

Bantam Towns in the Deep South

* Tiny Town Revitalization in

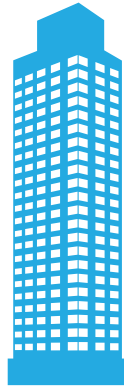
Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi

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*Research Overview

“Bantam Towns in the Deep South” comprises: an overview of the challenges facing rural America; qualitative and quantitative information on rural areas of Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia; a review of others’ work on related topics; and brief case studies on four small towns. The research within this report primarily focuses on identifying these tiny towns and how many of them are in existence, and on defining the conditions and characteristics that have contributed to successful towns’ revitalization and growth. Knowledge gained from this study, in many ways, supports the notion that successful small-town development has largely moved away from traditional strategies, and is now being driven by smaller, more inward-looking, local efforts.



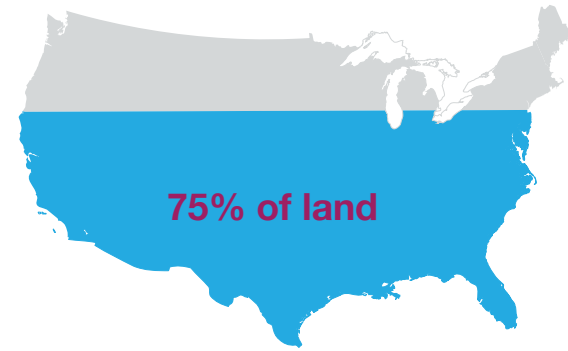
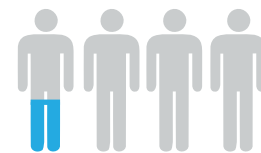
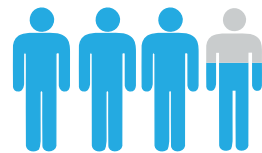
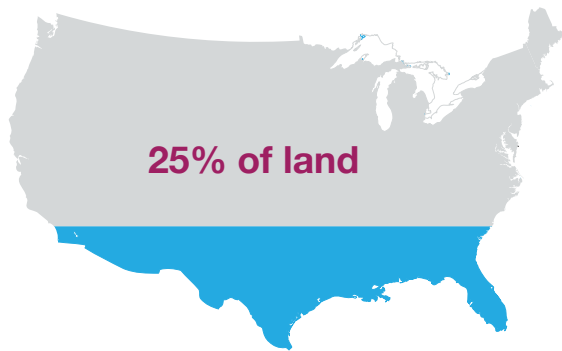


Metro/Urban



Nonmetro/Rural

***Defining Rural: The U.S. Census Bureau classifies rural as all territory outside of Urbanized Areas (UAs) and Urban Clusters (UCs), with Urbanized Areas being defined as having 50,000 people or more and Urban Clusters being defined as having between 2,500 and 50,000 people.**



Metro/Urban

Nonmetro/Rural

Reasons:

- * Higher growth rates in urban areas since the 1970s
- * Current fast growth trends in nonmetro towns near urban areas
- * Suburban are expansion

Types of Rural Areas

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graph TD; A[Types of Rural Areas] --> B[Rural Urban Fringe]; A --> C[Deep Rural];
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Rural Urban Fringe

