is expected to help the local beef sector, for example. The attraction of a poultry processing plant in the county would provide a major boost for the Morgan County broiler sector. A new milk processing plant coming to the county is unlikely, however. In the timber sector, access to a wood pellet plant or a mass timber manufacturing plant would offer new markets for Morgan County timber. Such plants would be most likely to locate east of Morgan County.

Across the United States there is a trend of smaller, niche farms producing for local markets, with direct sales to consumers through farmers markets and community supported agriculture projects as well as to restaurants and grocery stores. However, this trend is not yet widely seen in Morgan County.

Agritourism features a variety of on farm activities, including bed and breakfast operations, u-pick fruit operations, hayrides, weddings, and petting zoos, among others. Agritourism could help with critical mass by generating additional farm-related income and thus keeping land in farm use.

Chapter 4: Recommendations for Sustaining Critical Mass in the Agricultural and Forestry Industries in Morgan County.

Morgan County plays a key role as the agricultural leader in its region. Morgan County sits in the center of six counties and boasts the strongest agricultural industry. Also, Morgan County is only one county away from a concentration of several major agricultural counties to the northeast. But a potential threat to Morgan County's farmland base is the ever-expanding Atlanta metro area to the west.

A main purpose of a critical mass study is to identify the tipping points for farmland acres and value of farm output. That is, when does the decline in farmland acres result in a decline in the value of agricultural production, especially a decline that would be difficult, if not impossible to reverse?

This report found that value of agricultural output was a better measure of critical mass than acres in farmland or number of farms. One reason for this is that farms with annual sales of \$500,000 and above are dominating agricultural production both nationwide and in Morgan County. Also, livestock operations, such as broiler production, tend to use less land than farms that mostly grow crops.

An analysis of Georgia counties suggests that counties with annual sales of more than \$100 million have a critical mass of agricultural production. To maintain this level of sales generally requires at least 75,000 acres. A small number of Georgia counties were able to produce more than \$100 million in annual sales on 60,000 acres to just under 75,000 acres. In 2022, Morgan County had 97,901 acres in farm use. Maintaining a base of 60,000 to 75,000 acres in farm use is a reasonable long-term goal for the county.

The 2017 Morgan County Comprehensive Plan has the following goal: "Goal: Sustainable Economic Growth and Prosperity. Support the existing agricultural economy and our unique sense of place while attracting and retaining new businesses that meet the needs of future generations" (Morgan County, 2017, p. 16). Under Implementation and Land Use, the plan states: "We will provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community" (p. 18).

Recommendations

Goal: To maintain a critical mass of agricultural land and agricultural production, it would be ideal to retain at least one-third of Morgan County or 75,000 acres in agricultural production. This goal can be achieved through a combination of land preservation and zoning. Priority mapping of areas of the county and farms that would be good candidates for preservation would be helpful. But it is important to note that land preservation is a *voluntary process* and involves legally binding agreements between willing sellers of development rights (also known as conservation easements) and willing buyers—a private, non-profit land trust, a government agency, or both. It will be helpful to maintain the county agricultural zoning which can provide short- to

medium-term land protection. Agricultural zoning covers more than half of Morgan County.

Goal: Preserve 45,000 acres of farmland, forests, natural areas, and parks. Objective 1.0 of the Morgan County Joint Comprehensive Plan issued in 2004 stated: “Meet or exceed State of Georgia Greenspace goals by permanently protecting more than 20% of the county’s land area in farmland, forests, natural areas or parks” (Morgan County, 2004, p. 135). Twenty percent of Morgan County would equal about 45,000 acres.

So far, about 12,000 acres of greenspace have been preserved in Morgan County, including some 6,000 acres of private land preserved by conservation easements, according to the Madison-Morgan Conservancy. There are 5,804 acres in Hard Labor Creek State Park, and more than 110 acres in Morgan County parks.

Goal: Preserve an additional 15,000 acres of farm and forestland by 2045 through Morgan County, private landowners, and conservation organizations. This goal would aim to preserve 15,000 acres of farm and forestland by 2045 out of the overall goal of 45,000 acres. An important strategy is to take advantage of matching funds from the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program/ Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP/ALE) operated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency within the US Department of Agriculture. In addition, in 2023, the Georgia legislature created the Georgia Farmland Conservation Fund Program to purchase development rights (conservation easements) on farmland. Note that the 2004 Joint Comprehensive Plan Objective 4.0 stated: “Support the continued existence of a viable agricultural and forestry sector in the county” (Morgan County, 2004, p. 138) and Policy 4.2 called for “Conservation easements and purchase of development rights programs to enable landowners to realize value from their land as they conserve it” (ibid.).

Appendix One: Morgan County: A Diverse Agricultural Base, 2022.

The following tables were compiled from the University of Georgia Farm Gate Report, 2022 and provide details about the crop and livestock production in Morgan County.