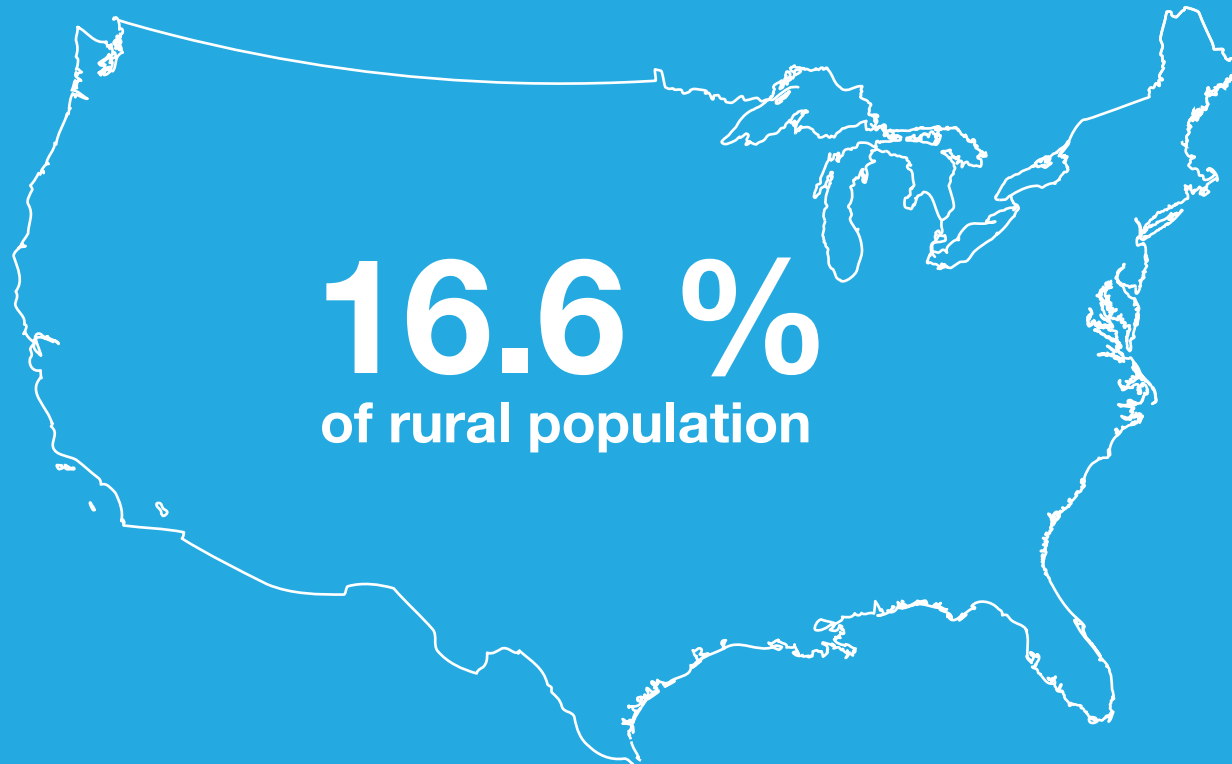
*nonmetropolitan areas 10 to 40 miles outside major metro centers

Deep Rural

*remote rural areas that are usually lagging behind the rest of the nation in income, education, housing, employment, healthcare and social services

*** Poverty rates in rural areas of the U.S.**

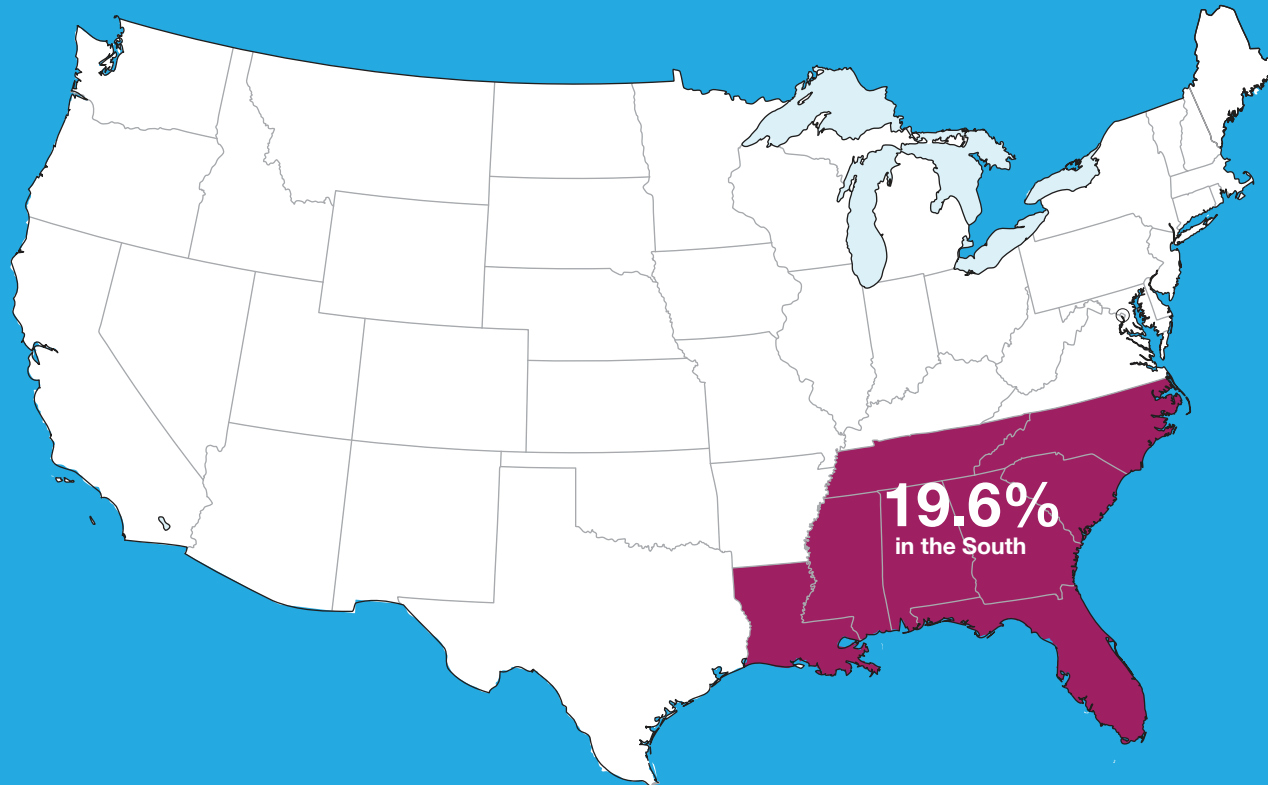
have been consistently higher than those in urban areas since the 1960s, when such figures were first recorded.



Today, 16.6-percent of the total U.S. rural population, or 8.1 million people, are living below the poverty level.

*USDA, Economic Research Services, 2012

*** In some regions rural poverty is considerably higher than in others**



19.6%
in the South

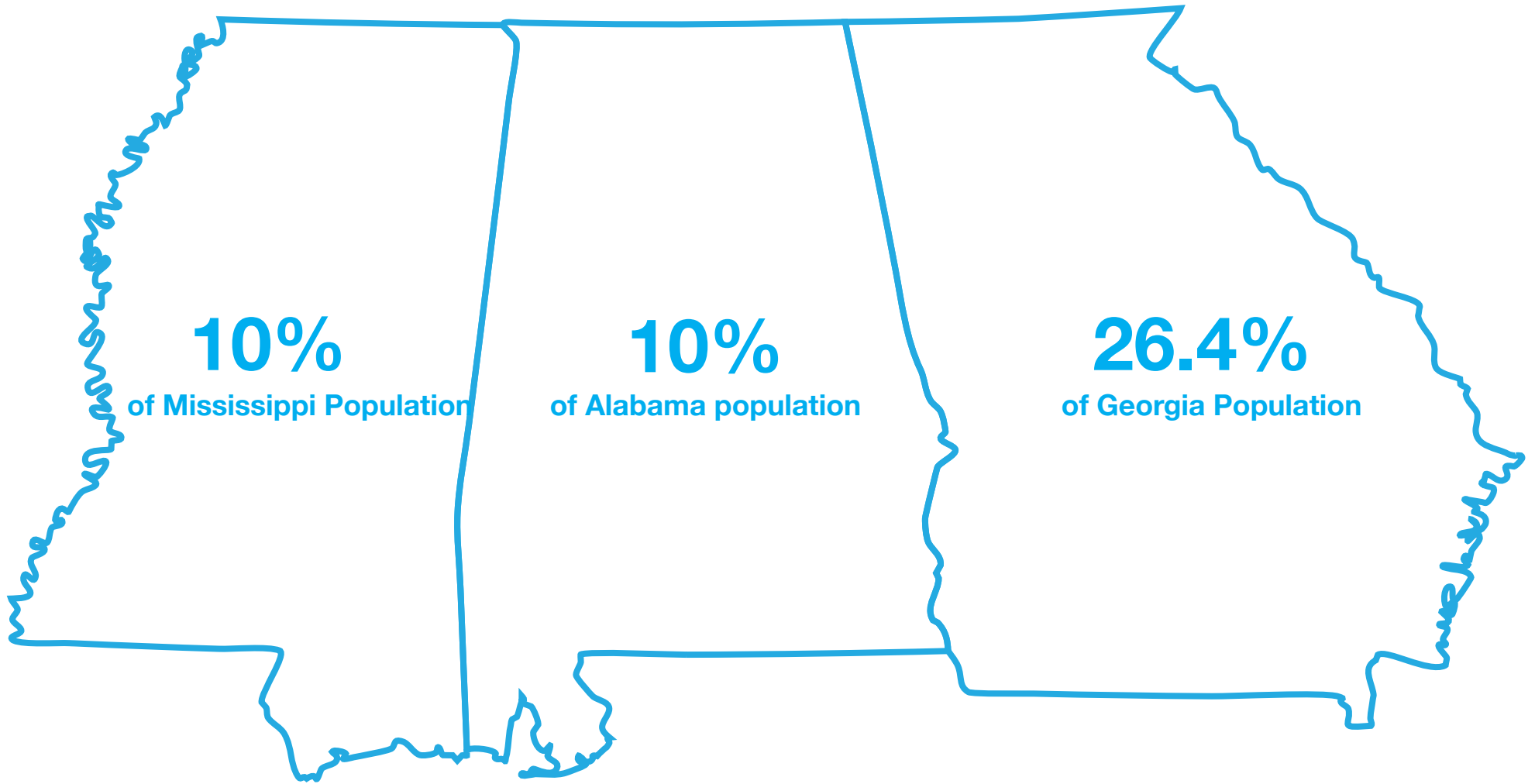
16.7%
in the West

13%
in the Midwest

12.9%
in the Northeast

***In the South, 19.6-percent of people living in rural areas are poor, a figure considerably higher than that of any other region, with the closest comparison being the West with 16.7-percent.**