Table A. Leading Crops in Morgan County, 2022.

| Crop | Acres | Market Value |
|------------------------------------|--------|-----------------|
| Corn | 3,039 | \$1.53 million |
| Cotton | 1,722 | \$1.90 million |
| Field Nursery (#2 county in state) | 600 | \$18.51 million |
| Hay (#4 county in state) | 25,000 | \$8.45 million |
| Pecans | 500 | \$1.04 million |
| Silage (#2 county in state) | 4,000 | \$2.46 million |
| Soybeans | 526 | \$.26 million |
| Straw (#2 county in state) | 2,500 | \$1.24 million |
| Turf Grass | 200 | \$2.17 million |
| Wheat (#7 county in state) | 3,027 | \$1.79 million |
| | | |
| All Row and Forage Crops | | \$22.46 million |
| All Fruits and Nuts | | \$1.72 million |
| All Horticulture | | \$21.42 million |
| ALL CROPS | 40,914 | \$45.60 million |

Source: University of Georgia Farm Gate Report, 2022.

Table B. Market Value of Livestock Products Sold in Morgan County, 2022.

| Livestock | Number | Market Value |
|---|--------|------------------------|
| Beef Cows (#6 county in state) | 16,500 | \$11.30 million |
| Dairy Cows (#4 county in state) | 4,300 | \$26.70 million (milk) |
| Horses (Boarding) (#2 county in state) | 3,100 | \$15.50 million |
| Hogs (#3 county in state) | 300 | \$.78 million |
| Other Livestock | | \$1.47 million |
| Total Livestock Market Value (#3 county in state) | | \$55.75 million |

Source: University of Georgia Farm Gate Report, 2022.

The following tables provide additional data on Morgan County agriculture from 2012-2022. The data come from the USDA Census of Agriculture, 2012, 2017, and 2022.

Table C. Livestock Production and Value in Morgan County, 2012-2022.

Livestock

| <u>Total</u> | <u>Number of Farms</u> | <u>Value of Sales</u> |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2022 | 282* | \$138,628,000 |
| 2017 | 320 | \$115,250,000 |
| 2012 | 365 | \$95,887,000 |

Poultry

| | | |
|------|----|---------------|
| 2022 | 60 | \$110,623,000 |
| 2017 | 60 | \$86,361,000 |
| 2012 | 87 | \$67,548,000 |

Cattle and Calves

| | | |
|------|-----|--------------|
| 2022 | 195 | \$7,205,000 |
| 2017 | 248 | \$10,384,000 |
| 2012 | 252 | \$5,835,000 |

Milk from Cows

| | | |
|------|----|--------------|
| 2022 | 7 | \$19,526,000 |
| 2017 | 12 | \$18,136,000 |
| 2012 | 26 | \$22,046,000 |

Note: There were 20 other types of livestock farms, which added only about \$1 million to the value of sales.

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Table D. Harvested Cropland in Morgan County, 2012-2022.

| All Crops | Number of Farms | Cropland Acres | Value of Crops Sold |
|--|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 2022 | 305 | 21,161 | \$7,179,000 |
| 2017 | 285 | 22,402 | \$5,761,000 |
| 2012 | 326 | 25,038 | \$7,075,000 |
| Harvested Cropland By Size 2022 | | | |
| Less than 30 acres | 158 | 1,910 | |
| 30-49 acres | 59 | 2,099 | |
| 50-99 acres | 36 | 2,422 | |
| 100-199 acres | 34 | 4,109 | |
| 200-499 acres | 8 | 2,485 | |
| 500-999 acres | 6 | 3,100 | |
| 1,000+ acres | 3 | 5,036 | |
| 2017 | | | |
| Less than 30 acres | 125 | not reported | |
| 30-49 acres | 64 | 2,337 | |
| 50-99 acres | 38 | 2,517 | |
| 100-199 | 38 | 4,719 | |
| 200-499 | 15 | 4,654 | |
| 500-999 | 1 | not reported | |
| 1,000+ acres | 4 | 6,310 | |
| 2012 | | | |

| | | |
|--------------------|-----|-------|
| Less than 30 acres | 135 | 1,581 |
| 30-49 acres | 45 | 1,677 |
| 50-99 acres | 66 | 4,438 |
| 100-199 | 68 | 9,097 |
| 200-499 | 6 | 1,861 |
| 500-999 | 3 | 2,024 |
| 1,000+ acres | 3 | 4,360 |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Table E. Harvested Cropland in Morgan County, 2023 from the Farm Service Agency.

| |
|--|
| 33,615.5860 Total acreage |
| 8,866.20 <i>In row crops, but some of the acreage can be counted twice if they plant wheat followed by a summer crop so this number is probably really about half.</i> |
| 20,202.53 <i>in grass/pasture/hay</i> |
| 1,408.64 <i>Other</i> |

Source: Farm Service Agency, 2024. <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/efoia/electronic-reading-room/frequently-requested-information/crop-acreage-data/index>

Table F. Change in the Number of Farms by Size in Morgan County, 2012-2022.