*USDA, Economic Research Services, 2012



In the Deep South

there are over **1,000 tiny towns** of less than 5,000 people. Most of these small towns in the Deep South lie in what the USDA classifies as “**persistently poor counties,**” meaning that 20-percent or more of their population has been below the poverty level for the last 30 years.

***CHALLENGES FOR SMALL TOWNS**

**Loss of farming and
manufacturing industry**

**Exodus of youth to
larger towns and cities**

**Chronically high poverty
rates**

**Poor public education
system**

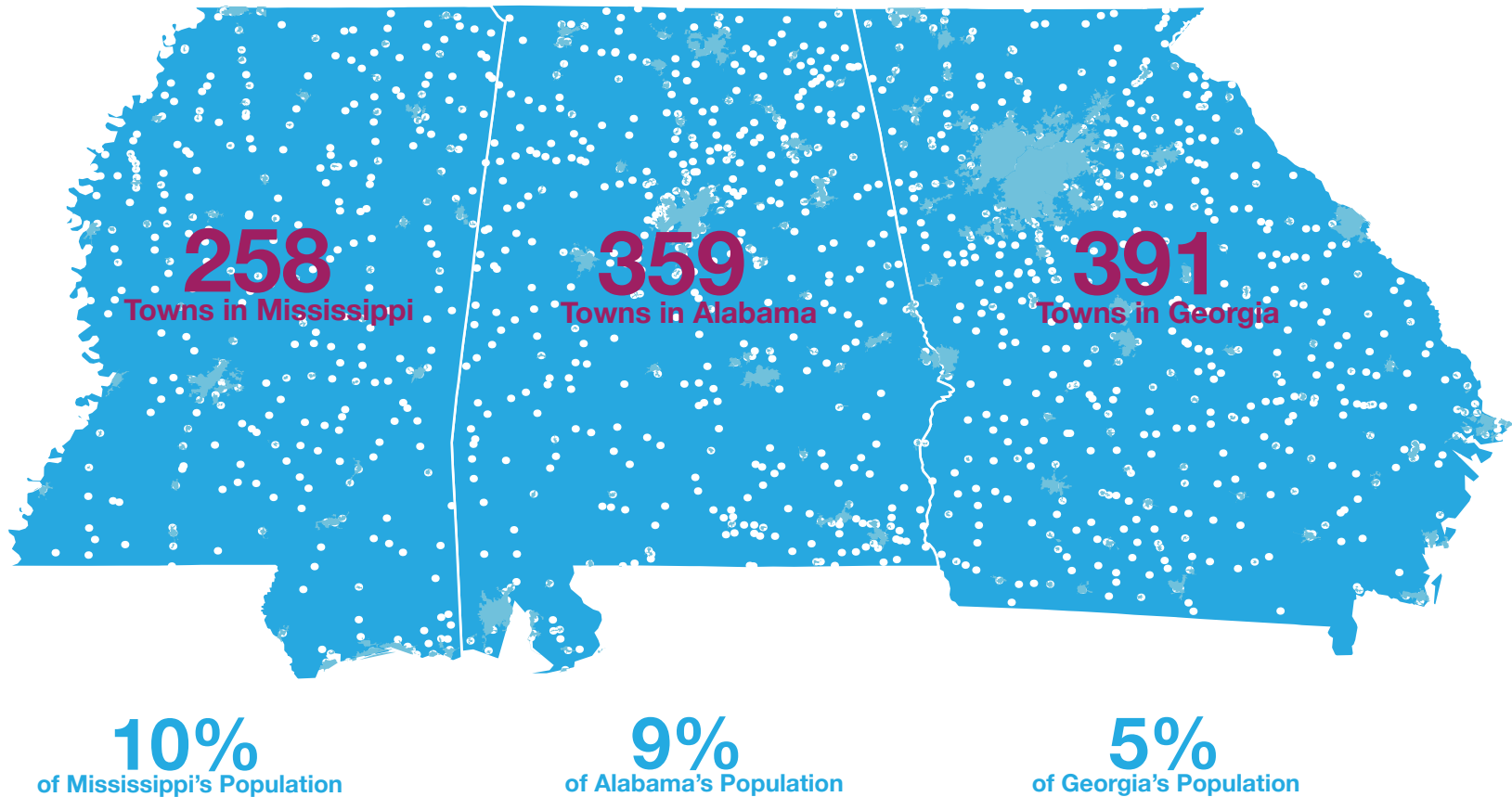
**Lack of technical planning
skills and resources**

*Methodology

How did you do the research?