| Year | Farm Size in Acres | Number of Farms | Change in Number | Percentage Change |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 2012 | 260-499 | 73 | --- | --- |
| | 500-999 | 26 | --- | --- |
| | 1,000-1,999 | 6 | --- | --- |
| | 2,000+ | 3 | --- | --- |
| 2017 | 260-499 | 49 | -24 | -32.9 |
| | 500-999 | 32 | +6 | +23.1 |
| | 1,000-1,999 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| | 2,000+ | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 2022 | 260-499 | 42 | -7 | -14.2 |
| | 500-999 | 25 | -7 | -21.9 |
| | 1,000-1,999 | 8 | +2 | +33.3 |
| | 2,000+ | 8 | +5 | +166.7 |
| 2012-2022 | 260-499 | 42 | -31 | -42.5 |
| | 500-999 | 25 | -1 | -3.8 |
| | 1,000-1,999 | 8 | +2 | +33.3 |
| | 2,000+ | 8 | +5 | +166.7 |

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

Table G. Change in the Value of Sales by Sales Category and Change in the Number of Farms by Value of Sales in Morgan County, 2012-2022.

| Year | Value of Sales | Number of Farms | Total Value of Sales Class | Change in Number of Farms | Change in Value |
|--------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 2012 | | | | | |
| | Less than \$1,000 | 200 | \$25,000 | --- | --- |
| | \$1,000 to \$2,499 | 57 | \$88,000 | --- | --- |
| | \$2,500 to \$9,999 | 100 | \$582,000 | --- | --- |
| | \$10,000 to \$24,999 | 71 | \$1,079,000 | --- | --- |
| | \$25,000 to \$49,999 | 35 | \$1,334,000 | --- | --- |
| | \$50,000 to \$99,999 | 17 | \$1,162,000 | --- | --- |
| | \$100,000 to \$249,999 | 10 | \$1,796,000 | --- | --- |
| | \$250,000 to \$499,999 | 14 | \$5,253,000 | --- | --- |
| | \$500,000+ | 68 | \$91,653,000 | --- | --- |
| | TOTAL | 572 | \$102,972,000 | | |
| 2017 : | | | | (2012-2017) | (2012-2017) |
| | Less than \$1,000 | 147 | \$17,000 | -53 | -\$8,000 |
| | \$1,000 to \$2,499 | 50 | \$81,000 | -7 | 43 -\$7,000 |
| | \$2,500 to \$9,999 | 132 | \$764,000 | +32 | +\$182,000 |
| | \$10,000 to \$24,999 | 67 | \$1,038,000 | -4 | -\$41,000 |
| | \$25,000 to \$49,999 | 32 | \$1,161,000 | -3 | -\$173,000 |
| | \$50,000 to \$99,999 | 20 | \$1,475,000 | +3 | +\$313,000 |
| | \$100,000 to \$249,999 | 20 | \$2,767,000 | +10 | +\$981,000 |
| | \$250,000 to \$499,999 | 12 | \$4,807,000 | - 2 | -\$446,000 |
| | \$500,000+ | 32 | \$108,893,000 | -36 | +\$17,251,000 |
| | TOTAL | 513 | \$121,011,000 | -60 | +\$18,039,000 |
| 2022 | | | | (2017-2022) | (2017-2022) |
| | Less than \$1,000 | 166 | \$35,000 | +19 | +\$18,000 |

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| \$1,000 to \$2,499 | 59 | \$93,000 | +9 | +\$12,000 |
| \$2,500 to \$9,999 | 105 | \$624,000 | -27 | -\$140,000 |
| \$10,000 to \$24,999 | 83 | \$1,245,000 | +16 | +\$207,000 |
| \$25,000 to \$49,999 | 32 | \$1,119,000 | 0 | -\$42,000 |
| \$50,000 to \$99,999 | 37 | \$2,608,000 | +17 | +\$1,133,000 |
| \$100,000 to \$249,999 | 14 | \$2,423,000 | -6 | -\$344,000 |
| \$250,000 to \$499,999 | 10 | \$2,788,000 | -2 | -\$2,019,000 |
| \$500,000+ | 31 | \$134,871,000 | -1 | +\$25,978,000 |
| TOTAL | 537 | \$145,806,000 | +24 | +\$24,795,000 |
| 2012-2022 | | | (2012-2022) | (2012-2022) |
| Less than \$1,000 | 166 | \$35,000 | -34 | +\$10,000 |
| \$1,000 to \$2,499 | 59 | \$93,000 | +2 | +\$5,000 |
| \$2,500 to \$9,999 | 105 | \$624,000 | +2 | +\$42,000 |
| \$10,000 to \$24,999 | 83 | \$1,245,000 | +12 | +\$166,000 |
| \$25,000 to \$49,999 | 32 | \$1,119,000 | -3 | -\$215,000 |
| \$50,000 to \$99,999 | 37 | \$2,608,000 | +17 | +\$1,446,000 |
| \$100,000 to \$249,999 | 14 | \$2,423,000 | +4 | +\$627,000 |
| \$250,000 to \$499,999 | 10 | \$2,788,000 | -4 | -\$2,465,000 |
| \$500,000+ | 31 | \$134,871,000 | -37 | +\$43,218,000 |
| TOTAL | 537 | \$145,806,000 | -35 | +\$42,834,000 |

Note: Dollar amounts are not adjusted for inflation. The 2012 numbers are in 2012 dollars, the 2017 numbers are in 2017 dollars, and the 2022 numbers are in 2022 dollars.

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture 2012, 2017, 2022.