1,008 towns with populations under 5,000 people



*I compiled a list of Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi towns with populations under 5,000 from both U.S. Census data and information from state municipal associations. Once I completed the list, I mapped the towns, by state and in relation to all metro areas and other features.

***Compiled a list of Target Towns**

**Birmingham City Regional Planning Commission
Tuscaloosa Department of Economic Development
Auburn Department of Economic Development**

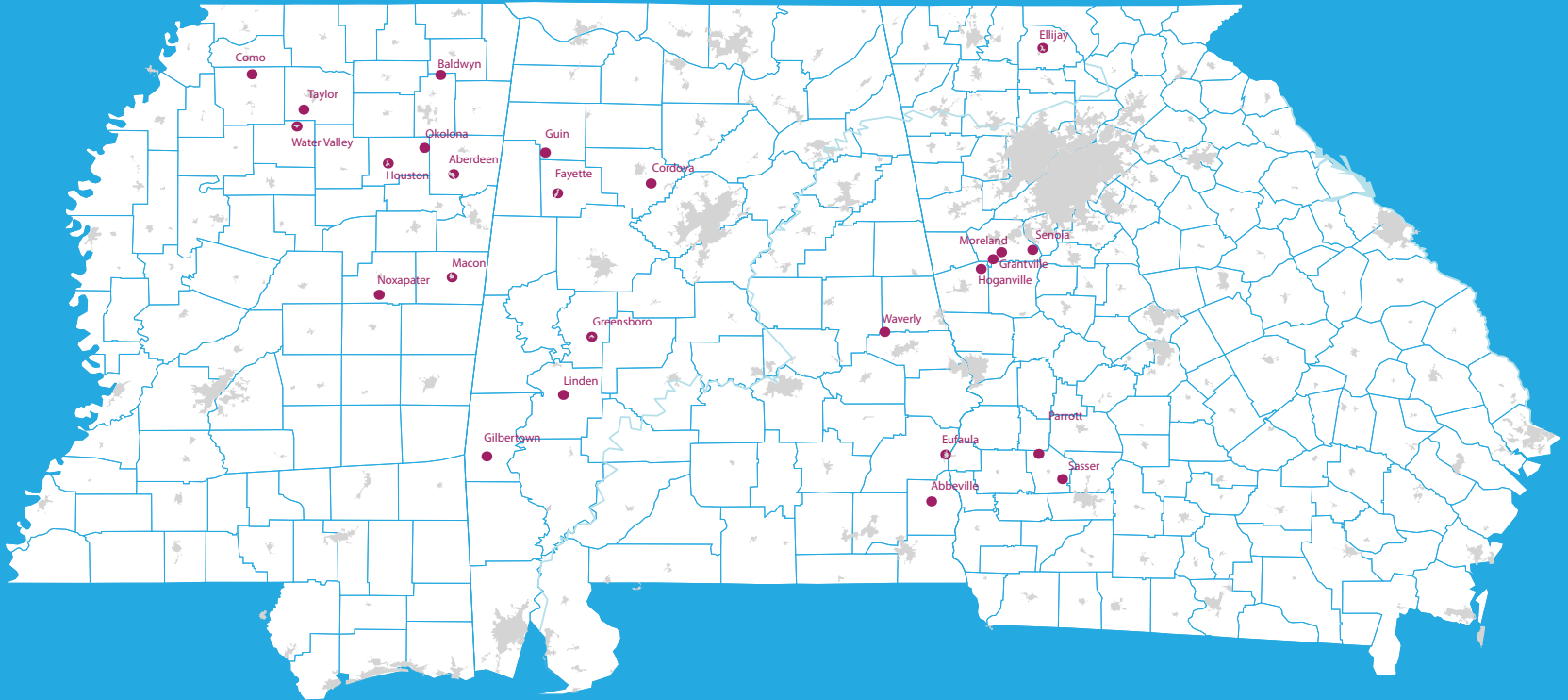
**Georgia Conservancy
University of West Georgia
Senoia City Administrator**

**Mississippi Main Street
Water Valley
Carl Small Town Center Miss. State
Taylor Planning Commission
Como - Main Street**