References

Carpenter, J. and L. Lynch. 2002. Is There a Critical Mass of Agricultural Land Needed to Sustain an Agricultural Economy? Evidence from Six Mid-Atlantic States. College Park, MD: Dept. of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland. https://www.farmlandinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/Is_There_a_Critical_Mass_of_Ag_Land_Needed_1.pdf. Accessed December 21, 2023.

Daniels, T. and M. Lapping. Mark Lapping, 2001. "Farmland Preservation in America and the Issue of Critical Mass," presented at the American Farmland Trust National Conference, November 13, Chicago, IL.

Farm Service Agency. 2024. 2023 Crop Acreage Data. <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/efoia/electronic-reading-room/frequently-requested-information/crop-acreage-data/index>.

Georgia Department of Revenue. 2023. Property Tax Valuation. <https://dor.georgia.gov/property-tax-valuation#:~:text=Special%20Assessment%20Programs,-There%20are%20other&text=Preferential%20Agricultural%20Property%20Bona%20fide,value%20rather%20than%2040%20percent>. Accessed December 4, 2023.

Georgia Forestry Association. 2023. Georgia: The #1 Forestry State in the Nation. https://gfagrow.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2023-Report_1-Forestry-State-in-the-Nation.pdf.

Georgia Pacific. 2014. Georgia-Pacific Planned Investments at Madison Plywood Facility To Total \$65 Million. PR Newswire, August 18, 2014. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/georgia-pacific-planned-investments-at-madison-plywood-facility-to-total-65-million-271698171.html>.

Lapping, M. 1982. Toward a Working Rural Landscape. In Reidel, C. (Ed.), New England Prospects. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Lapping, M. 1979. Agricultural land retention strategies: Some underpinnings, Journal of Soil and Water Conservation, May-June, 34(3), 124-126.

Macrotrends. 2024. U.S. Inflation Rate 1960-2024. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/USA/united-states/inflation-rate-cpi#:~:text=U.S.%20inflation%20rate%20for%202022,a%200.63%25%20decline%20from%202018>. Accessed February 29, 2024.

Morgan County, 2022. 2022-2036 Issue Based Comprehensive Plan: A Resource Book for Morgan County and the Cities of Bostwick, Buckhead, and Rutledge. <https://www.morgancountyga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3333/2022->

[2036MorganCountyJointCompPlan_FinalDraft_Reduced_Size](#). Accessed February 25, 2024.

Morgan County. 2021. Zoning Districts and Maps.

<https://morgancountyga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/309/Article-04---Districts-and-Maps>. Accessed December 15, 2023.

Morgan County and the Cities Bostwick, Buckhead, and Rutledge. 2017. 2017-2036 Issue Based Comprehensive Plan: A Resource Book for Morgan County and the Cities of Bostwick, Buckhead, and Rutledge.

https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/final_adopted_morganco_bostwick_buckhead_rutledge_comp_plan_07262017.pdf. Accessed December 5, 2023.

Morgan County. 2004. Morgan County / Cities Joint Comprehensive Plan 2025.

https://www.madisonga.com/DocumentCenter/View/189/Comprehensive-Plan_Section-3_2004?bidId=. Accessed December 5, 2023.

Morgan County Assessor. 2024. CUVA enrollment 2023. Personal Communication.

Morgan County Tax Commissioner. 2024. Timber Acres Harvested and Fair Market Value, 2020, 2021, and 2022. Personal communication.

National Young Farmers Coalition. 2022. Building a Future with Farmers 2022: Results and Recommendations from the National Young Farmer Survey.

<https://www.youngfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NationalSurveyReport22-1.pdf>. Accessed December 5, 2023.

Nousaine, A. 2011. Defining A Critical Mass Threshold for Agricultural Support Services: An Economic Assessment of Western North Carolina. Chapel Hill, NC: Master's Thesis, Dept. of City and Regional Planning, University of North Carolina.

<https://core.ac.uk/reader/210605280>. Accessed December 21, 2023.

Primary Forest Products Network. 2024. Lumber Mill Map.

<https://primary.forestproductslocator.org/mill-map>. Accessed February 26, 2024.

Sheehan, K. 2012. Valuing Conservation Easements: A Guide for Georgia Tax Assessors. University of Georgia, River Basin Center, Odum School of Ecology, University of Georgia.

US Census Bureau. 2022. Quick Facts, Morgan County, GA.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/morgancountygeorgia/PST045222>. Accessed December 6, 2023.

US Department of Agriculture. 2024. Census of Agriculture, 2022. Washington, DC: USDA.

US Department of Agriculture. 2019. Census of Agriculture, 2017. Washington, DC: USDA.

US Department of Agriculture. 2014. Census of Agriculture, 2012. Washington, DC: USDA.

University of Georgia, Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development. 2023. Ag Snapshots 2023. Athens, GA: University of Georgia

https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/AP%20129-1_2.PDF.

Accessed December 11, 2023.

University of Georgia, Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development. 2022.

Georgia Farm Gate Value Report 2021. Athens, GA: University of Georgia.

[https://caed.uga.edu/content/dam/caes-subsite/caed/publications/annual-reports-farm-gate-value-reports/2021_GeorgiaFGVReportDec2022%20\(1\).pdf](https://caed.uga.edu/content/dam/caes-subsite/caed/publications/annual-reports-farm-gate-value-reports/2021_GeorgiaFGVReportDec2022%20(1).pdf). Accessed December

11, 2023.

White County, GA. No date. Frequently Asked Questions about Conservation Use Valuation and Agricultural Preferential Assessment.

https://www.whitecountyga.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/tax_assessor/page/3763/frequently_asked_questions_about_conservation_use_valuation_and.pdf. Accessed

December 5, 2023.

THE HONORABLE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, MADISON, GEORGIA,
MET THIS DAY IN REGULAR SESSION.

MEETING WAS HELD ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.

PRESENT: Chairman Bill Kurtz, Vice-Chair Blake McCormack, Commissioners Philipp von Hanstein, Donald Harris, and Ben Riden, Jr.

STAFF: County Manager Adam Mestres, Assistant County Manager Mark Williams, County Attorney Christian Henry, and County Clerk Leslie Brandt.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion by Commissioner Riden, Seconded by Commissioner Harris to approve the agenda as presented. Motion Passed Unanimously.

MINUTES

February 06, 2024 BOC Meeting

Motion by Commissioner McCormack, Seconded by Commissioner von Hanstein to approve the minutes as presented. Motion Passed Unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to accept as information the February 2024 payables and financials.

MOTION by Commissioner McCormack, Seconded by Commissioner Harris to approve the consent agenda as presented. Motion Passed Unanimously.

DAVID GERBER IS REQUESTING A TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE MORGAN COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE TO ADD AUTO PAINTING AND BODYWORK TO THE I2 ZONING DISTRICT

David Gerber is requesting a text amendment to add collision repair as a permitted use in the Heavy Industrial (I2) Zoning District. Mr. Gerber is the owner/operator of DJ’s Auto Painting and Collision, currently located in Social Circle, and is seeking to move his business to Woodkraft Road in Madison. Mr. Gerber did not submit any language with his request to add the use to the I2 Zoning District, other than the request to make it a permitted use.

In the current regulations, automobile repairs and body shops are limited to C2, C3, and TCO Zoning Districts, and is a conditional use in MXD3. The language pertaining to automobile repairs is located in Table 4.1 of the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance and states the following: Automobile repair garage, mechanical and body shops, provided all operations are conducted in a building which shall not have any opening, other than a stationary window, within 100 ft. of a residential zoned district.

Planning staff researched regulations related to automobile repair garages and proposes the following language:

Automobile Repair Garages (including paint and body shops)

The lot of record must be a minimum of five acres in order to operate an Automobile Repair Garage.

The applicant shall submit to the planning department written detailed site plans and landscaping plans for the property to be used including method proposed for

improvement, drainage, parking and display areas, driveways for ingress and egress, signage and buildings to be built or existing buildings to be used in the operation of the business. Off-street parking spaces, site plans, landscaping and buffers, and signage shall be in accordance with the requirements for the applicable zoning district in which the property use is located.

A repair shop building shall be provided and shall meet all requirements of the current building code as adopted by Morgan County.

Setbacks for the zoning district shall be maintained. No vehicles may be displayed or parked on the public right-of-way.

All surface areas for motor vehicle traffic and/or parking shall be an asphalt or concrete surface which shall be maintained in good condition and free of damage. In no event shall vehicles be parked on grass or unprepared surfaces.

Required parking spaces for customers shall be designated separately from those areas used to store repaired motor vehicles or those awaiting repair.

An adequate turn-around area shall be provided so that vehicles shall not back out into traffic from the property.

Disabled or damaged vehicles shall not be permitted to remain in an exterior location unless screened from public view. Screened areas shall only be allowed in areas to the rear of the principal structure of the dealership. Screening fences surrounding storage areas shall be provided on any property line that abuts any right-of-way and any adjoining property.

Any change in business ownership or discontinuance in the use of the property for the purpose of a automobile repair garage shall cancel the repair garage's occupational tax certificate. To become licensed as an automobile repair garage again, all of the necessary requirements and physical improvements described herein must be met. A site plan and landscape plan shall be submitted to ensure compliance and an inspection shall be required.

No loud or boisterous noises, including outdoor public-address systems, shall emanate from the business, either by persons congregating there or by the playing of recording instruments, radios, and/or television sets or other sound-producing equipment.

All motor vehicle repairs shall take place inside the repair shop building. No motor vehicle repairs shall occur outside of the repair shop building.

Motor vehicle repair shops shall not be permitted within 300 feet of any property used for a school, park, playground or hospital or on a lot which is either adjacent to or directly across the street from any residential use.

The Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve the request.

Chairman Kurtz allowed proponents and opponents to speak.

No one spoke in favor or against the request.

MOTION by Commissioner Harris, Seconded by Commissioner von Hanstein to approve the text amendment to the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance to add auto painting and body work to the I2 Zoning District with the language presented by the Planning Staff. Motion Passed Unanimously.

COUNCIL ON AGING BOARD APPLICATION

Geraldine Cooper’s term on the Council on Aging Board has expired. Geraldine submitted an application to be considered for reappointment and no other applications were received. If reappointed, the new term would expire December 31, 2026.