***Through information gathered from planning and architecture professionals and academics, I compiled a list of Target Towns with populations less than 5,000 and one or more of the following: evidence of successful revitalization efforts; potential for future growth or revitalization; and evidence of growth as the result of unplanned influences..**

* Target Towns

Abbeville, AL
Cordova, AL
Eufaula, AL
Fayette, AL
Gilbert Town, AL
Greensboro, AL
Guin, AL
Linden, AL
Waverly, AL
Ellijay, GA
Grantville, GA
Hogansville, GA
Juliette, GA
Moreland, GA
Parrott, GA
Sasser, GA
Senoia, GA
Aberdeen, MS
Baldwyn, MS
Como, MS
Houston, MS
Macon, MS
Noxapater, MS
Okolona, MS
Taylor, MS



*Evidence of successful revitalization efforts

*Prediction and Potential for future growth or revitalization

*Evidence of growth as the result of unplanned influences

* Case Studies

Como, MS

Senoia, GA

Taylor, MS

Water Valley, MS

*To perform case studies, I visited four towns – three in Mississippi and one in Georgia – for a minimum of two days each, and gathered information through mapping, photography and sketching, as well as through interviews with town officials, residents, business owners and planning authorities. Through my field research, I gained an understanding of the various working components that have contributed to these towns' distinctive revitalizations.

* Como, MS

County: Panola

Population: 1,310

Population Density: 692.1/sq mi

Area: 1.9 sq mi

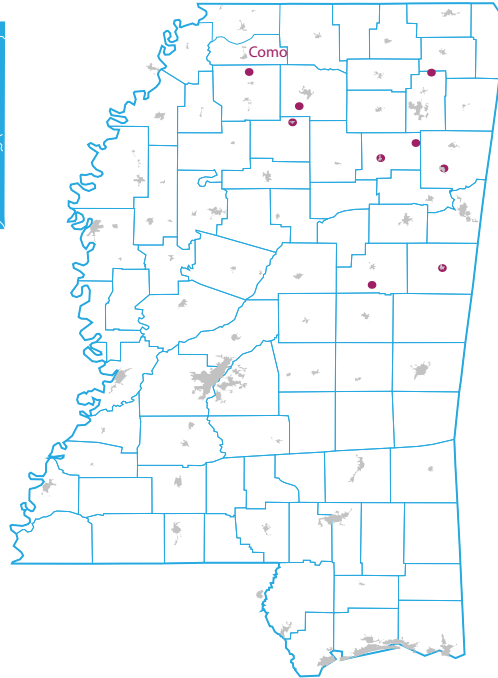
Number of Households: 461

Number of Families: 352

Median Income:

Household	Family
\$22,344	\$25,000

Female	Male
\$18,977	\$28,333



Poverty Rate:

37.5% of population below poverty line

Age:

Under 18	18 to 24	
30.1%	9.8%	
25 to 44	45 to 64	65 +
24.5%	20.6%	15.0%

Race:

Black	White	Native
71.8%	26.8%	0.08%
Hispanic	Asian	
1.15%	0%	
Other		
0.61%		

Location:

Como is about 40 miles northwest of Oxford, 50 miles south of Memphis, 8 miles south of Senatobia and 15 miles north of Batesville.

*Traditionally a prosperous agricultural town.

*In heyday, Como brags the most millionaires per capita in the United States.

*Since the 1960s the population has steadily decreased and businesses have left.

*Farming industry is almost nonexistent there.

Nearly-by Micropolitains attract all potential industry.

*Poverty rates have grown.

*Demographic tensions between white and black, as well as, rich and poor.

*95% of students at the local elementary school receive free or reduced lunch

* Como, MS

Assets:

* Private reinvestment back into community

* Anchor businesses:
Como Steak House
Windy City Grille

* Night Life
Blue Trail

* Special events planning
Como Inn on Main
Como Courtyard – Bed and Breakfast
211 Main - Hall and Gardens

Strategies:

* 2% Tourism Tax

* Target retired population and young professionals

* Creative Lease Options

* Encourage more businesses that supports the town's needs

Resources:

* Appalachian Regional Commission

* Mississippi Main Street Project

* Mississippi State University's First Impressions Group



* Senoia, GA

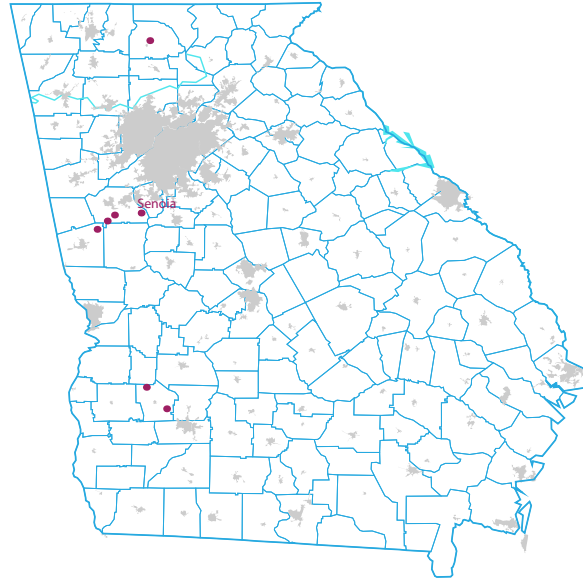
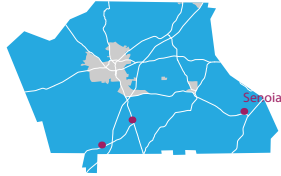
County: Coweta
Population: 3,307
Population Density: 369.8/sq mi
Area: 4.7sq mi
Number of Households: 1,175
Number of Families: 946

Median Income:
Household Family
\$50,080 \$56,382
Female Male
\$27,900 \$36,000

Poverty Rate:
7.4% of population below poverty line

Age:
Under 18 18 to 24
% %
25 to 44 45 to 64 65 +
% % %

Race:
Black White Native
14.5% 80.3% 0.3%
Hispanic Asian
5.6% 1.6%
Other
1.1%



- * Traditionally a railroad town
- * Economy traditionally agriculturally based
- * Today, economically dependent on nearby cities for tourism and jobs
- * Some industry located in town
- * Most new residential construction traditional PUDs.

Location:

Senoia is located about 40 miles southwest of Atlanta, 12 miles southwest of Fayetteville, and 10 miles southeast of Peachtree city.

*Senoia, GA

Assests:

* Tourism

Filming

Local tourism

2010, 2012 Southern Living House



*Historic Development Ventures

Cotton Gin Property

Infill Properties on Main Street

*Stock of historic homes

*Intact downtown area

*Sewer system

* Location

Strategies:

* Most development on Main Street by private developer

* Businesses focused on tourism

* Plan to preserve downtown by keeping new development located on Highway 16 Corridor

* Increase capacity at key intersections to ensure town can manage tourist traffic



* Taylor, MS

County: Lafayette
Population: 500
Population Density: 70.3/sq mi
Area: 4.1 sq mi
Number of Households: 128
Number of Families: 78

Median Income:

Household	Family
\$28,875	\$50,250
Female	Male
\$20,000	\$31,528

Poverty Rate:

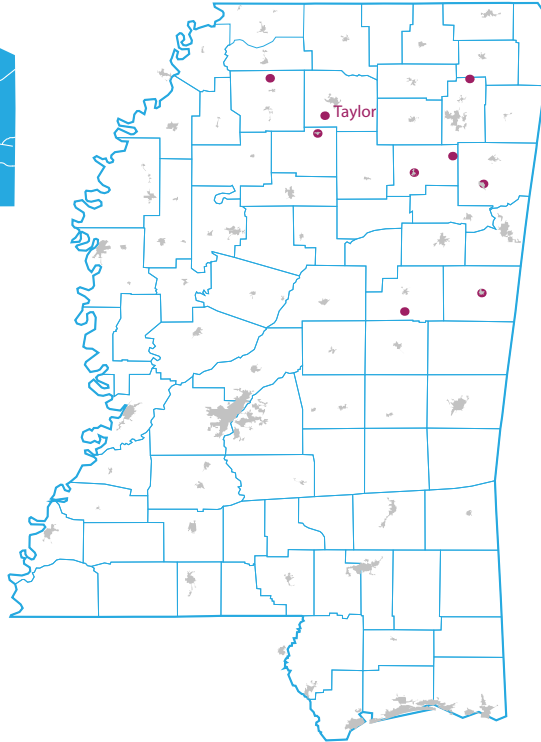
12.2% of population below poverty line

Age:

Under 18	18 to 24	
17.3%	10.0%	
25 to 44	45 to 64	65 +
34.4%	23.5%	14.9%

Race:

Black	White	Native
26.0%	70.3%	1.38%
Hispanic	Asian	
1.73%	0%	
Other		
0.35%		



- * Traditionally a railroad town
- * Economy traditionally agriculturally based
- * Today, a bedroom community of Oxford
- * A new urbanist PUD, Plain Aire, has been built in recent years much to the disapproval of residents
- * Has a long-standing allure to artists, musicians and sculptures
- * No Public Sewer