MOTION by Commissioner Riden, Seconded by Commissioner McCormack to appoint Geraldine Cooper to the Council on Aging Board with a term ending December 31, 2026. Motion Passed Unanimously.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS FOR BUILDINGS - PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX

Administration is requesting a budget amendment to transfer \$50,000 from contingency to Public Buildings-Public Safety. The amendment is needed due to unexpected expenses. Those expenses include \$9,287 to replace an industrial water heater, \$7,065 for sprinkler system repairs, and \$11,500 for an HVAC replacement.

MOTION by Commissioner McCormack, Seconded by Commissioner Harris to approve the budget amendment request to transfer \$50,000 from contingency to Public Buildings-Public Safety. Motion Passed Unanimously.

2024-RES-004 FY24 BUDGET AMENDMENT

2024-RES-004 resolution is to request FY2024 budget amendments for the following:

| Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Amendments | | |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| ACCOUNT CODE | DESCRIPTION | AMOUNT |
| 100-1400-51.1100 | Reclass to Elections from payroll contingency for PT elections worker | 17,515 |
| 100-1595-57.9002 | Contingency - Reclass to Elections from payroll contingency for PT elections worker | (17,515) |
| 100-1565-53.1230 | Reclas electricity from Public Buildings to Elections | (1,800) |
| 100-1400-53.1230 | Reclas electricity from Public Buildings to Elections | 1,800 |
| 100-1535-52.1200 | FY 2023 purchase orders carried over to FY 2024 | 4,922 |
| 100-1565-52.2202 | FY 2023 purchase orders carried over to FY 2024 | 46,185 |
| 100-3500-52.2201 | FY 2023 purchase orders carried over to FY 2024 | 2,350 |
| 100-3500-53.1600 | FY 2023 purchase orders carried over to FY 2024 | 3,692 |
| 100-3500-53.1703 | FY 2023 purchase orders carried over to FY 2024 | 22,500 |
| 100-7400-53.1100 | FY 2023 purchase orders carried over to FY 2024 | 2,700 |
| 100-3920-53.1600 | FY 2023 purchase orders carried over to FY 2024 | 10,460 |
| 100-1595-57.9000 | Contingency - FY 2023 purchase orders carried over to FY 2024 | (92,809) |
| 100-3920-53.1600 | Reimbursed by ACCG Safety Grant for AED equipment | 4,000 |
| 100-1595-57.9002 | Contingency - Reimbursed by ACCG Safety Grant for AED equipment | (4,000) |
| 100-3910-53.1600 | Slide in kennel unit for Animal Control - BOC approved 9/5/23 | 9,500 |
| 100-1595-57.9000 | Contingency - Slide in kennel unit for Animal Control - BOC approved 9/5/23 | (9,500) |
| 100-1535-51.1100 | Reclass from Planning and Dev to IT for K Walker | 31,870 |
| 100-7400-51.1100 | Reclass from Planning and Dev to IT for K Walker | (31,870) |
| 100-1595-57.9000 | Contingency - Reclass from contingency to Public Buildings for R&M | (100,000) |
| 100-1598-52.2200 | Reclass from contingency to Public Buildings for R&M | 50,000 |
| 100-1566-52.2200 | Reclass from contingency to Public Buildings PSC for R&M | 50,000 |
| 100-1535-52.1200 | Use of fund balance for payment to Charter for broadband expansion | 1,664,427 |
| | Use of Fund Balance | (1,664,427) |

MOTION by Commissioner Riden, Seconded by Commissioner Harris to approve resolution 2024-RES-004 for FY2024 budget amendments as presented. Motion Passed Unanimously.

REPLACEMENT OF MOWER

Public Buildings is requesting to replace their current lawn mower that has over 900 hours of operation and is now difficult to find replacement parts for. The following quotes were obtained:

| | | | | | |
|--------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Vendor | A Keese Enterprise | Madison Rentals | John Deere | TK’s | Youngblood |
| Quote | \$10,469 | \$10,374.17 | \$10,927.02 | \$11,599.20 | \$10,995 |

The Public Buildings Director's recommendation is to purchase a new mower from A Keesee Enterprise for \$10,469. A budget amendment is also needed to transfer the same amount from reserve SPLOST to Public Buildings SPLOST.

MOTION by Commissioner von Hanstein, Seconded by Commissioner McCormack to approve the mower purchase from Madison Rentals for \$10,374.17 and to amend the budget to transfer the same amount from reserve SPLOST to Public Buildings SPLOST. Motion Passed Unanimously.

REPLACEMENT OF WINDOWS AND BUDGET AMENDMENT

The windows in the Creamery Building require replacement due to decaying frames. Multiple vendors were asked to submit bids to replace the windows with PVC sashes and composite sills and nosing. The only responsive bidder was Social Circle Ace Hardware for a total of \$34,333.92. The purchase is for the windows only. County staff will provide the labor.

In addition to this expense, there was an unexpected partial replacement of the roof at the Courthouse for \$18,080. Requesting motion to transfer \$50,000 from contingency to Public Buildings for these expenses.