Location:

Taylor, MS is located in the north-central part of the Mississippi, in the Hill Country of the Delta, Lafayette County. 9 miles southwest of Oxford and 11 miles north of larger Water Valley,

*Taylor, MS

Assests:

* Artist Community

Bill Bickwith

* Low cost of living

* Proximity to Oxford

* The Taylor Grocery

* Picturesque landscape

Conflicts:

* Oxford growth

* Plain Aire

* New zoning ordinance



* Water Valley, MS

County: Yalobusha
Population: 3,392
Population Density: 480/sq mi
Area: 7.0 sq mi
Number of Households: 1,470
Number of Families: 961

Median Income:

Household	Family
\$23,777	\$31,083
Female	Male
\$20,127	\$26,888

Poverty Rate:

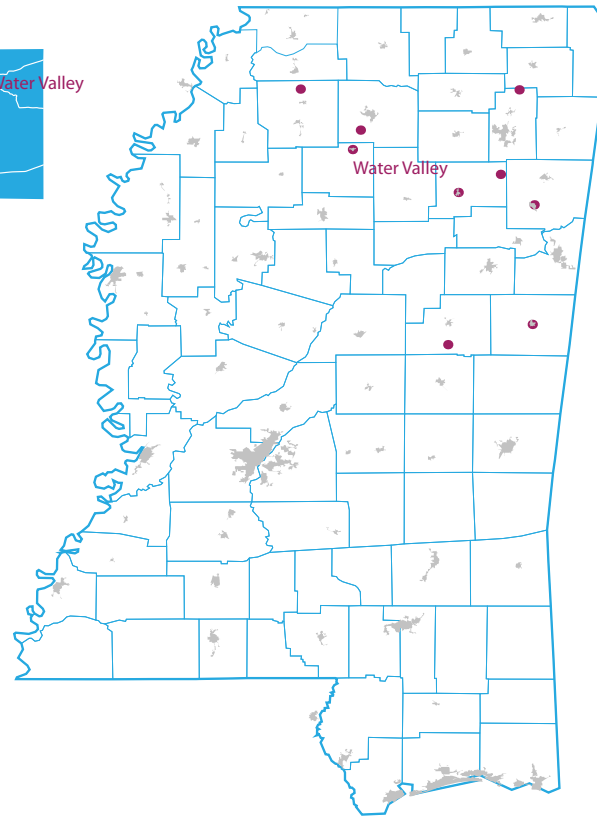
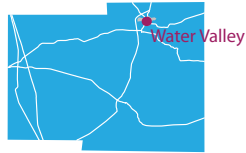
26.9% of population below poverty line

Age:

Under 18	18 to 24	
26.5%	8.9%	
25 to 44	45 to 64	65 +
26.2%	21.1%	17.3%

Race:

Black	White	Native
40.7%	57.9%	0.33%
Hispanic	Asian	
1.20%	0.16%	
Other		
0.19%		



- * Historically a railroad town
- * Economy traditionally based on agriculture
- * Some industry located in town
- * Recent increase in younger residents
- * Economy does not rely heavily on tourism
- * Recognized by the Mississippi Main Street Association for progress
- * High poverty rate at 26.9%

Location:

Water Valley is 19 miles southwest of Oxford and 33 miles northeast of Grenada.

*Water Valley, MS

Assests:

- * Lower real estate prices
- * Influx of younger families
- * Entrepreneurial opportunities
- * Community reinvestment
- * Local newspaper
- * Supported public school
- * Proximity to Oxford
- * Business anchors
Turmage's Drugs
Sartain's Harware
- * Arts community
- * Two strong local banks



Strategies:

- * Focus on "one zone"
- * Leverage the "creative class"
- * Encourage reinvestment
Facade grants
- * Cultivate businesses that serve the community
B.T.C. Grocery
- * Create ongoing programs for community building instead of annual festivals
Farmer's Market
Art Crawl



*Preliminary Conclusions

* Successful efforts are internal

Como community leaders
Water Valley entrepreneurs
Senoia Historic Development Ventures

* Funding is national, state or regional, but knowledge is local

Como ARC funding
Water Valley facade grants
Mississippi Main Street

* Appeal to those without location-specific jobs

Taylor artist community
Water Valley “creative class”
Como business development strategy

* Tourism is local

Como event destination
Taylor Grocery
Water Valley art galleries/B.T.C. Grocery
Senoia Tourism

* Local jobs are still lacking

All towns were dependant on nearby, larger areas for jobs

* Moving Forward

*Issues moving forward

Expanding target town list

Evaluating towns with quantifiable data

Finding funding for a regional project