MOTION by Commissioner von Hanstein, Seconded by Commissioner McCormack to approve the purchase of replacement windows from Social Circle Ace Hardware for \$34,333.92 and to amend the budget to transfer \$50,000 from contingency to Public Buildings. Motion Passed Unanimously.

PROPERTY TO BE DECLARED SURPLUS

The following list identifies equipment and property that are no longer utilized or have exceeded their useful life.

| DESCRIPTION | DEPT |
|--|------------------|
| Xerox Work Centre 7225 copier | Recreation |
| Xerox Work Centre 7845i copier | Planning |
| One wooden desk and 2 drawer file cabinet | Archives |
| Canon Microfilm Scanner 100 SN: 32201243 | Archives |
| Canon Microfilm Scanner 300 SN: 230556 | Archives |
| Cubicle Desk Componets | BOC |
| Frigidaire Refrigerator SN BA43849960 | Public Buildings |
| Taser X26 batteries | Sheriff's Office |
| Taser X26 holsters | Sheriff's Office |
| Motorola Body Microphones | Sheriff's Office |
| Decatur Genesis II Radar Unit | Sheriff's Office |
| 8 Motorola Mobile Radios | Sheriff's Office |
| 3 Lightbars | Sheriff's Office |
| 2 Dodge Charger Rear Cages | Sheriff's Office |
| 2 Dodge Charger Weapons Racks | Sheriff's Office |
| 3rd row Seats for 2022 Ford Explorer | Sheriff's Office |
| Ford F150 Front Row Center Seats | Sheriff's Office |
| 2011 Chevrolet 1500 VIN: 3GCPCREAXBG154354 (Seizure) | Sheriff's Office |
| 2018 Ford F150 VIN: 1FFTMF1CB1JFC65768 | Solid Waste |
| Lot of reception chairs | Multiple |

MOTION by Commissioner McCormack, Seconded by Commissioner Riden to approve the items to be declared surplus and sold or disposed of. Motion Passed Unanimously.

COUNTY MANAGER REPORT

County Manager, Adam Mestres, presented a monthly overview of Morgan County government's current projects and/or issues.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

No public comments were made.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioners made comments and gave updates on Liaison assignments.

MOTION by Commissioner McCormack, seconded by Commissioner Riden to exit regular session and adjourn at 11:08 a.m. Motion Passed Unanimously.

Bill Kurtz, Chairman

ATTEST:

Leslie Brandt, County Clerk



MORGAN COUNTY AGENDA REQUEST

Department:

Roads & Bridges

Presenter(s):

A. Mestres

Meeting Date: mm/dd/yyyy 3/19/2024

Type of Request:

New Business

Wording for the Agenda:

2024 County Road Resurfacing

Background/History/Details:

On February 1, 2024, an RFP was issued for resurfacing approximately 8 miles of roadway throughout Morgan County. On March 13, 2024, an official bid opening was conducted and the following recommendation is being made herein:

Pittman Construction Company is the lowest bid at \$1,796,327.94. East Coast Grading is a local Morgan County owned company with a bid of \$1,845,288.90 which is \$48,960.96 higher than Pittman. The county does provide a 5% local bidder preference which is approx. \$90,000.00. Pittman Construction does have personal property located in Morgan County at the rock quarry, but principal business is located outside of the county.

If the commission wishes to issue the award to Pittman Construction the amount not to exceed would be \$1,796,327.94

If the commission wishes to issue the award to East Coast Grading the amount not to exceed would be \$1,845,288.90

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

Motion Option 1: Motion to award the 2024 County Road Resurfacing Contract to Pittman Construction Company for an amount not to exceed \$1,796,327.94

Motion Option 2: Motion to award the 2024 County Road Resurfacing Contract to East Coast Grading for an amount not to exceed \$1,845,288.90

If this item requires funding, please describe:

Yes, TSPLOST & LMIG

Has this request been considered within the past two years?

No

If so, when?

Is Audio-Visual Equipment Required for this Request?*

No

Backup Provided with Request?

Yes

*** All audio-visual material must be submitted to the County Clerk's Office no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It is also your department's responsibility to ensure all third-party audio-visual material is submitted at least 48 hours in advance.**

Approved by Finance

Yes

Approved by Purchasing

Yes

Manager's Approval

Yes

Staff Notes:

3/15/2024

Mr. Adam Mestres
County Manager
Morgan County Board of Commissioners
150 E. Washington St
Madison, GA. 30650

REFERENCE: 2024 LMIG/TSPLOST RESURFACING BID CERTIFICATION: BID DATE 3/13/23

Dear Mr. Mestres,

I have reviewed the bid packages for the above referenced projects, opened Wednesday March 13th, 2024 at 10 AM

We received four bids:

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Pittman Construction Company, Rockdale County, GA: | \$1,796,327.94 |
| East Coast Grading, Morgan County, GA: | \$1,845,288.90 (+\$48,960.96) |
| MHB Paving, Walton County, GA: | \$1,928,816.97 (+\$83,528.07) |
| Vertical Earth, Inc, Forsyth County, GA: | \$1,951,354.44 (+\$155,026.50) |

I hereby certify all bids as responsible and responsive, per the solicitation.

I recommend the low-bidder, Pittman Construction with the following stipulations:

- 1) Pittman Construction replace subcontractor Peek Pavement Marking for past performance, as permitted in the solicitation.
- 2) Pittman Construction be willing and able to utilize a 4' milling head for all patching, per the agreement.

In the event Pittman Construction is unwilling or unable to comply, I recommend the County award the contract to East Coast Grading.

Sincerely,



Aaron Wadley, PE
LNCO Planning Engineering Construction
Madison Georgia
Aaron.wadley@LNCOpec.com

| STREET | FROM | TO | TREATMENT | BUDGETED COST |
|--|---------------|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| INDIAN BEND | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 83,514.56 |
| LAKE SHORE DRIVE | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 113,878.22 |
| BONNER ROAD | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 166,378.29 |
| FRACTION BOTTOM ROAD | RR | LAKESHORE DRIVE | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 174,985.63 |
| OLD MILL ROAD (UNINCORPORATED ONLY) | RR | FAIRPLAY ROAD | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 563,803.26 |
| | | | | \$ 1,102,559.97 |
| RUTLEDGE | | | | |
| KELLEY STREET | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 29,977.64 |
| INDIAN CREEK TRAIL | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 192,203.57 |
| CHEROKEE CIRCLE | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 29,266.27 |
| ARROWHEAD CIRCLE | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 25,760.11 |
| | | | | \$ 277,207.58 |
| MADISON | | | | |
| PETERS STREET | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY | \$ 27,289.54 |
| OLD POST ROAD | WALTON STREET | W CENTRAL AVE | MILL, PATCH, AND OVERLAY | \$ 64,938.97 |
| DIXIE AVE | CITY LIMITS | WALTON STREET | MILL, PATCH, AND OVERLAY | \$ 155,549.71 |
| 4TH STREET | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 72,002.17 |
| E CENTRAL AVE | ALL | | MILL, PATCH, AND OVERLAY | \$ 26,793.66 |
| | | | | \$ 346,574.04 |
| BOSTWICK | | | | |
| FAMBROUGH LANE | ALL | | PATCH AND OVERLAY W/ CRACK RELIEF INTERLAYER | \$ 69,986.34 |
| TOTAL | | | | \$ 1,796,327.94 |



MORGAN COUNTY AGENDA REQUEST

Department:

Roads & Bridges

Presenter(s):

A. Mestres

Meeting Date: mm/dd/yyyy

3/19/2024

Type of Request:

New Business

Wording for the Agenda:

2024 Road Patching and Repair

Background/History/Details:

On February 1, 2024, an RFP was issued for patching and repair approximately 9.3 miles of roadway throughout Morgan County. On March 13, 2024, an official bid opening was conducted and the following recommendation is being made herein:

East Coast Grading for an amount not to exceed \$872,500.

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

Motion to award the 2024 Road Patching and Repair Contract to East Coast Grading for an amount not to exceed \$872,500.

If this item requires funding, please describe:

Yes; TSPLOST & LMIG

Has this request been considered within the past two years?

No

If so, when?

Is Audio-Visual Equipment Required for this Request?*

No

Backup Provided with Request?

Yes

*** All audio-visual material must be submitted to the County Clerk's Office no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It is also your department's responsibility to ensure all third-party audio-visual material is submitted at least 48 hours in advance.**

Approved by Finance

Yes

Approved by Purchasing

Yes

Manager's Approval

Yes

Staff Notes:

3/15/2024

Mr. Adam Mestres
County Manager
Morgan County Board of Commissioners
150 E. Washington St
Madison, GA. 30650

REFERENCE: 2024 LMIG/TSPLOST PATCHING AND REPAIR BID CERTIFICATION: BID DATE
3/13/23

Dear Mr. Mestres,

I have reviewed the bid packages for the above referenced projects, opened Wednesday March 13th,
2024 at 10:15 AM

We received four bids:

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| East Coast Grading, Morgan County, GA: | \$872,500.00 |
| Pittman Construction Company, Rockdale County, GA: | \$950,895.00(+ \$78,395.00) |
| MHB Paving, Walton County, GA: | \$1,112,554.00 (+ \$240,054.00) |
| *Vertical Earth, Inc, Forsyth County, GA: | \$1,199,574.22 (+ \$327,074.22) |

I hereby certify the three lowest bids as responsible and responsive, per the solicitation.

I recommend the low-bidder, East Coast Grading, for award of the Patching and Repair contract.

Sincerely,

Aaron Wadley, PE
LNCO Planning Engineering Construction
Madison Georgia
Aaron.wadley@LNCOpec.com



MORGAN COUNTY AGENDA REQUEST

Department:

Presenter(s):

Meeting Date: mm/dd/yyyy

Type of Request:

Wording for the Agenda:

Background/History/Details:

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

If this item requires funding, please describe:

Has this request been considered within the past two years?

If so, when?

Is Audio-Visual Equipment Required for this Request?*

Backup Provided with Request?

**** All audio-visual material must be submitted to the County Clerk's Office no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It is also your department's responsibility to ensure all third-party audio-visual material is submitted at least 48 hours in advance.***

Approved by Finance

Approved by Purchasing

Manager's Approval

Staff Notes: