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# MIDDLE GEORGIA CHARRETTE AND REGIONAL PLANNING INITIATIVE

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REPORT

November 2018





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This report outlines the Stakeholder Engagement processes that were conducted as part of the Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning Initiative. This report provides a compilation of engagement findings, analyses, and conclusions that have been used to support the development of the Action Plan and Roadmap for the future of the Middle Georgia region. This report has been produced as part of the wider Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning Initiative.

REPORT PREPARED BY:

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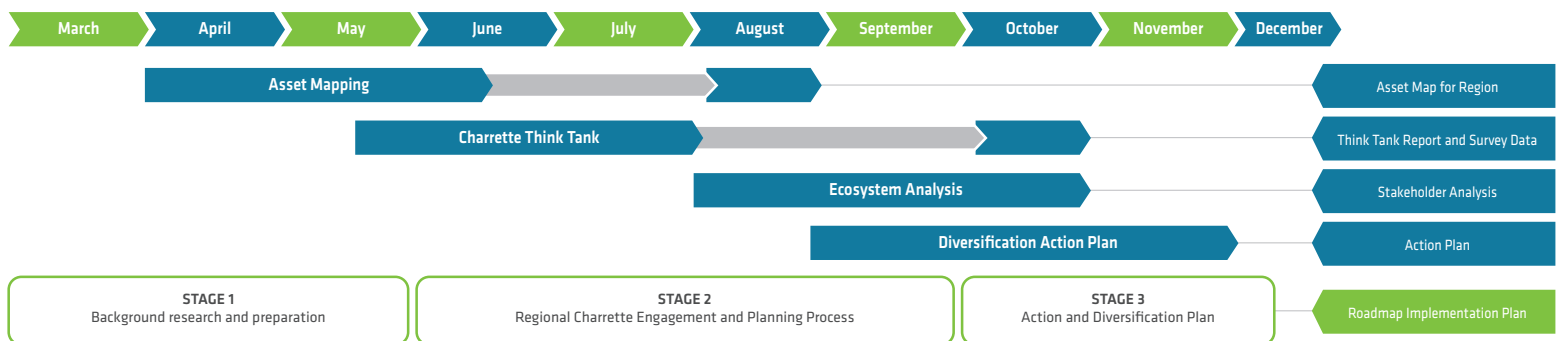
*The Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning initiative used a wide and deep stakeholder engagement process to help gather as much local input as possible*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) is the state agency responsible for both attracting and growing businesses within Georgia. As part of this effort, the GDEcD's Workforce Division and Centre of Innovation for Aerospace obtained a grant award from the Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment in order to study current Department of Defense contract work that is being conducted in Georgia. One of the projects that has resulted from this grant is The Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning initiative.

The Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning initiative includes the 11 counties within Middle Georgia. The initiative has aimed to build on the existing defense industrial base, and explore opportunities to diversify the regional economy away from a dependence on Department of Defense contracts. Currently Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) is a critical industry in the region employing, as of 2016, 21,864 personnel. The intention of this initiative has been to assess Middle Georgia's strengths, and determine opportunities to develop business in alternative markets. Using this information, the goal of the initiative will be to provide a road map to an economy that is more resilient to Department of Defense spending fluctuations by 2030.

### Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Plan | February 2018 - November 2018



#### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- The initiative has incorporated stakeholder engagement, asset mapping, network mapping and scenario-based strategic planning.
- This report outlines the stakeholder engagement methodologies throughout the initiative and the findings from each stage of the process.
- The findings from this report will inform the final Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning Road Map and Action Plan.

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*In order to be most effective, it was necessary to combine a range of complementary engagement methodologies which would suit the progression and momentum of the initiative at each stage*

## 2.0 ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGIES

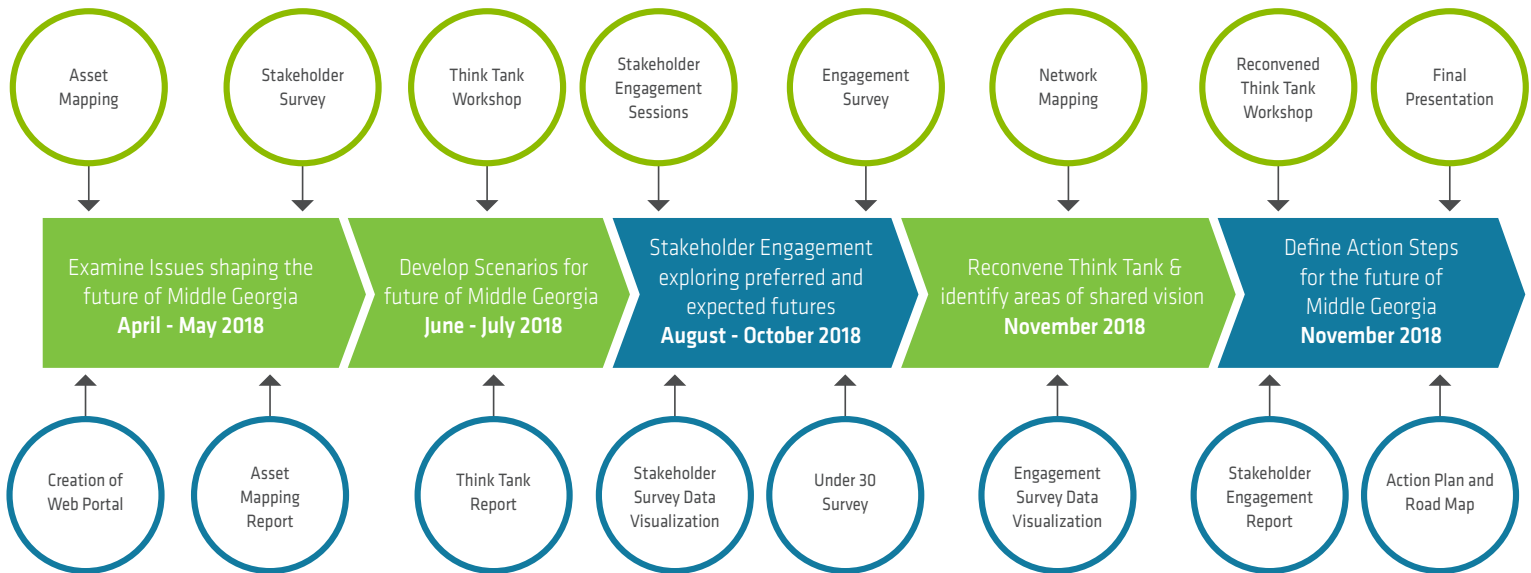
The engagement methodologies were designed to progress in a sequential manner and were tailored to suit each phase of the initiative.

### 2.1 ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES INCLUDED DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS

- **Asset Mapping Workshops:** This consisted of a three-step mapping procedure; categorized asset mapping, timeline/trend analysis of the assets and asset opportunity development. The mapping exercise was completed in two sessions with regional economic development leaders and other subject matter experts.
- **Initial Stakeholder Survey:** An extensive survey was used to ascertain stakeholders' perspectives about key trends and factors shaping the future of the Middle Georgia Region.
- **Think Tank Workshop:** Scenario Planning was conducted with a full day Think Tank workshop in late June 2018 in order to generate plausible futures for the Middle Georgia region and to ascertain the preferred and expected futures.
- **Stakeholder Engagement Sessions:** The scenarios were taken out to the wider Middle Georgia community within 3 large engagement sessions to test the plausibility of the scenarios. An engagement survey was used to gauge the reactions and perspectives of each of the attendees at the end of each engagement session. The engagement sessions were held in August 2018.
- **Data Visualization Portal:** The results from the Stakeholder Survey and Engagement Sessions were subsequently compiled and displayed via an online data visualization platform. This platform consisted of filterable charts which enabled stakeholders to view the results from a range of options including age, location, importance of factors, preparedness of the region for change and other variants.
- **Under 30's Survey:** This survey was used to ascertain the views of the younger population about life in Middle Georgia. It explored what the younger people felt about the region, the region's activities and amenities and whether the younger people were going to remain living in the area in the future.
- **Network Mapping:** This was employed in order to assist the regional stakeholders in identifying all of the critical entities and individuals that are part of the regional eco system.
- **Reconvened Think Tank:** The original Think Tank was reconvened in early November 2018 and the results from the stakeholder surveys and engagement sessions were presented to participants. This workshop was also used to clarify the areas of shared vision for the future of the Middle Georgia region.

## 2.2 ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

The stakeholder engagement process ran from April through to November 2018. The diagram below demonstrates the sequential manner in which engagement methodologies were used and deliverables were produced during this timeframe.



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### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

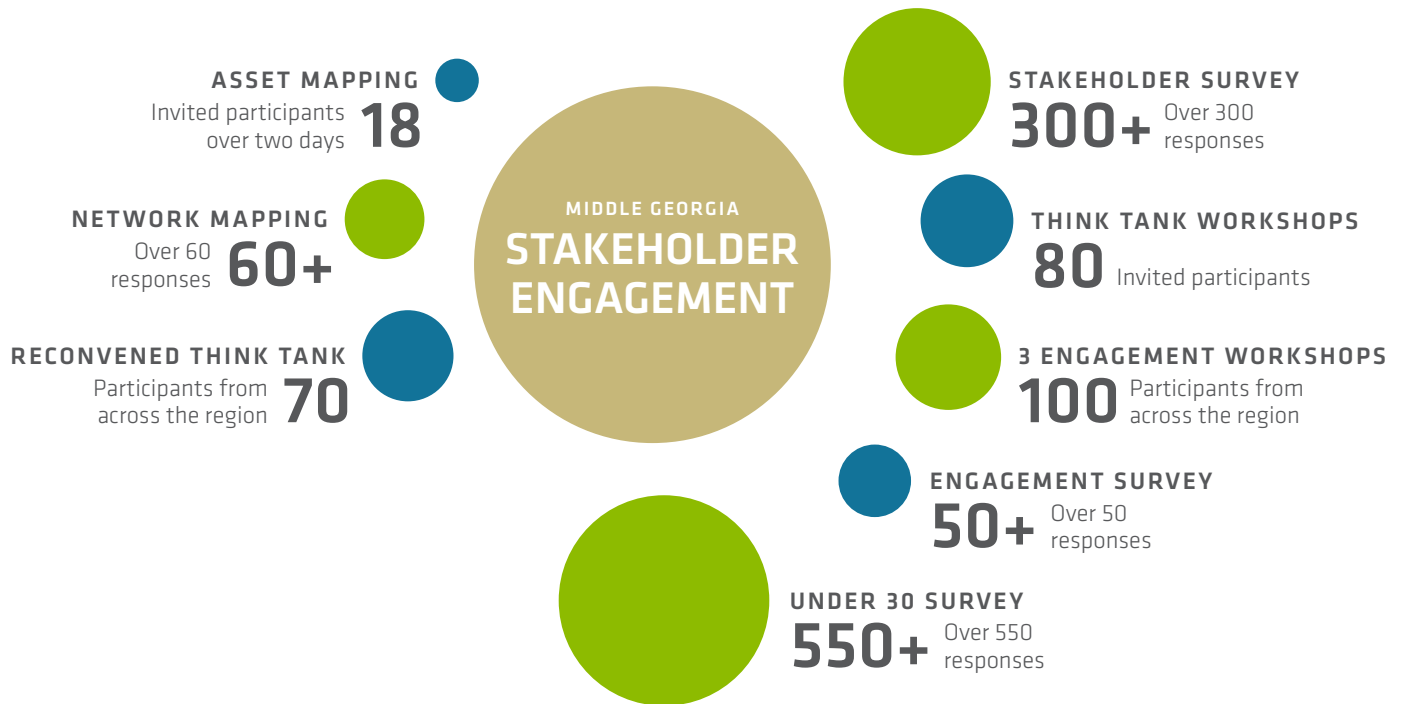
- This engagement process aimed to have each step methodically build on the previous work, creating consensus about future direction and priorities.
- The project has produced detailed reports and data visualization outcomes that outline stakeholder views on key topics, and alignment around a preferred future.

*The Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning process was designed to provide in-depth and extensive stakeholder engagement through a range of engagement methodologies*





## 2.3 KEY METRICS OF THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- The surveys and workshops gathered high quality data from the respondents.
- A strong core of some 60-80 people participated throughout the entire process, providing a robust group of key stakeholders who were central to the process.

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## 3.0 COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

A communications process ran concurrently throughout the project which enabled stakeholders to learn about the initiative. The communications process consisted primarily of:

- Production of the initiative's website portal.
- Creation of the initiative's Facebook page.
- Consistent social media promotion on that page.

The initiative was also promoted by the Executive Director of Development Authority of Houston County through Middle Georgia Economic Alliance (MGEA) and related channels.





## 4.0 ENGAGEMENT RESULTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

### 4.1 ASSET MAPPING

Characterizing regional assets was a valuable first step in order to inform the stakeholder engagement aspect of the initiative, and the building of a long term economic diversification strategy for Middle Georgia.

Assets were identified and prioritized by what is 'truly unique' or originating naturally or generated freely resulting in a true competitive advantage. The asset focus was confined to the 11 county Middle Georgia region and the asset mapping methodology utilized an opportunity analysis for the discovery and development process. Opportunity analysis was designed to discover new or emerging assets and realize connections that may have not be identified previously in order to generate or retain economic value.

The Middle Georgia Asset mapping consisted of a three-step mapping procedure:

1. Categorized asset mapping
2. Timeline/trend analysis of the assets
3. Asset opportunity development

The mapping exercise was completed in two sessions with regional economic development leaders and other subject matter experts. The sessions were two hours in duration.

The high-level assumptions in framing the asset mapping sessions included:

- The Middle Georgia region and economy is diverse with substantial competitive strengths and special characteristics that provide real opportunities for economic diversification.
- The competitive strengths in the region provide an opportunity to enhance a mutually beneficial relationship between Robins Air Force Base and the regional economy.
- Enhancing a mutually beneficial relationship will reduce the regional exposure to future Federal Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decisions.

Further details on the Asset Mapping aspect of the initiative can be found in the Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning Asset Mapping Summary Report of workshops in May and August 2018.

*The Middle Georgia regional economy has diverse and substantial competitive strengths and some unique characteristics that provide opportunities for economic diversification*



## 4.1.1 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ASSET MAPPING

During the asset mapping workshops, local experts identified asset concentrations in eight critical areas:

- Software development, application, maintenance and security
- The research – innovation – commercialization continuum
- Water resources and distribution
- Adaptive manufacturing maintenance and sustainment
- Intellectual capital and talent
- Veteran Center of Excellence
- Film and digital entertainment
- Healthcare and research

*The Middle Georgia region has significant unique concentrations of excellence. Leveraging these strengths provides a fast track to drive economic diversification and growth*

Of these critical areas, opportunity for catalytic work was identified in the following:

- **Software and cyber security.** The region has multiple organizations and institutions that have a history of software development or are emerging with a focus on cyber security. It was identified there is a very logical opportunity to expand this 'island of excellence' into broader commercial activity and economic diversification, especially building off the concentration of expertise around the Robin Air Force Base.
- **Research – Innovation – Commercialization continuum.** Strong regional innovation ecosystems foster a strong entrepreneurial culture and dynamic business environment. They provide long term resources that support the successful launch and scaling of innovation-based businesses, offering a suite of services for location specific enterprises. Potential 'islands of excellence' were identified around: Healthcare and medical devices; Aerospace, drones and defense applications and Kaolin and mining companies.
- **Adaptive manufacturing maintenance and sustainment.** Manufacturing maintenance and sustainment is an emerging industrial capacity in Middle Georgia. This application is primarily focused on preventative maintenance in aerospace, industrial, advanced food processing, warehousing and distribution sectors. Adaptive manufacturing, 3D printing (additive manufacturing) capability, corrosion testing and reliability focussed maintenance, establish Middle Georgia as a center of excellence for adaptive manufacturing maintenance and sustainment.
- **Intellectual capital and talent.** The Middle Georgia region has a significant concentration of higher education institutions. Enrolment figures for 2017 indicate over 30,000 students across a range of technical and university campuses. Higher Education institutions have a significant economic impact on regional economies. An April 2017 Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia report estimated that 2.2 local jobs were generated by every job in the institutions.

## 4.2 INITIAL STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

The online Stakeholder Survey endeavored to understand the perspectives of the stakeholders about key trends shaping the future of the Middle Georgia Region. Running from May to September 2018, stakeholders were asked to respond to questions which explored:

- The importance of a range of factors facing the region in 2018 and 2030
- Positivity or negativity related to the range of factors and overall impact
- Preparedness of the region to adapt to projected changes
- Opportunities and Threats relating to the future of Middle Georgia over the next 10 years

From initial research and discussions, the following factors and trends were identified as important to discuss throughout the survey:

- Automation and Robotics in industry
- Proximity to Atlanta metropolis
- Location as a major logistics hub
- Economic and industry diversification
- Quality of regional transportation infrastructure
- Decline in mining and agriculture sectors
- Potential for tourism destination development
- Workforce and Skills shortage
- Aging population
- Difficulty in youth attraction and retention
- Income disparity across the region
- Collaboration across counties

Further details on the Stakeholder Survey can be found at: <http://lab.future-iq.com/middle-georgia-economic-alliance/data-visualization/about-the-survey/>

*Social media was an essential tool to encourage stakeholder engagement throughout the process and provide momentum and visibility to the initiative*



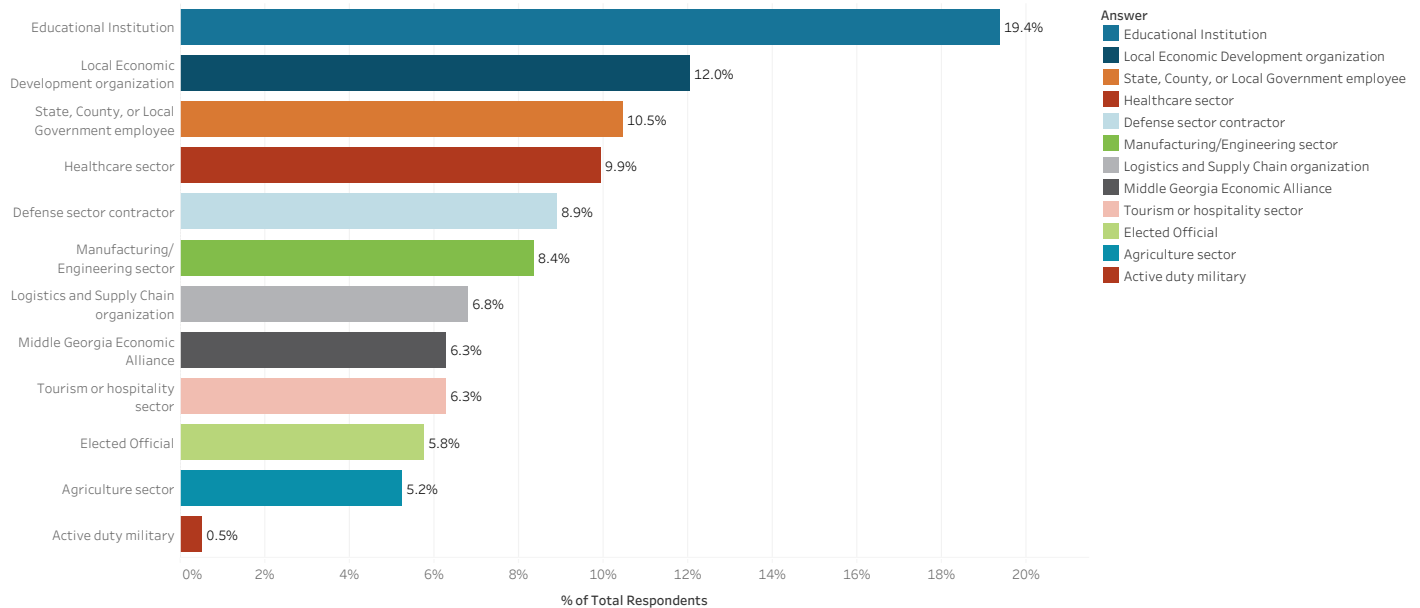
## 4.2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

The Stakeholder survey was available for participants to complete online. It consisted of 15 questions which took 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey included a mix of open ended, ranked, matrix and close ended questions. While the closed ended, ranked and matrix questions were particularly advantageous for the data visualization, the open-ended questions gave the powerful individual perspective of each participant regarding the opportunities and threats facing the Middle Georgia region. The survey was completed by 312 stakeholders.

The results from the Stakeholder Survey were compiled and displayed via an online data visualization platform. This platform consisted of filterable charts which enabled stakeholders to view the results from a range of options including age, location, importance of factors, and preparedness of the Middle Georgia region for change and other variants.

### Stakeholder survey respondents' profile – Sector Affiliation

Sector Affiliation



More data on the survey respondents profile can be found at <http://lab.future-iq.com/middle-georgia-economic-alliance/data-visualization/about-the-survey/>



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#### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

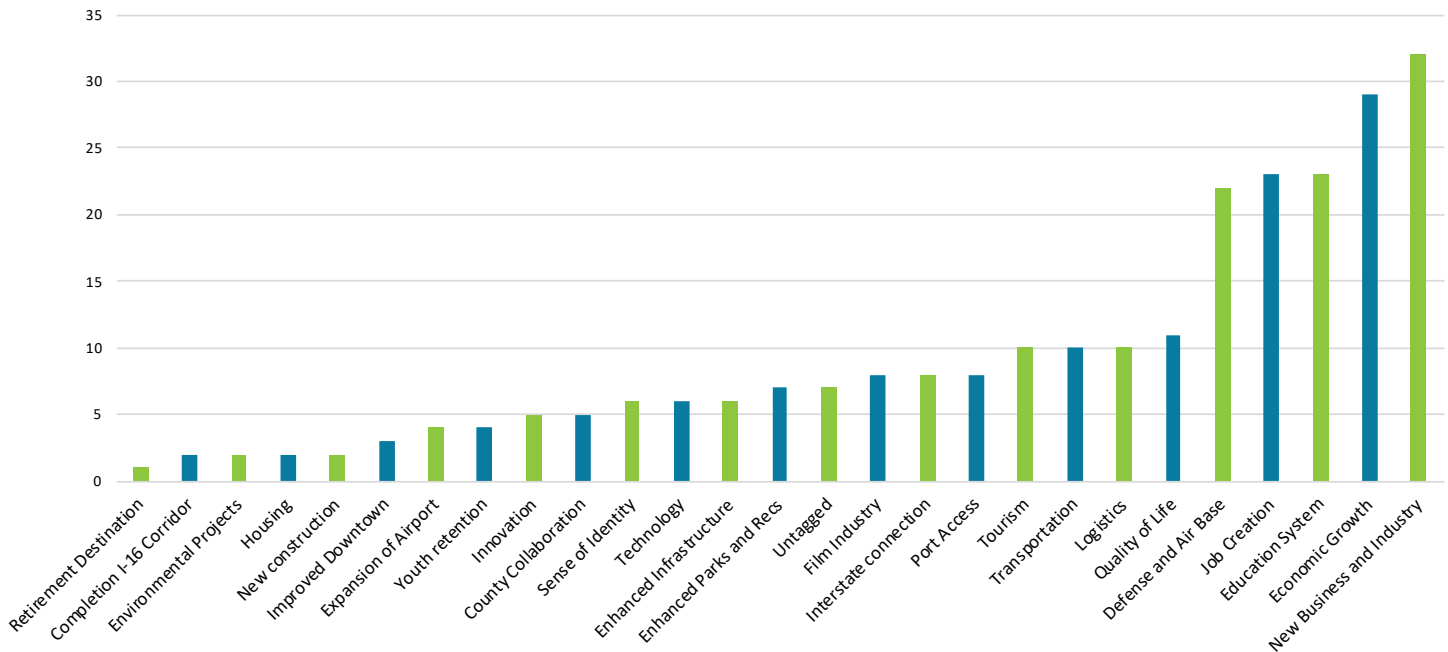
- The largest respondent age cohort was between 51-60 years, followed by 41-50 years.
- The majority of respondents had lived and worked in the region for over 20 years, and approximately 30% of respondents had lived and worked in the region for over 40 years.
- The majority of respondents were affiliated to educational institutions, followed by Local Economic Development organizations and then State, County or Local government.
- Over half of the respondents were most interested in Economic and Industry issues.
- Over half of respondents lived in Houston county, followed by Bibb county and Putnam county.



## 4.2.2 OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE REGION OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Survey respondents were asked open ended questions regarding opportunities. These responses were then categorized to create broad themes of responses.

### Biggest Opportunities facing the Middle Georgia Region over the next 10 years



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#### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

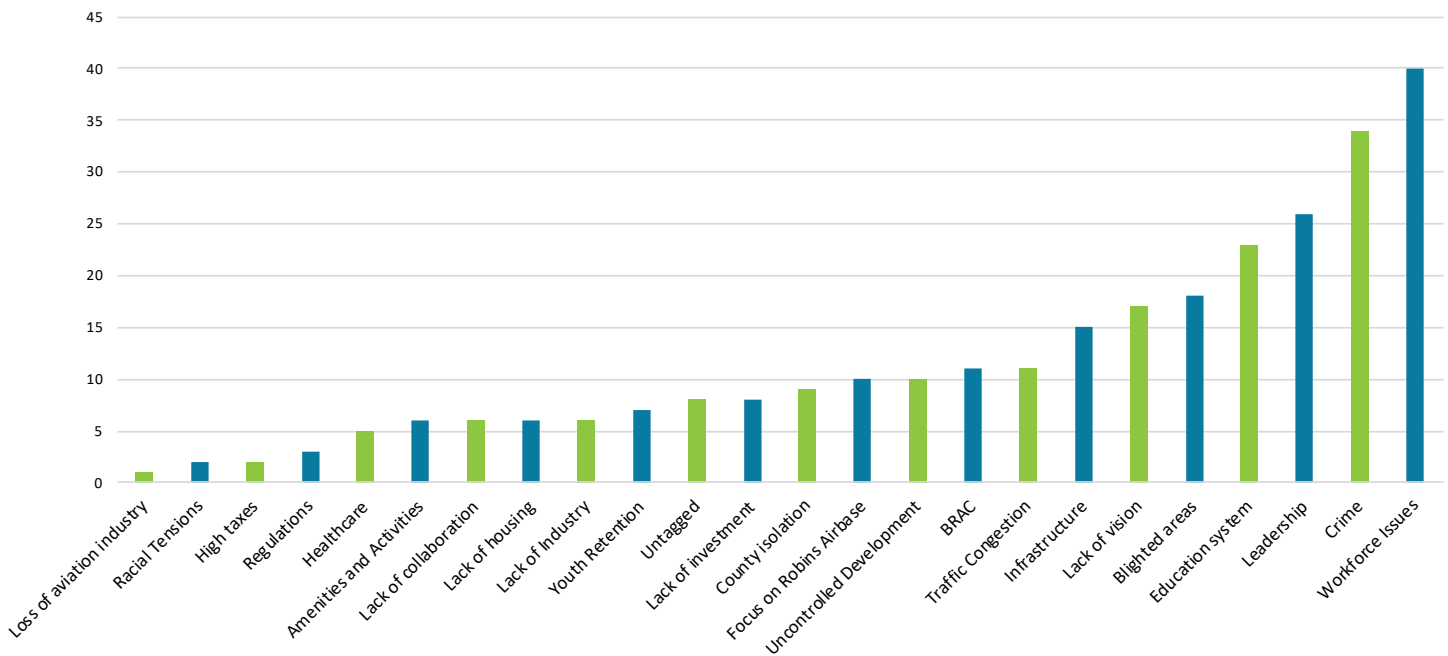
- New Business and Industry was seen as the biggest opportunity facing the Middle Georgia region over the next 10 years.
- This was followed by Economic Growth, the Education System, Job Creation and Defense and Air Base.

*Many people have identified there are new business and industry opportunities that will help drive future economic growth. The regions proximity and potential as a major logistics hub was well noted by many people*



## 4.2.3 THREATS FACING THE REGION OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Survey respondents were asked open ended questions regarding threats. These responses were then categorized to create broad themes of responses.



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### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

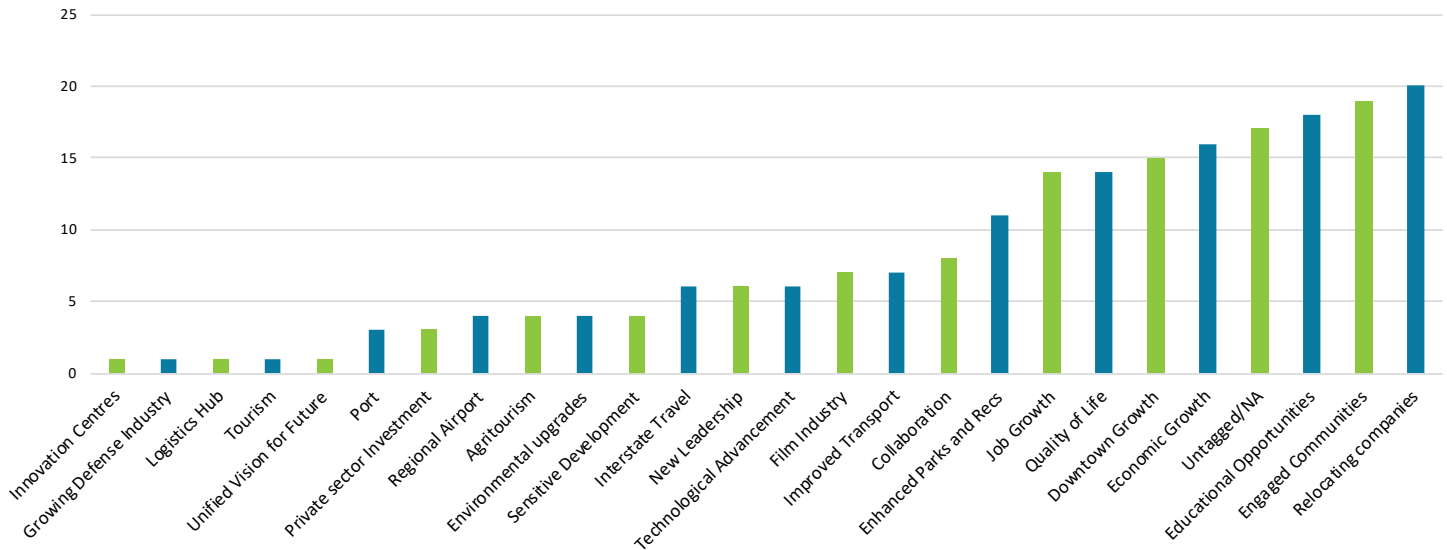
- Workforce issues were seen as the biggest threat facing the Middle Georgia region over the next 10 years.
- This was followed by crime, leadership issues and the education system.

*The issues of the challenges with the future workforce and skills was well noted. A recurrent theme was also the need for the regional leadership to build a collaborative approach*



## 4.2.4 PROMISING EMERGING TRENDS FACING THE REGION OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Survey respondents were asked open ended questions regarding promising emerging trends. These responses were then categorized to create broad themes of responses.



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### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- Relocating companies and Engaged Communities were seen as the most promising or interesting emerging trends, shaping the future of the Middle Georgia region.
- This was followed by Educational Opportunities and Economic Growth.
- There were a number of responses which could not be categorized as some respondents were unsure of the question or had no opinion.

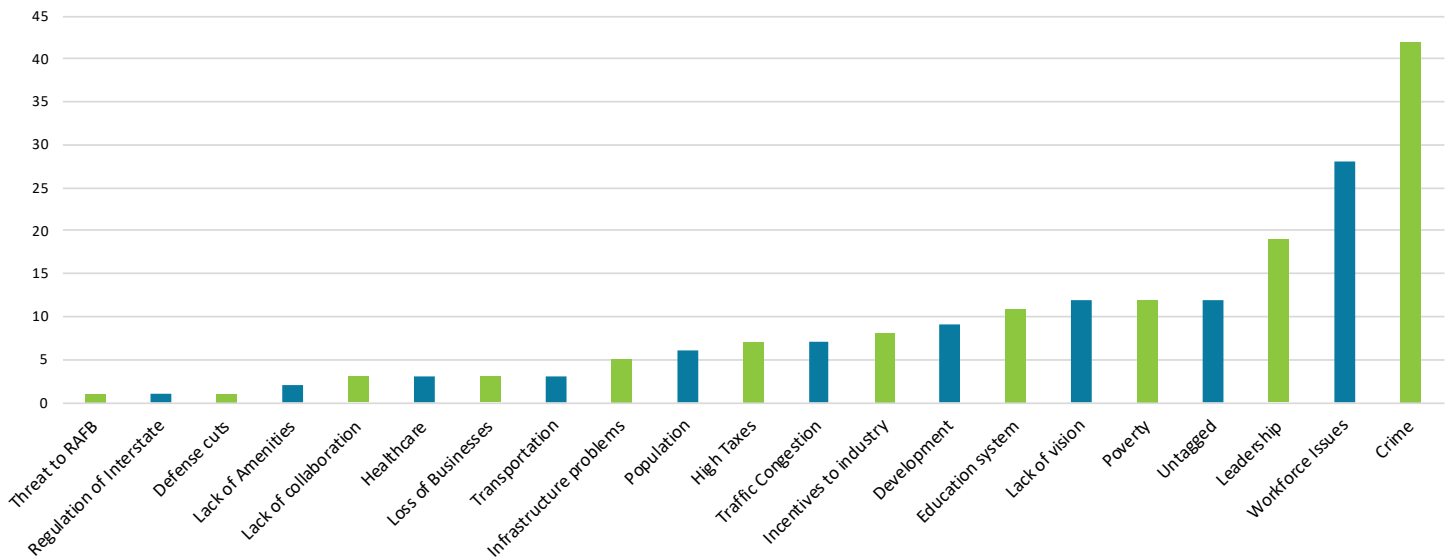
*The regions appeal to companies seeking competitive locations was well documented. This particularly applies to logistics and distribution companies. The emergence of urban and downtown renewal also holds promise in parts of the region*





## 4.2.5 CONCERNING EMERGING TRENDS FACING THE REGION OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Survey respondents were asked open ended questions regarding concerning emerging trends. These responses were then categorized to create broad themes of responses.



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### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- Crime was seen as the most concerning emerging trend shaping the future of the Middle Georgia region.
- This was followed by Workforce Issues and Leadership.
- There were a number of responses which could not be categorized as some respondents were unsure of the question or had no opinion.

*Crime is a recurrent theme in the surveys, as well as blighted areas and concerns about general community appearance*

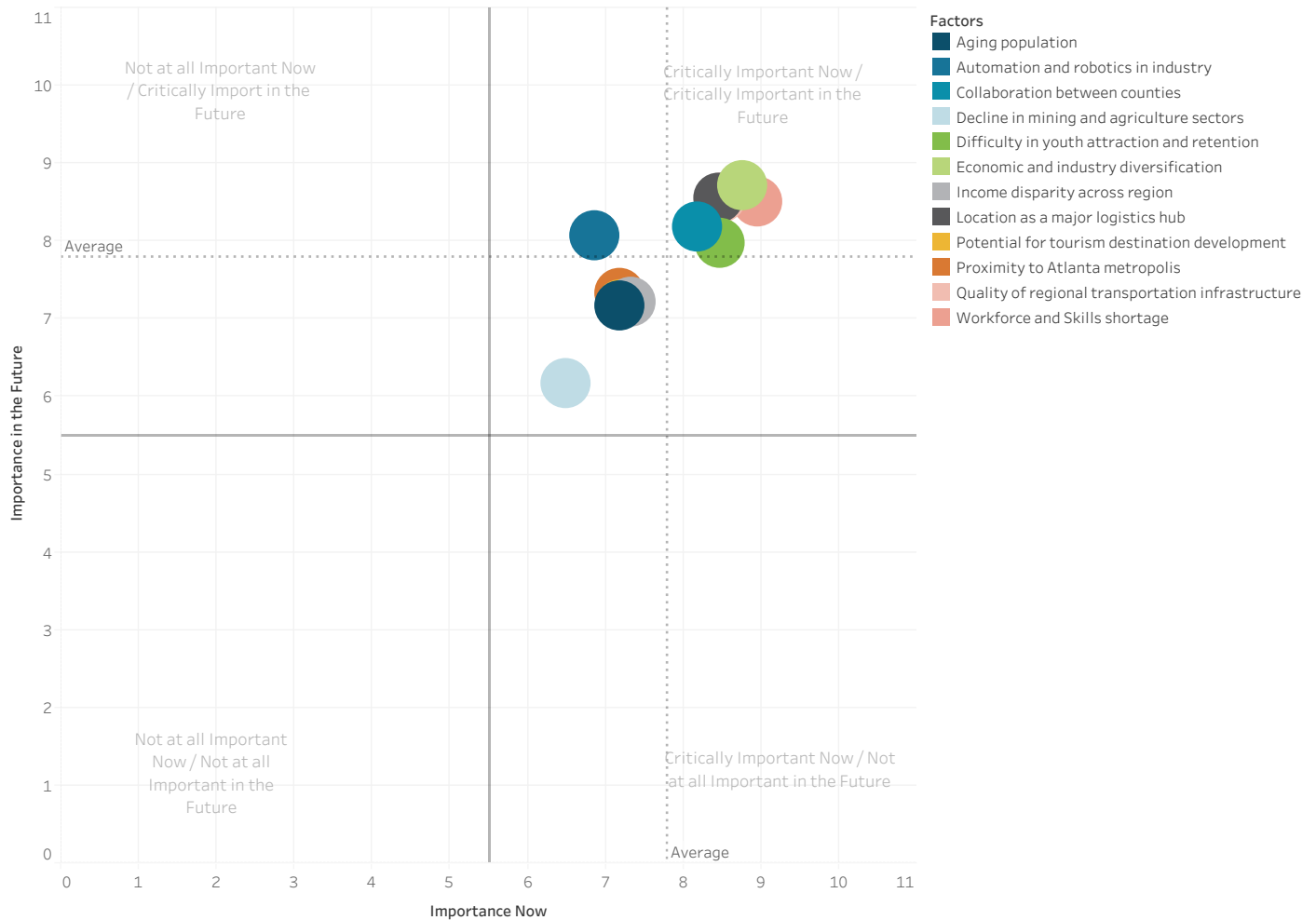


## 4.2.6 IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS TO THE MIDDLE GEORGIA REGION

Survey respondents were asked to assess the importance of the key factors, both now and in the future. The following chart provided the average responses for each factor, on the scales of 'Importance of factor NOW', and 'Importance in the FUTURE'.

Importance of Factors NOW (X-Axis) x Importance of Factors in the FUTURE (Y-Axis) - Average Points

**SCALE:** 1 = Not Important; 10 = Critically Important



### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- The overall most critically important factors both in 2018 and 2030 were Economic and Industry Diversification, Workforce and Skills Shortage, and Location as Major Logistics Hub.
- Decline in Mining and Agriculture Sectors was seen as the least important factors both in 2018 and in 2030.

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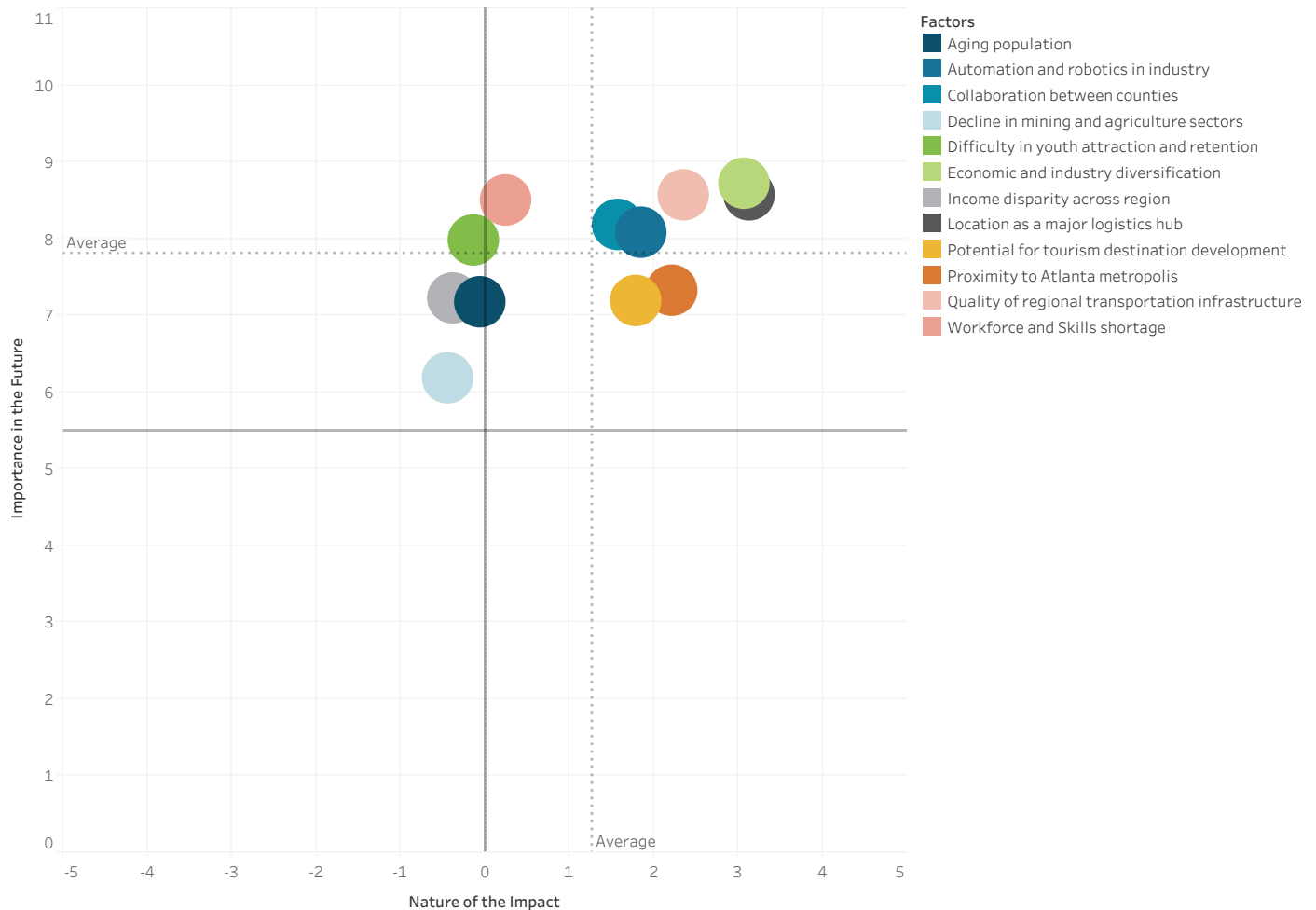
## 4.2.7 NATURE OF IMPACT OF THE FACTORS TO THE MIDDLE GEORGIA REGION

Survey respondents were asked to assess the impact of the key factors, in terms of negative or positive potential impact. The following chart maps the average points for each factor on the scales of 'Nature of Impact' and 'Importance in the Future'.

Nature of Impact (X-Axis) x Importance in the Future (Y-Axis) - Average Points

**X Axis SCALE :** -5 = Very negative; 0 = Neutral; +5 = Very positive

**Y Axis SCALE:** 1 = Not Important; 10 = Critically Important



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### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

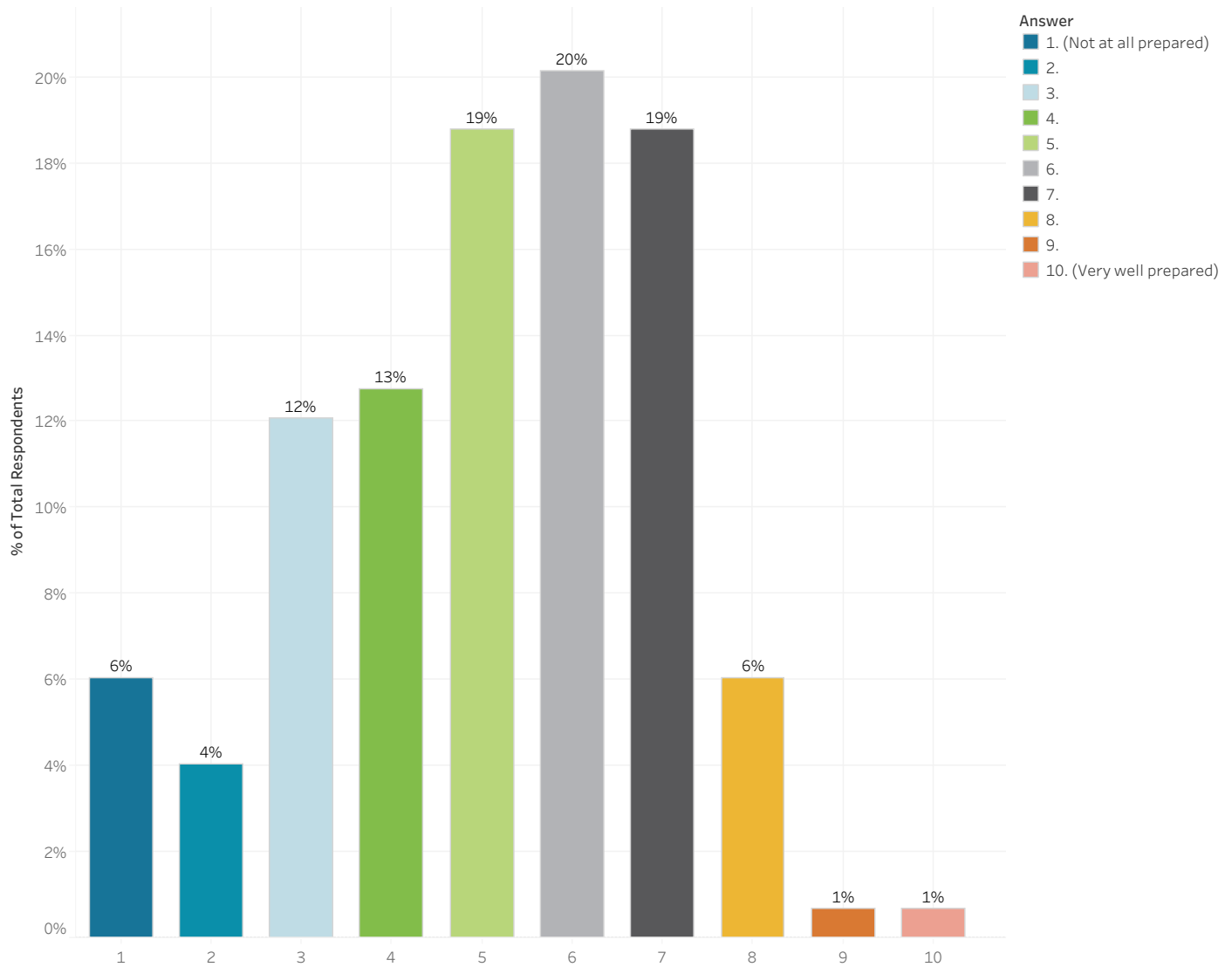
- Most of the factors associated with the physical aspects (proximity, location, infrastructure) were seen as strongly positive for the future.
- Collaboration between counties was seen as a positive factor.
- Social issues such as income disparity, aging population and workforce shortages were seen as neutral to negative for the future.

## 4.2.8 PREPAREDNESS OF MIDDLE GEORGIA REGION TO ADAPT TO CHANGES

Survey respondents were asked how well prepared they thought Middle Georgia was to adapt to changes. This question aimed to explore resilience and the capacity for change. The responses are perception based, and people were not asked to qualify or explain their views.

How well prepared is the Middle Georgia Region to adapt to these changes?

**SCALE:** 1 = Not at all prepared; 10 = Very well prepared



### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- Very few respondents felt that the region was very well prepared to adapt to change.
- The spread of results show that the majority of respondents felt that the region was leaning to not prepared to adapt to change.

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## 4.2.9 HIGHLIGHTS FROM STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

This initial survey was completed by 319 stakeholders, who were largely interested in economic and industry issues. They were predominantly residing in Houston county and were mainly from the economic development and education sectors.

### Key highlights included:

- Revitalizing and diversifying the regional economy was seen as the biggest opportunity facing the region over the next 10 years, and the most critically important topic both in 2018 and in 2030.
- Respondents felt that Middle Georgia was only moderately well prepared to face the challenge of revitalizing and diversifying the regional economy.
- Workforce Issues were seen as the biggest threat facing the Middle Georgia region over the next 10 years, which may arise from a lack of focus on revitalizing and diversifying the regional economy.
- Building a strong collaborative region, with safe and vibrant communities was seen as critically important to the region, looking out to 2030.
- Crime was seen as the most concerning or threatening emerging trend shaping the future of the Middle Georgia region, which would arise from a lack of building safe and vibrant communities.

*Revitalizing and diversifying the regional economy was seen as the most critically important topic now and in 2030. Building a strong and collaborative region was also seen as critically important*



### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- The regions physical location and proximity to transportation hubs appears to be one of the most promising factors to drive economic growth.
- The regions workforce and skills constraints, and some deeper social issues, appear to be the most pressing challenges and threats to future growth and success.

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## 4.3 THINK TANK WORKSHOP

The Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning Think Tank workshop was conducted in late June 2018 and involved invited stakeholders. This one-day workshop was attended by approximately 80 participants. The workshop was intended to assist in the understanding of future drivers that will affect Middle Georgia looking out to 2030.

Full details of the Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning Think Tank workshop including the full methodological process and outcomes from the event have been produced in the Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning Think Tank Workshop Report. For the purposes of this Stakeholder Engagement Report the Think Tank workshop will be addressed from a high-level perspective as part of the overall project engagement process.

More information on the Think Tank, and the associated report can be found at:

<http://lab.future-iq.com/middle-georgia-economic-alliance/mgea-charrette-and-regional-planning-future-think-tank/>

### 4.3.1 OUTLINE OF THE THINK TANK WORKSHOP

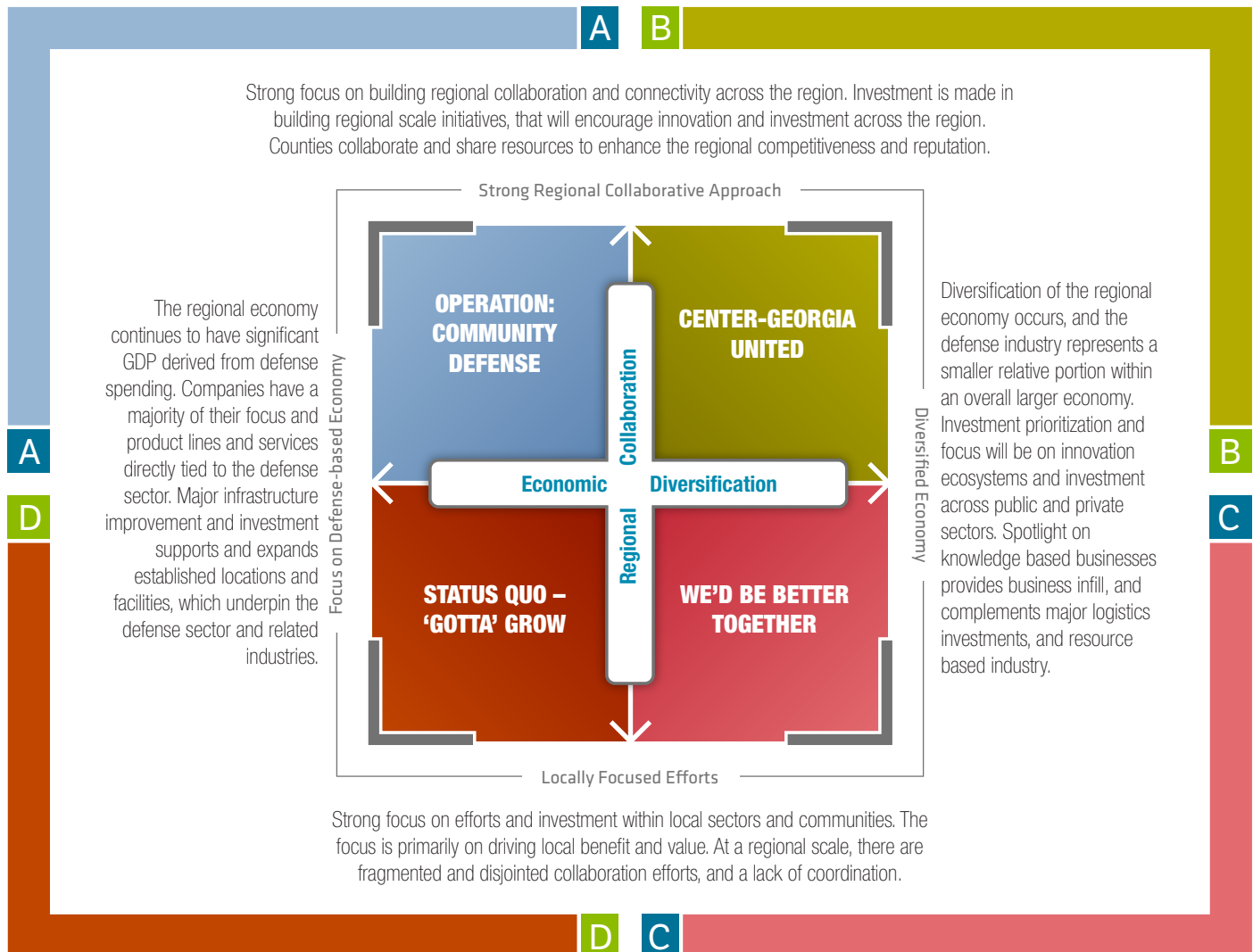
The participants spent the day examining important emerging trends and crafted a range of possible future scenarios for Middle Georgia leading up to 2030. The Think Tank explored how the region would change over time, in relation to emerging macro and local trends. What may happen if the focus is on a strong regional collaboration approach in contrast to locally focused efforts. Or if the region focuses on a defense-based economy or moves to a diversified economy?

The Scenario Planning process provided a methodology from which to explore plausible futures and to consider the implications of various future scenarios. The scenarios developed during this Scenario Planning process and outlined in this report were important in order to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications. Participants were guided through the Scenario Planning process in order to develop four plausible scenarios for the future of the Middle Georgia region. The process involved an exploration and discussion of global, regional, and local trends and forces of change; development of a scenario matrix defining four plausible scenarios spaces for the future; and, the development of descriptive narratives of each scenario. The event concluded with an in-depth discussion of the scenarios, selection of a preferred scenario and plausibility mapping.

*The Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning Think Tank workshop enabled participants to create and describe four plausible scenarios for the region in 2030*

## 4.3.2 CREATING FOUR PLAUSIBLE FUTURES

In developing the scenario framework, the Think Tank considered the two primary clusters of drivers which were identified from the stakeholder survey. These would form the horizontal and vertical axis. These were Economic Diversification and Regional Collaboration. This provided a framework to explore a range of plausible futures for the region.



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### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- The scenario matrix explores the implications of economic diversification and examines the impacts of remaining largely dependent on a defense-based economy. Economic diversification was identified as a key issue in the stakeholder surveys.
- Regional collaboration is a key theme examined in the scenario matrix. Again, this broad theme was highlighted in the stakeholder surveys.

## 4.3.3 BRIEF SCENARIO DESCRIPTIONS

### MIDDLE GEORGIA SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURE

#### VIEWS OF THE FUTURE - 2030



#### SCENARIO A – OPERATION COMMUNITY DEFENSE

In this future, the Middle Georgia region has embraced and developed strong collaboration across the 11 counties, while still focusing on the existing defense-based economy. Consolidation has become important to the region, as business development centers work together in a collaborative manner. It is predominantly an ageing population and it is proving difficult to attract millennials and young families to the area.



#### SCENARIO D – STATUS QUO – ‘GOTTA GROW’

In this future, the region has retained its focus on the defense-based economy and the regional economy's GDP reliance on defense spending. There has been an increase in aerospace suppliers and engineers who fulfill the needs at RAFB. The region has remained focused at a local level and there is a lack of regional collaboration. Economic growth exists in counties nearer to the RAFB. There is an increasing challenge of an aging population as citizens retire, and less young families move the region. The rural populations are declining rapidly, and with fewer opportunities and amenities.



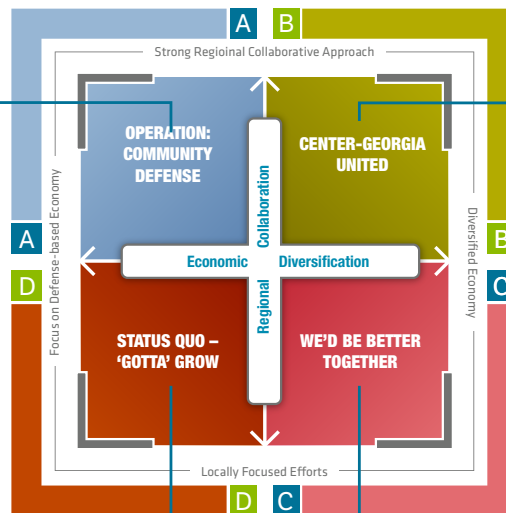
#### SCENARIO B – CENTER-GEORGIA UNITED

In this future, the Middle Georgia region has adopted the need to really embrace a strong regional collaborative approach. There is an inclusive sense of community across the whole region rather than within each county. The region has attracted new residents who wish to make Middle Georgia their home, and this has shifted the demographic weighting of a previously ageing population. The economy has transitioned to a more diversified economy and investment has been made in innovation ecosystems and across the public / private sphere.



#### SCENARIO C – WE'D BE BETTER TOGETHER

In this future, the Middle Georgia region has recognized the need to diversify the economy and rely less on the defense-based economy. This has resulted in an economy with a concentration on knowledge-based businesses. The counties within Middle Georgia are focused on their own efforts, and there is a lack of regional collaboration and connectivity. There are pockets of exponential growth, but this has resulted from each county driving local benefit and value.





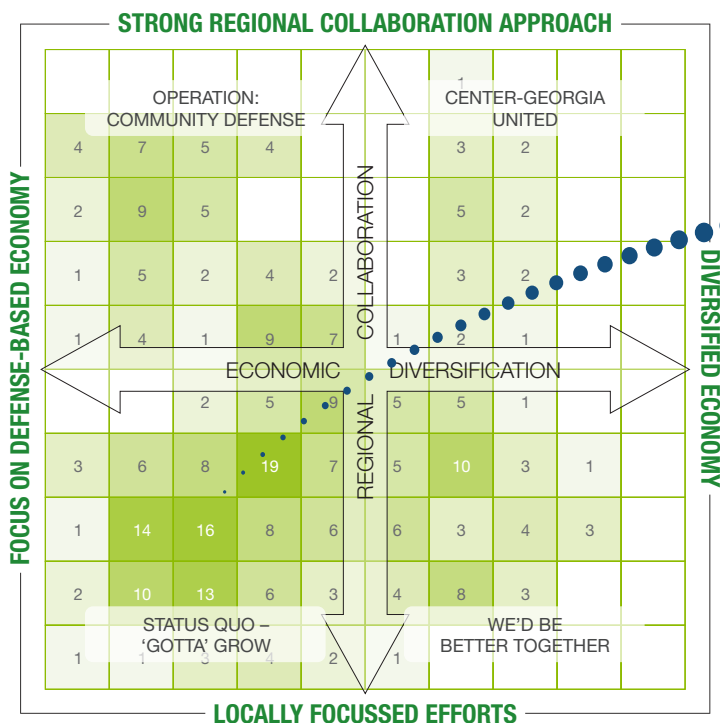
## 4.3.4 IDENTIFYING PREFERRED AND EXPECTED FUTURES

During the Think Tank, participants were asked about their views of preferred and expected futures. There was strong agreement that Scenario D – Status Quo – “Gotta Grow” was the expected future. This scenario represented a future which focuses on the defense-based economy and locally focussed efforts, rather than a diversified economy and strong regional collaboration. This scenario is very similar to the Middle Georgia region in 2018.

There was also strong agreement that Scenario B – Center-Georgia United was the preferred future. This more progressive scenario represented a future which would focus on a diversified economy which didn't rely on the defense industry. It also represented a future which would be characterized by strong regional collaboration, rather than locally focused efforts.

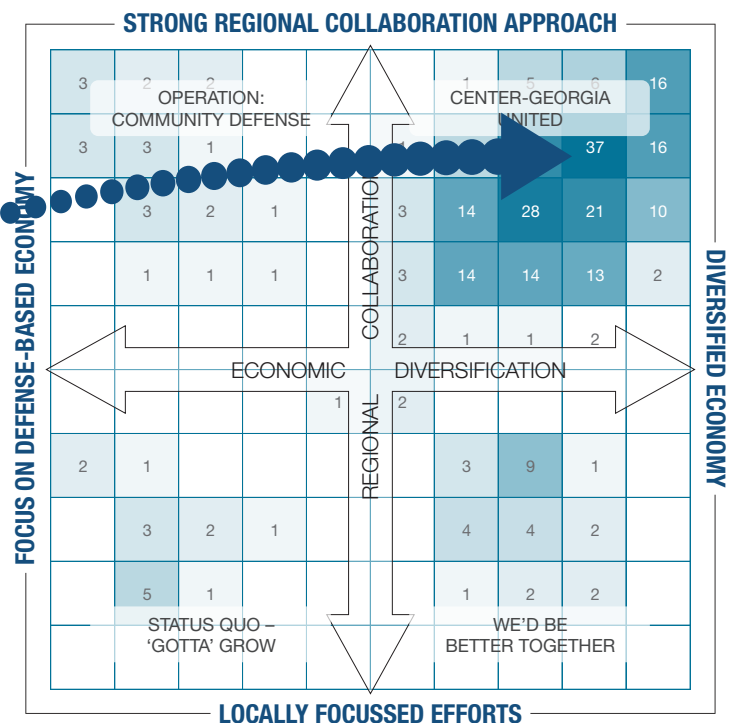
### MIDDLE GEORGIA CHARRETTE AND REGIONAL PLANNING HEAT MAPS

EXPECTED FUTURE – 2030



### MIDDLE GEORGIA CHARRETTE AND REGIONAL PLANNING HEAT MAPS

PREFERRED FUTURE – 2030



#### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- There was high level of agreement about the Expected and Preferred Futures. The concentration of responses suggests that stakeholders share a common vision for the future.
- The gap between the expected and preferred future is significant, suggesting that significant investment will be required to achieve the preferred outcome.

DataInsight

## 4.3.5 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED AT THE THINK TANK

As part of charting a pathway between the Expected and Preferred futures, the Think Tank participants developed a list of eight broad strategic priorities. These strategic priorities were defined as what the Middle Georgia Region needs to address as it moves from its 'Expected Future' (one that would eventuate if no change happens within the network) to its 'Preferred Future'.

Following the development of the list, participants were asked to prioritize each strategic priority over the next five years, by indicating where and when investment should be made. This exercise aimed at understanding what the Think Tank participants viewed as immediate priorities for the region as it moves towards its Preferred Future of 'Center-Georgia United.' Whilst this was a high-level process, it provided initial insights into key areas to be considered in the development of the Strategic Plan, with some information on sequencing priorities.

Priority	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<i>Regional Transportation Plan</i>	28	22	16	17	9
<i>Identify and attract complimentary industries to RAFB as a deliberate strategy</i>	11	8	5	8	4
<i>Build trust and goodwill among the elected and community leadership to forge collaboration</i>	32	19	17	11	8
<i>Merge regional planning and governmental activities and accountabilities</i>	14	17	8	5	7
<i>Build an innovation ecosystem</i>	21	12	9	5	5
<i>Leverage private funding to expedite public projects and identify funding</i>	17	11	6	8	5
<i>Strategy around leadership development</i>	26	16	12	7	4
<i>Understand regional asset portfolio and coordinated local action</i>	20	13	7	3	1



### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

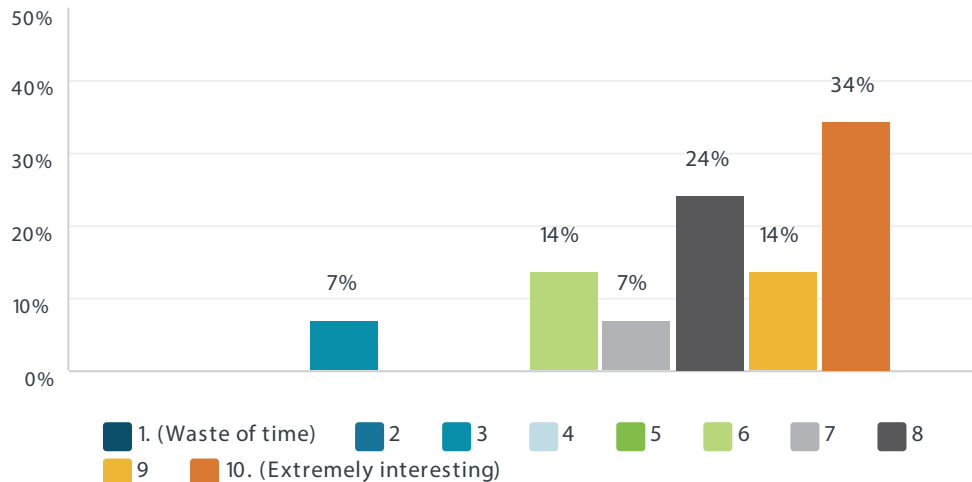
- The focus on building a strong trusted leadership network was emphasized as being as most important in 2019.
- Revitalizing and diversifying the regional economy and building a regional innovation eco-system was also seen as important in 2019.

DataInsight

## 4.3.6 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON THE THINK TANK

Stakeholders were asked how valuable and interesting they found the scenario-based future planning process.

### How interesting and valuable did you find this scenario-based future planning process?



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#### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- The majority of participants felt that this scenario-based future planning process was interesting and valuable, with 34% finding the process extremely interesting and valuable.
- This suggests the process was thought-provoking and made progress in defining a shared direction for the future.

*The high value people derived from the Think Tank process points to the critical importance of future thinking and understanding emerging trends. It also suggests that people derived great value from the collaborative discussions*



## 4.3.7 PARTICIPANTS TAKE-AWAYS FROM THE THINK TANK

Stakeholders were asked what their top three takeaways from the Think Tank were.

### The participants responses included:

- *It's important to prepare immediately. There are many obstacles to overcome. Transportation is perhaps the key to solving many of the problems hindering progress.*
- *We have a lot of work to do. Regionalism is the way forward. The very existence of small counties in 10-15 years depends on the actions of the large counties.*
- *More collaboration is needed. We are more aligned than we think. Our communities are moving forward.*
- *The absolute need to work together as a region. The idea of branding this geographical area as one region versus each county trying to brand itself. Listening to all participants without falling back on preconceived beliefs/ideas.*
- *Need more leadership development that is inclusive and not focused only on millennials and boomers.*
- *Planning needs to be done at regional level, whether education, transportation, etc., to prevent duplication of services, allow each community to shine/rising tide raising all boats and reduce competition.*
- *Need to work more on workforce development that fits the more automated future.*
- *Collaboration, diversifying leadership, and regionalism is key to a successful region.*
- *I don't know my peers in other counties, we agree on transportation and we need a way to sustain regional cooperation.*
- *Lots of opportunities for the region; MG can leverage connections to Atlanta as the metropolis; the region wants to be more diverse and collaborative.*
- *Future water scarcity, leadership transition difficulties and the need to diversify.*

*Participants from the Think Tank felt that the process was extremely valuable. They especially felt that regional collaboration was essential looking out to 2030*





## 4.4 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

### 4.4.1 STRUCTURE OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

Following the Think Tank, the Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning initiative moved out into the next phase of engagement into the wider Middle Georgia region community. For the overall Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning initiative to be successful, it was essential that there would be broad engagement across the region.

Citizens from the Middle Georgia region attended and participated in three large stakeholder engagement sessions which were held in August 2018. The sessions were held in Milledgeville, Macon and Warner Robins.

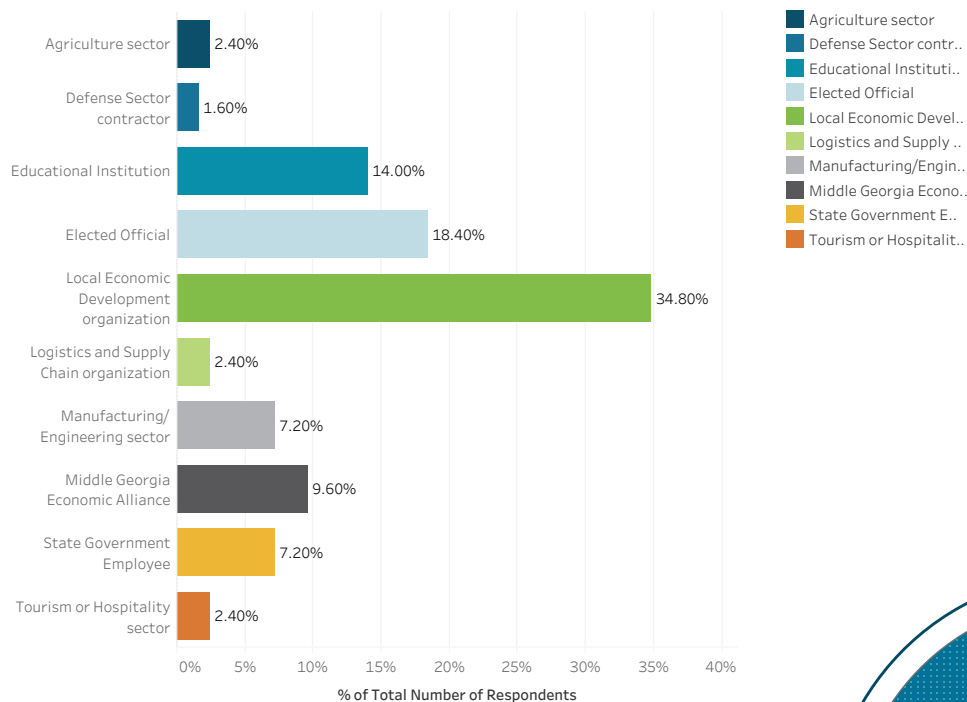
The purpose of the engagement sessions was to review the process with citizens and gather their input. The overall initiative, Stakeholder Survey and Think Tank were discussed in detail to inform the wider range of citizens. The results emerging from the initiative were discussed against a context of macro global trends. At the end of each of the engagement sessions, every participant was asked to complete a survey which explored their views about what reflects the best future balance and priorities for the Middle Georgia region.



## 4.4.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANT PROFILE

There were approximately 100 people who attended the Stakeholder Engagement workshops, and 56 completions of the associated Engagement Survey. It is essential to explore the results of this survey in full as the participants were asked to give their individual perspective on both the process but also of the issues raised since the inception of the initiative. The engagement phase of the project was an opportunity to include as many voices from across the region, following on from the Stakeholder Survey and Think Tank findings, which have been outlined within this report.

What sector do you represent?



### DataInsight

#### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

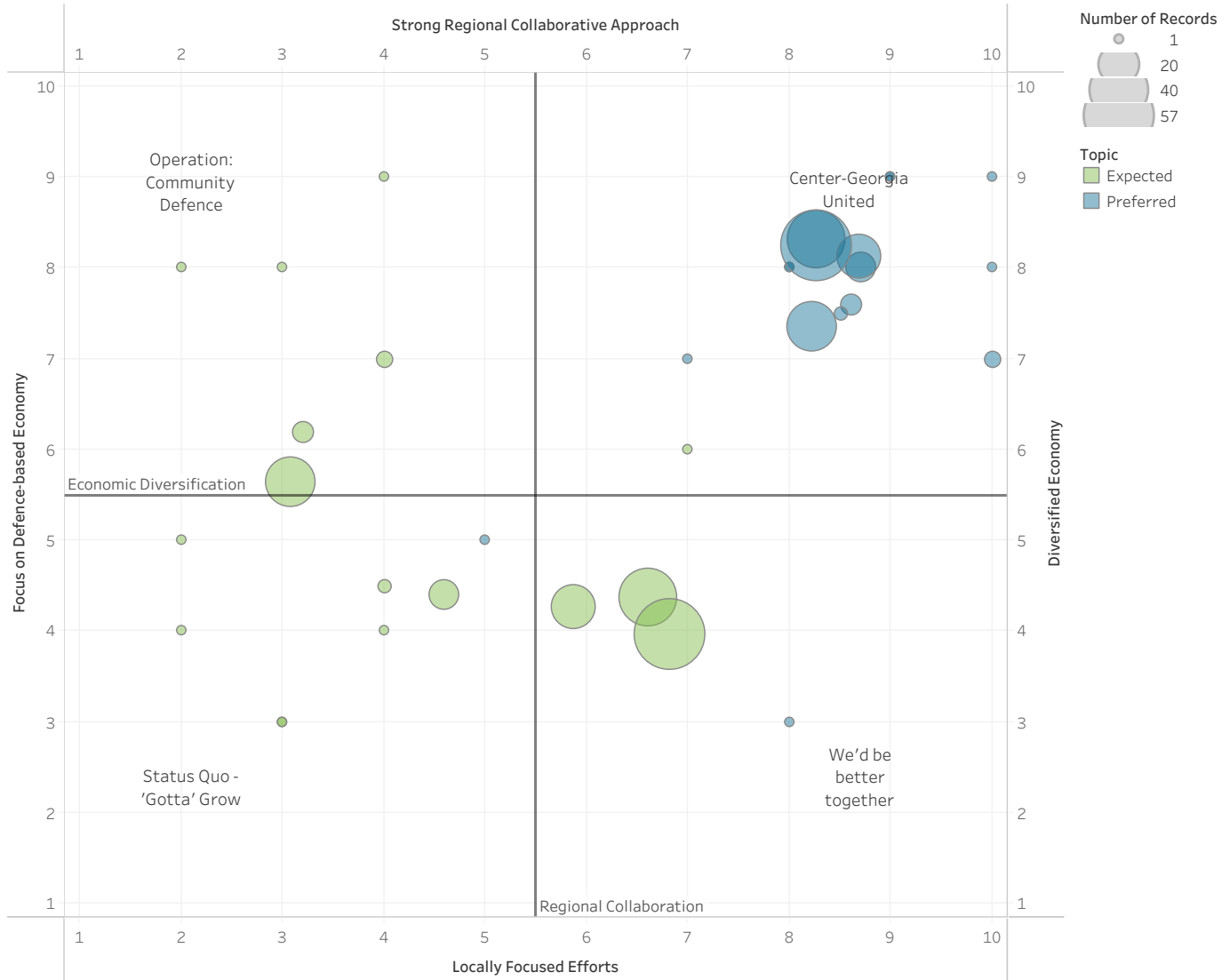
- The majority of respondents represented Local Economic Development organizations, followed by Educational Institutions.
- The majority of respondents were most interested in Economic and Industry Issues, followed by Community and Social Issues.
- The majority of respondents were between 51-70 years old.
- The respondents who had lived/worked in the region for 11-20 years made up the majority of respondents, followed by those who had lived/worked in the region for over 40 years.
- The majority of respondents worked in Houston, followed by Bibb and Wilkinson.

*The people who attended the engagement sessions tended to be locally based economic development operatives and elected officials. In most cases, these people had not attended the Think Tank*

## 4.4.3 RESULTS - PREFERRED AND EXPECTED FUTURES

Stakeholder Engagement Respondents were asked to select their preferred and expected futures using a similar process, which was used at the Think Tank.

Expected X Preferred - Cohorts by Age and Ethnic Group



### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- There was agreement with the results generated from the Think Tank. Scenario B – Center-Georgia United represented the preferred future and Scenario D – Status Quo – “Gotta Grow” represented the expected future.
- This data reflects the Think Tank participant results and therefore provides a very strong validation.

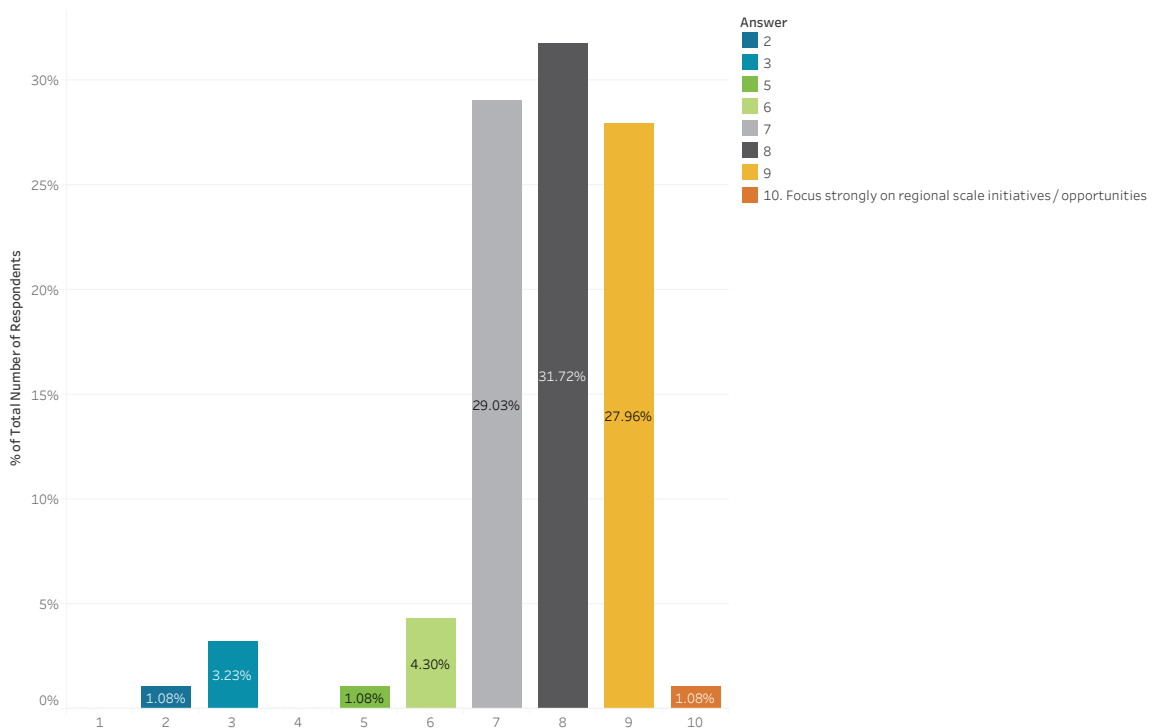
DataInsight

## 4.4.4 RESPONSES ABOUT INVESTMENT FOCUS

Workshop participants were asked their views about investment focus.

What investment focus do you think will best serve industries and communities over the next decade?

**Scale:** 1 = Groups should primarily focus on efforts and investment within their local areas and sectors; 10 = Focus strongly on investments in regional scale initiatives and opportunities.



### A selection of participant responses around the Investment Focus in 2030 included:

- It's the rising tide analogy. If we collaborate and focus our efforts as a region, we will succeed on a grander scale. Regional attractiveness will benefit all counties in our region.
- GA has nearly as many counties as TX. "Local" is far too narrow a focus for the geographic space that entails as a comparison. We are only as strong as our regional partners but continued resistance to embrace regional initiative not only creates a winners/losers game. We all lose something.
- I believe that working regionally to attract growth opportunities will be more successful than focusing locally.
- Have to pull resources of the entire region to be able to have the funds to invest and grow on a larger scale.
- Focusing regionally allows for a pooling of resources that can draw in more valuable industries and results



#### KEY THING TO NOTE:

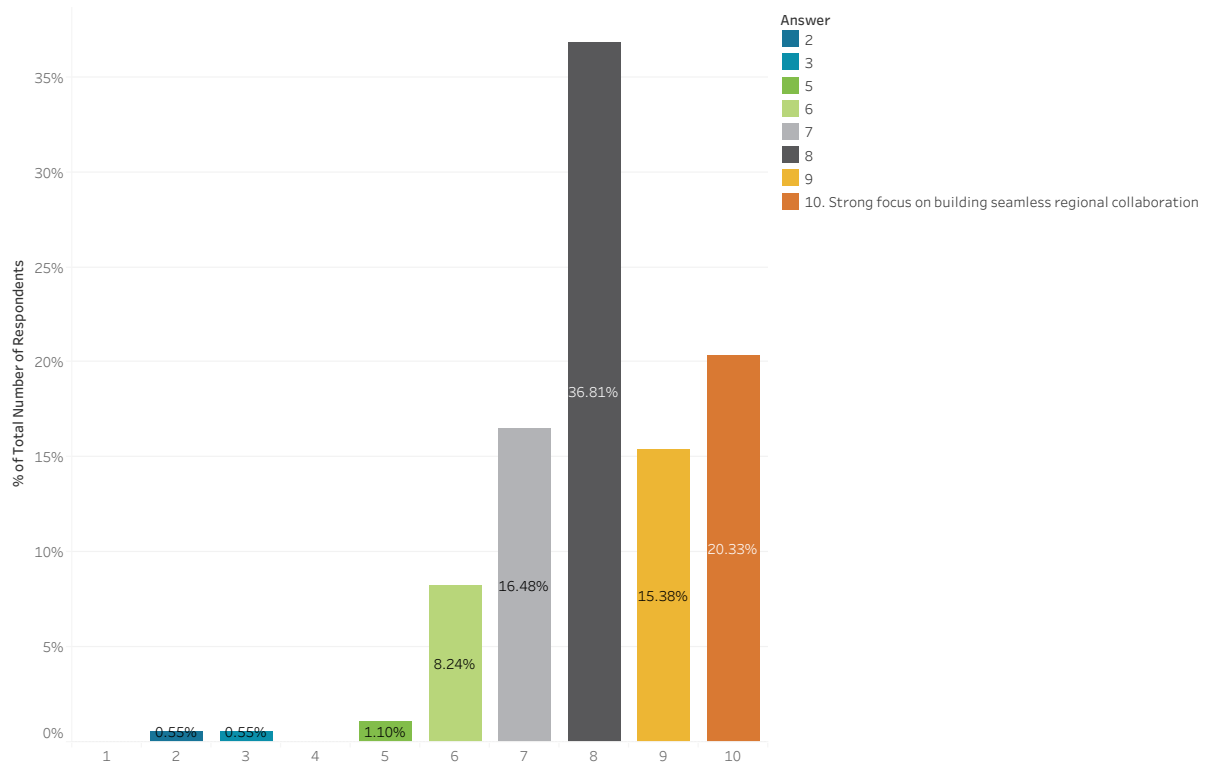
- The majority of respondents leaned strongly towards 'Focus strongly on investments in regional scale initiatives and opportunities.'

## 4.4.5 RESPONSES ABOUT COLLABORATION FOCUS

Workshop participants were asked their views about collaboration focus.

What approach do you think will best serve your local industries and community over the next decade?

**Scale:** 1= Maintaining strong county-focused efforts, driving local benefit and value; 10 = Create a strong focus on building seamless regional collaboration and connectivity.



### A selection of participant responses around the Collaboration Focus in 2030 included:

- Counties are diverse and need collaboration with stronger counties to succeed.
- Collaboration benefits everyone. We would be able to build upon each other's ideas. Regional collaboration looks more appealing to prospective industry and gives positive feelings to all.
- Regional efforts will simultaneously support local county focused efforts and the overall region as a whole.
- In the absence of strong focus and due diligence, regional cooperation will not grow. Innovative thinking towards effective enablers will be critical.



#### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- The majority of respondents leaned strongly towards 'Create a strong focus on building seamless regional collaboration and connectivity.'
- Very few respondents opted for 'Maintaining strong county-focused efforts, driving local benefit and value.'

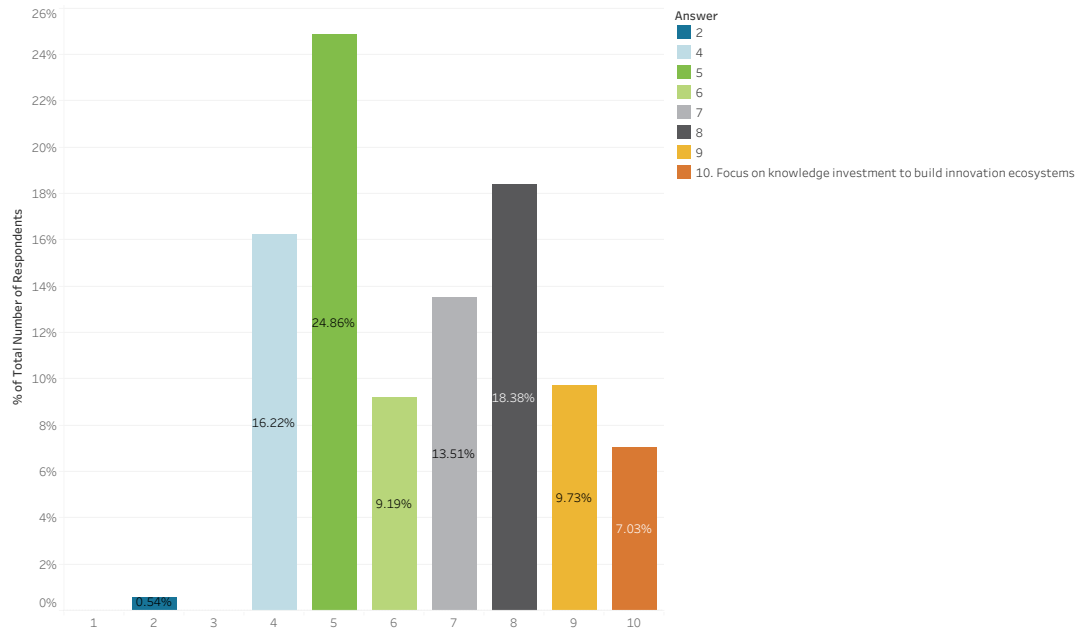


## 4.4.6 RESPONSES ABOUT INNOVATION FOCUS

Workshop participants were asked their views about innovation focus.

What emphasis do you think should be given to innovation investment over the next decade?

**Scale:** 1 = Focus on major infrastructure investment to expand established core locations and facilities; 10 = Focus on knowledge investment to build innovation ecosystems across public and private sectors.



### A selection of participant responses around the Innovation Focus in 2030 included:

- Continue to enhance infrastructure but work on knowledge investment as transportation will become more technological - autonomous, same-day delivery.
- Technology is here and is changing daily. We need to show that we are open to change/innovation if we want to be competitive.
- Innovation is the future but we must still invest in what our micro-economies are strong in.
- Middle Georgia has been dismal about supporting new innovations in the economy and growing businesses for the 21st century. If we don't innovate, we'll quickly be left behind.
- Reliance on single industries are keeping us from resiliency.
- Logistics and transport will become more and more automated requiring fewer employees on the future. Innovation is the only long term opportunity for future jobs.



#### KEY THING TO NOTE:

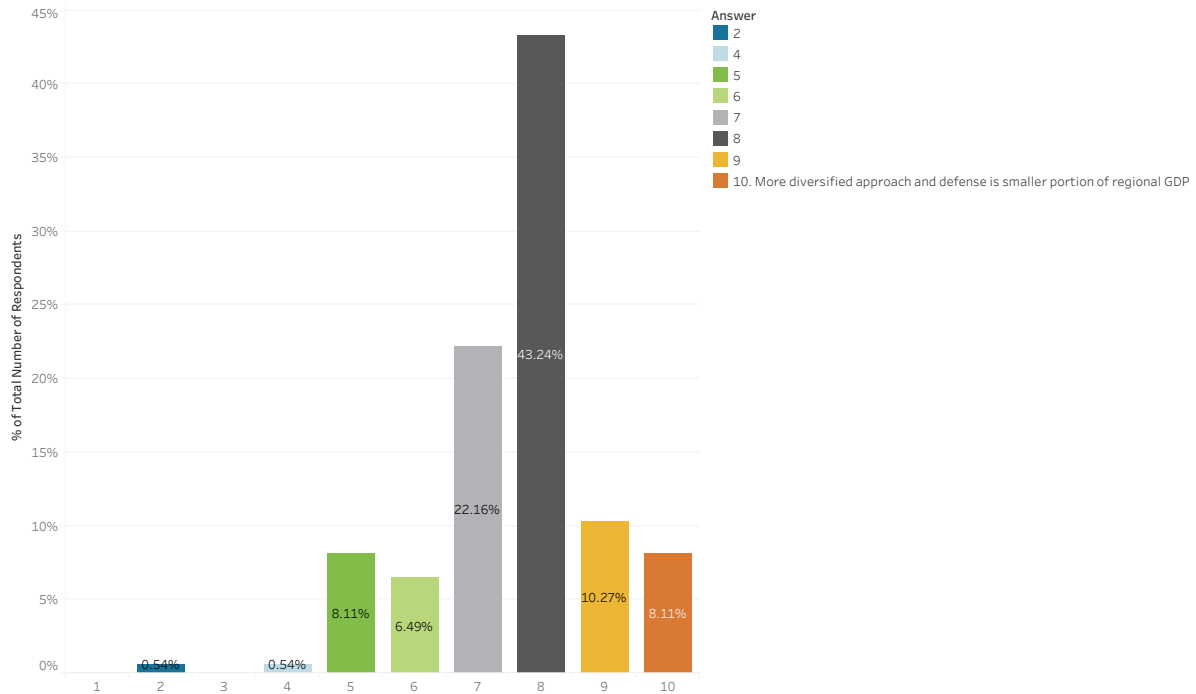
- An overwhelming majority of respondents leaned towards 'Focus on knowledge investment to build innovation ecosystems across public and private sectors'

## 4.4.7 RESPONSES ABOUT ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION FOCUS

Workshop participants were asked their views about collaboration focus.

What emphasis do you think should be given to economic development over the next decade?

**Scale:** 1 = Exclusive focus of driving product lines and services directly tied to the defense sector; 10 = Much more diversified approach, where defense is smaller portion of regional GDP.



### A selection of participant responses around the Economic Diversification Focus in 2030 included:

- Need to have diversification in the area. Defense is a cyclical business and we need to have other industries to support downturns.
- A more diversified approach to economic development will attract the business and industry back to our region.
- Diversity. Have been in early BRAC discussions in early 90's. Have seen/learned what impact could have on jobs and economy. Don't put all eggs in one basket.
- More diverse economy widens opportunity, and allows people 'access' to economic success.
- Utilizing a more diverse economy will allow the region to evolve even if one sector declines.



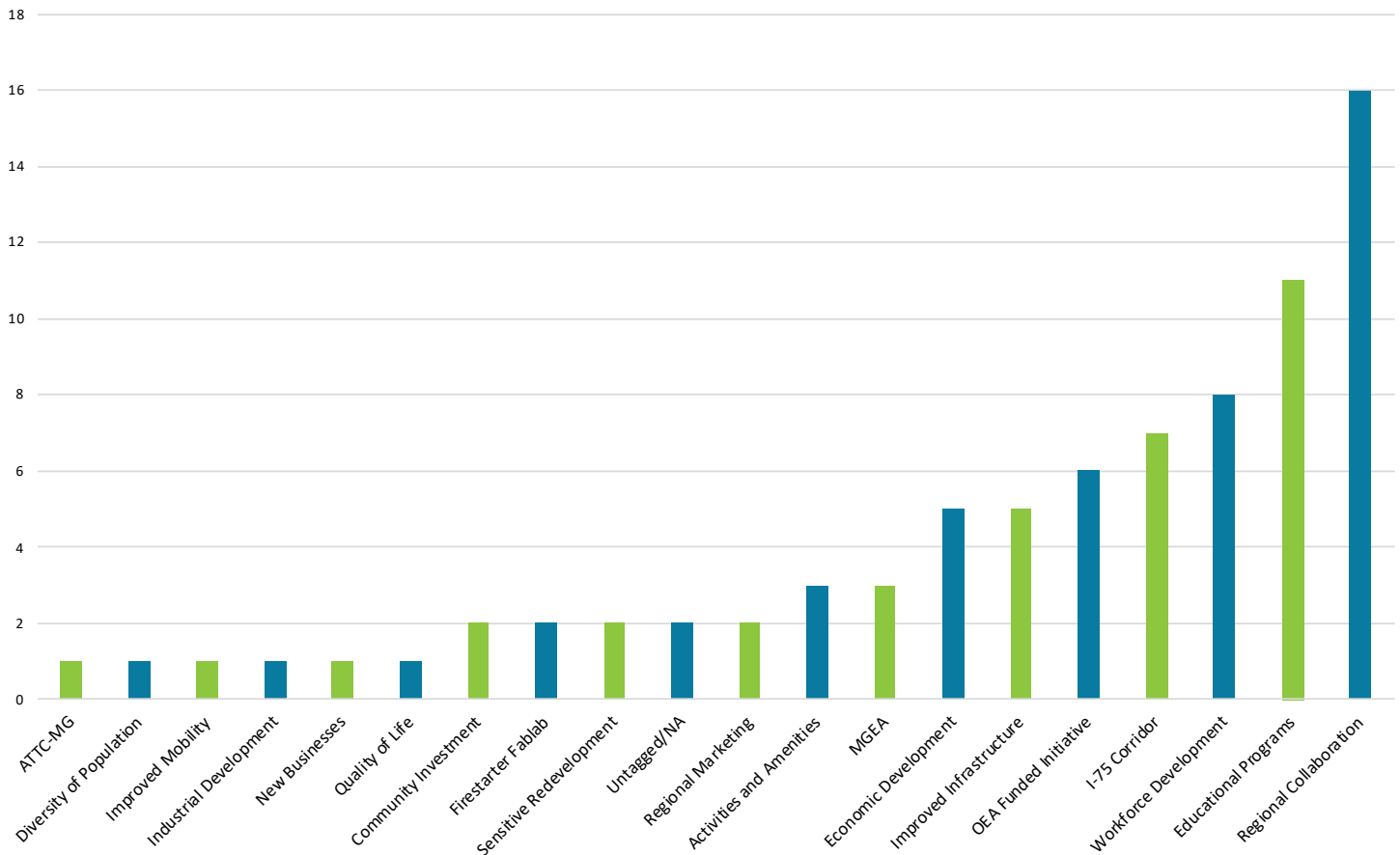
#### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- The majority of respondents leaned towards 'Much more diversified approach, where defense is smaller portion of regional GDP.'
- Very few respondents opted for 'Exclusive focus of driving product lines and services directly tied to the defense sector.'

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## 4.4.8 CURRENT INITIATIVES OR DEVELOPMENTS IN MIDDLE GEORGIA THAT REFLECT THE PREFERRED FUTURE

Workshop participants were asked in open ended questions what initiatives or developments happening NOW in the Middle Georgia region reflect the essence of their preferred scenario for the future.



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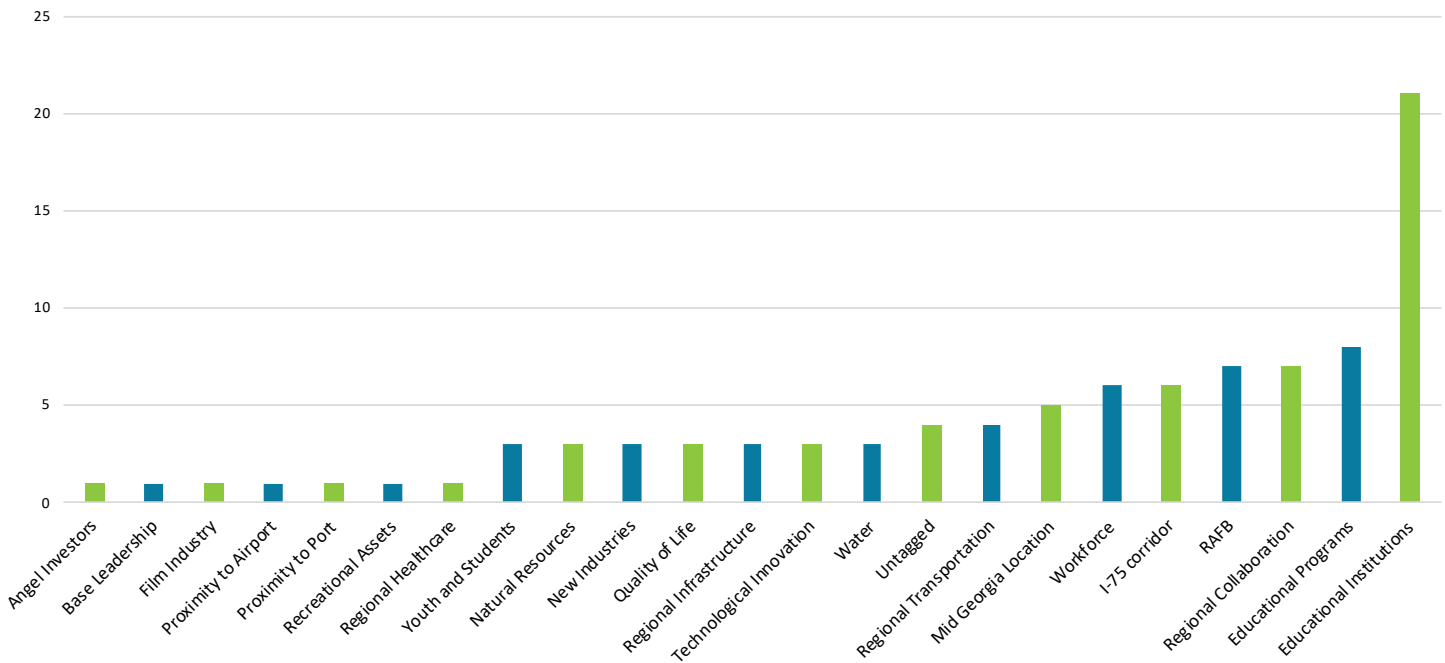
### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- Regional Collaboration was seen as the most important initiative or development happening now in the region that reflected the preferred future.
- This was followed by Educational Programs, Workforce Development, the I-75 Corridor and this OEA funded initiative.

*The recognition of the current efforts in regional collaboration are very promising. The focus of future workforce development is also very encouraging*

## 4.4.9 MOST IMPORTANT EXISTING ASSETS TO BE DEPLOYED

Workshop participants were asked in open ended questions what they thought were the most important existing assets that can be deployed to implement a regional economic development strategy over the next 3 years.



DataInsight

### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- Educational Institutions were significantly seen as the most important existing asset to be deployed in order to implement a regional economic development strategy.
- This was followed by Educational Programs, Regional Collaboration, RAFB, the I-75 Corridor and Workforce.

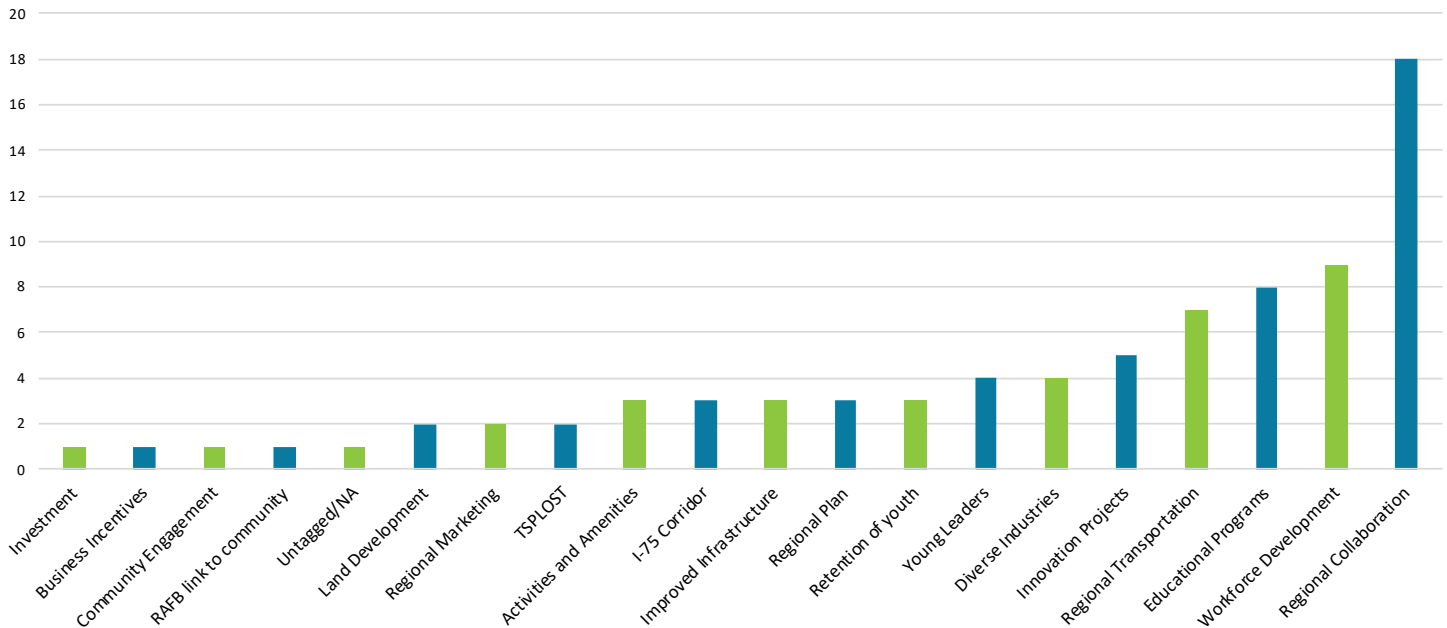
*The focus on educational assets was an outstanding response to this question.*

*The region has a core strength in educational institutions that need to central to future economic development strategies*



## 4.4.10 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS TO BE CREATED OVER NEXT 2 YEARS

Workshop participants were asked in open ended questions what they thought were the economic development strategies and projects that need to be created over the next 2 years, in order to achieve the preferred future.



DataInsight

### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- Regional Collaboration was seen as the predominant economic development strategy/project to be created over the next 2 years in order to achieve the preferred future.
- Workforce Development, Educational Programs, Regional Transportation and Innovation Projects were then seen as important in order to achieve the preferred future.

*Regional collaboration is a critical emerging theme through the engagement workshops. This will be a critical focus area of the resulting Regional Action Plan*



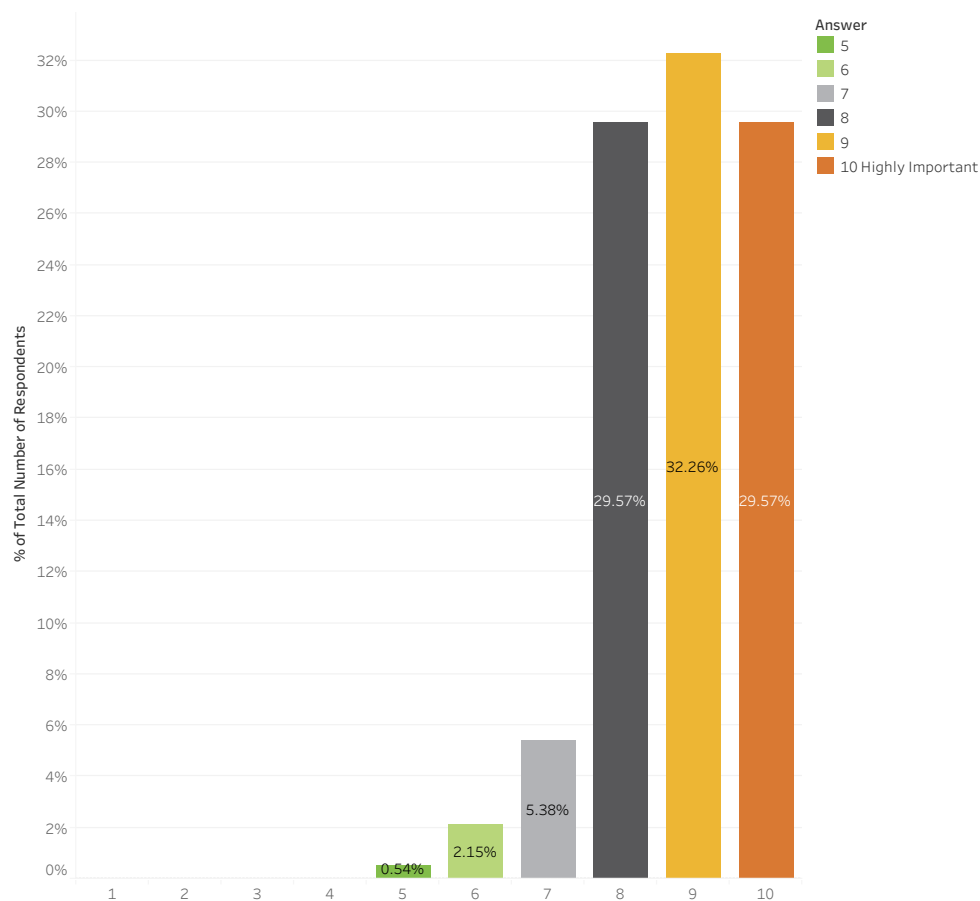


## 4.4.11 IMPORTANCE OF SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLE GEORGIA REGION

Workshop participants were asked how important they thought it was to have a SHARED VISION for the future of the Middle Georgia region.

How important do you think it is to have a SHARED VISION for the future of the Middle Georgia region?

**Scale:** 1 = Not important; 10 = Highly Important



DataInsight

### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- Almost half of respondents felt that it was highly important to have a shared vision for the future of the Middle Georgia region.
- The remainder of respondents felt it was important to highly important.

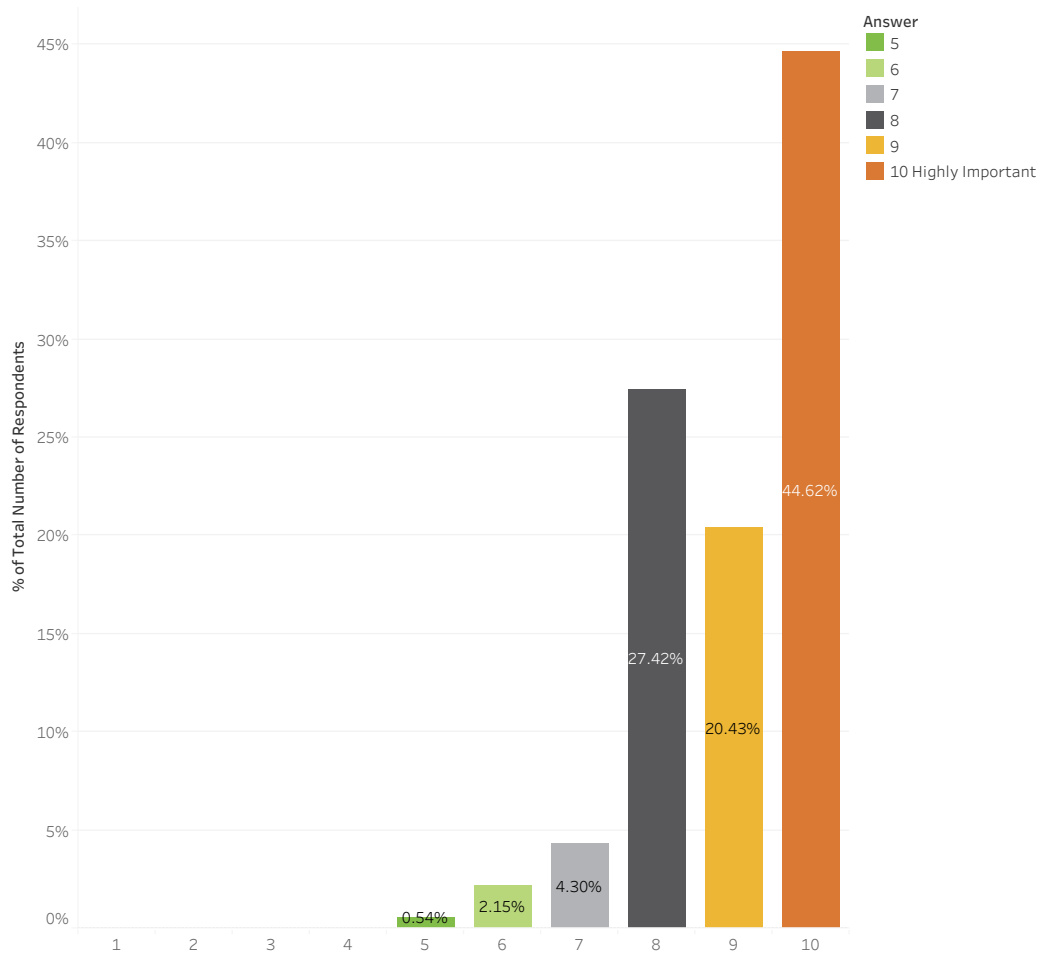


## 4.4.12 IMPORTANCE OF SHARED VISION FOR DECISION MAKING FOR THE REGION

Workshop participants were asked how important is it to consider the shared vision when MAKING DECISIONS for the region.

How important is it to consider the shared vision when MAKING DECISIONS for the region?

**Scale:** 1 = Not important; 10 = Highly Important



DataInsight

### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- Almost half of respondents felt that it was highly important to consider the shared vision when making decisions for the Middle Georgia region.
- The remainder of respondents felt it was important to highly important.

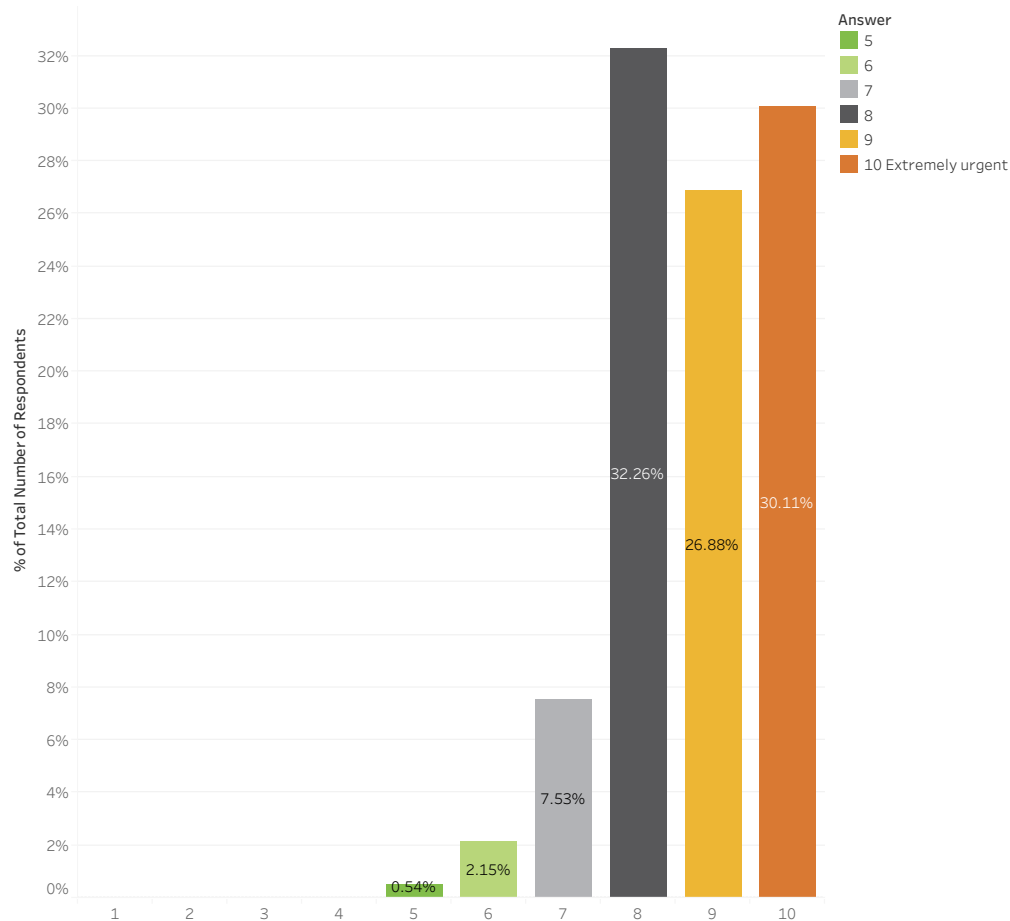


## 4.4.13 URGENCY OF ADAPTING AND PURSUING THE VISION

Workshop participants were asked how quickly they thought regional leaders need to adapt and pursue the vision.

How quickly do you think regional leaders need to adapt and pursue the vision?

**Scale:** 1 = Not urgent now; 10 = Extremely urgent



DataInsight

### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

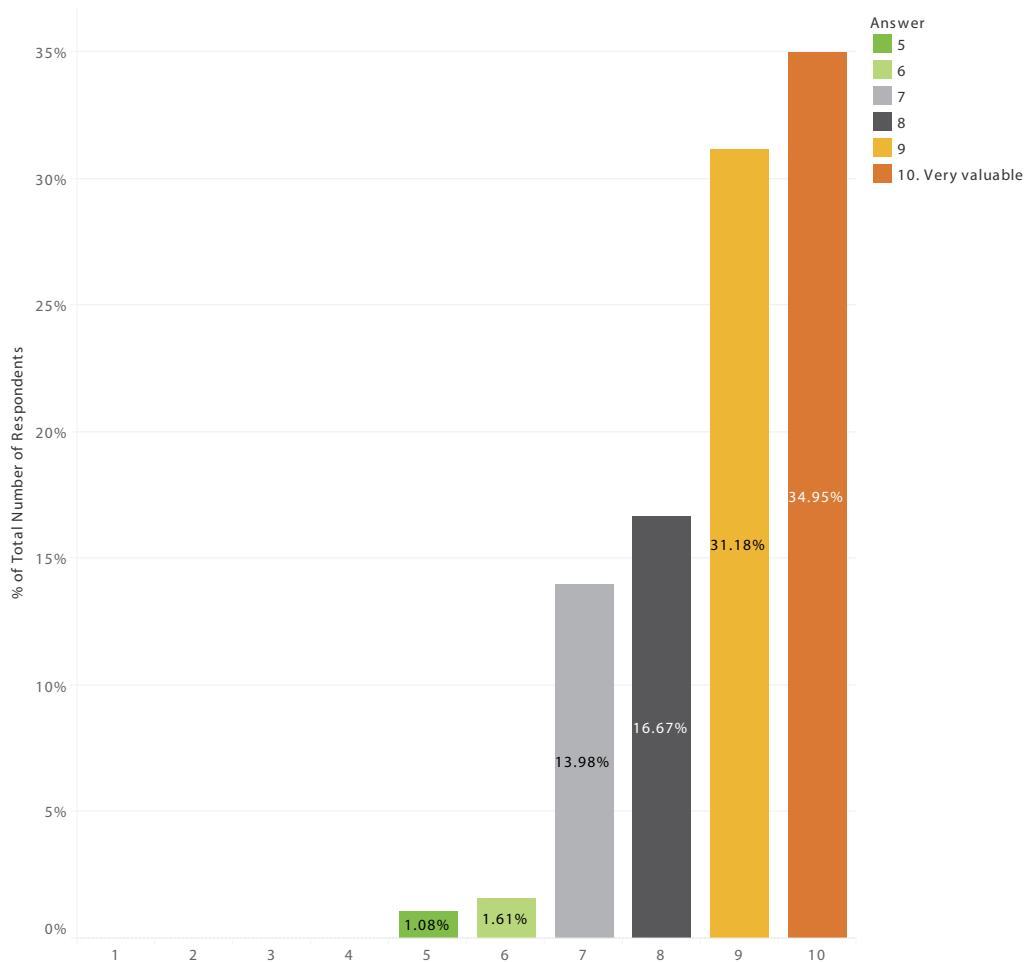
- 37% respondents felt that it was extremely urgent that regional leaders should adapt and pursue the vision.
- However, there was a spread of respondents who felt that while urgent, it wasn't extremely urgent for regional leaders to adapt and pursue the vision.



## 4.4.14 VALUE OF REGIONAL PLANNING INITIATIVE FOR MIDDLE GEORGIA

Workshop participants were asked if they thought the regional planning initiative was an interesting and valuable exercise for the Middle Georgia region.

Scale: 1 = Waste of time; 10 = Very valuable



DataInsight

### KEY THING TO NOTE:

- Over half of the respondents felt that the regional planning initiative was a very valuable exercise for the Middle Georgia region.



## 4.4.15 HIGHLIGHTS FROM STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP SURVEY

The stakeholder engagement workshops were conducted to broaden the reach of the project, and seek input from local leaders and economic development operatives.

### Key highlights from the workshops included:

- The survey was completed by 59 stakeholders, who were mainly interested in economic and industry issues. The majority of respondents worked in Houston county, and were predominantly from the education and economic development sectors.
- There was agreement with the results generated from the Think Tank that Scenario B – Center-Georgia United represented the preferred future and Scenario D – Status Quo – “Gotta Grow” represented the expected future.
- Respondents strongly felt that investment in the region should focus on regional scale initiatives and opportunities, reiterating the responses in the initiative to date on building a strong collaborative and connected region.
- Respondents felt that the collaboration focus for the region should concentrate on building seamless regional collaboration and connectivity.
- With regards to the innovation focus in the region over the next decade, respondents opted for a focus on knowledge investment in order to build innovation eco systems across the private and public sectors. This reiterated the emphasis within the initiative to date on creating a regional innovation eco-system as part of revitalizing and diversifying the regional economy.
- Respondents wanted a much more diversified approach, where defense is a smaller portion of the regional GDP, when asked about the Economic Diversification focus for the region.
- Regional Collaboration was seen as the most important initiative or development happening now in the region that reflected the preferred future.
- Educational Institutions and Programs were seen as the most important existing asset to be deployed in order to implement a regional economic development strategy.

*The engagement workshops were very successful in gathering important additional input, and in validating the work of the Think Tank*



## 4.5 UNDER 30'S SURVEY

The Under 30's survey was not an initial deliverable in the Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning initiative, however as the initiative developed this became an interesting and integral aspect to explore. With the initiative's reiterated and predominant topics of building a strong collaborative and connected region and the revitalizing and diversifying of the regional economy, it became necessary to explore the future work force and residents in 2030. Thus, it was necessary to explore how the younger generation felt about the Middle Georgia region. The full results and slide deck from the Under 30 survey were compiled and analyzed by Dr. Kelly Griendling, Center of Innovation for Aerospace and can be sourced on the initiative's portal at <http://lab.future-iq.com/middle-georgia-economic-alliance/>

### 4.5.1 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

- The majority of the respondents (338) were between 15-20 years, followed by those aged between 26-30 years (139) and finally those aged between 21-25 years (84)
- The majority of respondents lived in Twiggs county (201), followed by Houston county (136) and then Bibb county (89)
- 276 of respondents were White/Caucasian and 213 of respondents were Black/African American. The remaining respondents were Hispanic/Latino (26), Asian/Pacific Islander (13) and Multi-racial (17)

*The Under 30's survey attempted to understand what it is like to live in Middle Georgia as a younger person*





## 4.5.2 HIGHLIGHTS FROM UNDER 30'S SURVEY

### Likelihood of being in Middle Georgia in 5 years or 10 years from now:

- 28% of respondents who were 15-20 years old felt it was very unlikely that they would be in Middle Georgia in 5 years from now
- 24% of respondents who were 21-25 years felt it was very unlikely that they would be in Middle Georgia in 10 years from now
- 24% of respondents who were 26-30 years felt it was likely that they would be in Middle Georgia in 10 years from now

### Do the younger people think that Middle Georgia is failing them in certain areas?:

- 34% of respondents who lived in Bibb county felt that Middle Georgia was failing in relation to public safety and crime. This reiterates the consistent theme of building safe and vibrant communities throughout the initiative
- 35% of respondents who lived in Houston county felt that Middle Georgia was failing in relation to public transportation. 32% noted the lack of a walkable community. This repeats the theme of building a connected region
- 22% of those between the ages of 26-30 years felt that the region was failing in terms of nightlife
- Public Safety and Education were seen as the most essential factor the region. This reinforces themes that have continued through the initiative regarding building safe and vibrant communities and fostering an inclusive regional education system

*The Under 30's survey taps into a key representative group of the future regional workforce. The results identify some concerning perspectives about the appeal of the region, with many young people planning to leave in the future, to pursue opportunities elsewhere*

### How the younger people in Middle Georgia spend their leisure time:

- The majority of those between the ages of 15 -20 years spent most of their leisure time (over 10 hours per week) either at spending time with their family or relaxing at home
- The majority of those between the ages of 21-25 years and between the ages of 26-30 years spent most of their leisure time (over 10 hours per week) relaxing at home or playing computer games/online browsing
- The respondents felt there was a lack of shopping and dining facilities in the region, followed by places open after 6pm
- However, recreation/shopping and culture/community were what the respondents liked best about the region



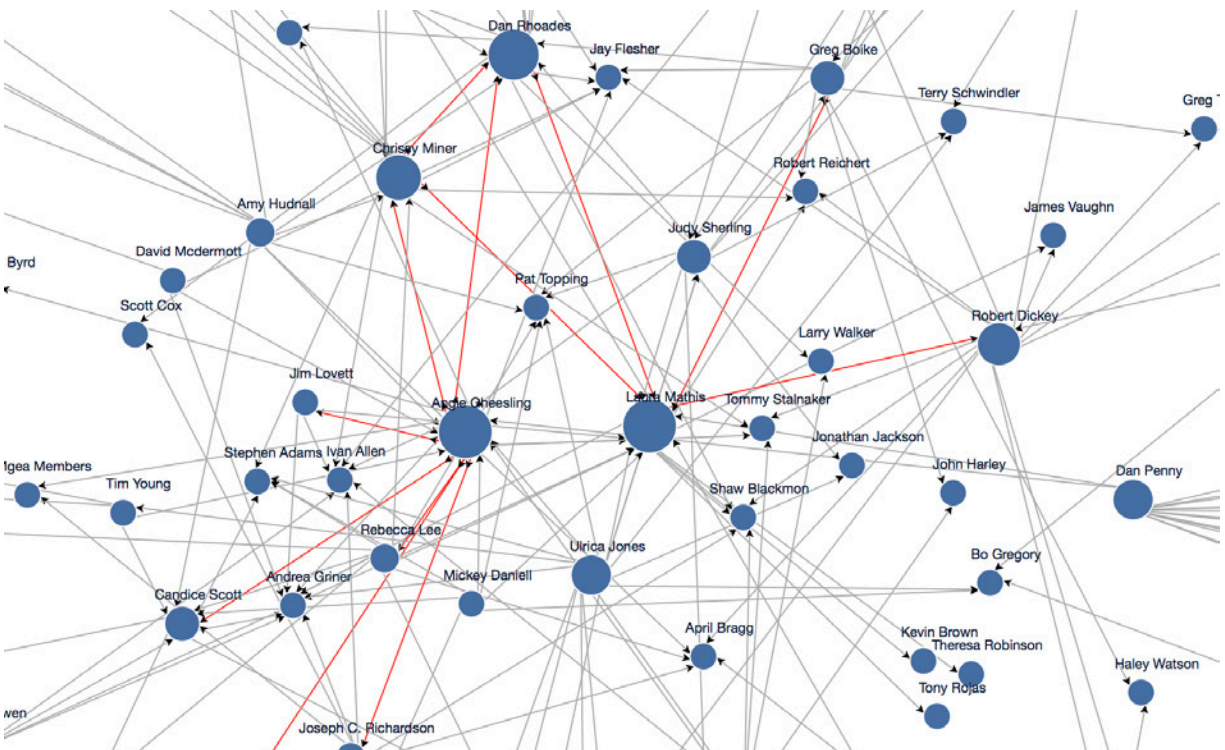
## 4.6 NETWORK MAPPING

Network mapping was conducted in October 2018. This was done with a relatively small cross section of the local stakeholders and centered mostly around the MGEA (Middle Georgia Economic Alliance) network. The network mapping process analyzed the eco-system within the region, providing the initiative with interactive maps that revealed collaboration and economic diversification within the eco-system. Network mapping highlights the strengths and vulnerabilities within a network while identifying key network hubs and allowing for targeted intervention. The interactive network mapping platform can be accessed on the initiative's portal <http://lab.future-iq.com/middle-georgia-economic-alliance/>

### 4.6.1 MIDDLE GEORGIA COLLABORATION MAP – CORE ECO-SYSTEM

The collaboration map is built from people's responses to a question about who they collaborate the most with.

The most influential individuals in the eco-system are those who have the most arrows that point to or away from them (as they are seen as 'go-to' people), and their bubble is correspondingly larger. The red lines indicate reciprocal relationships.



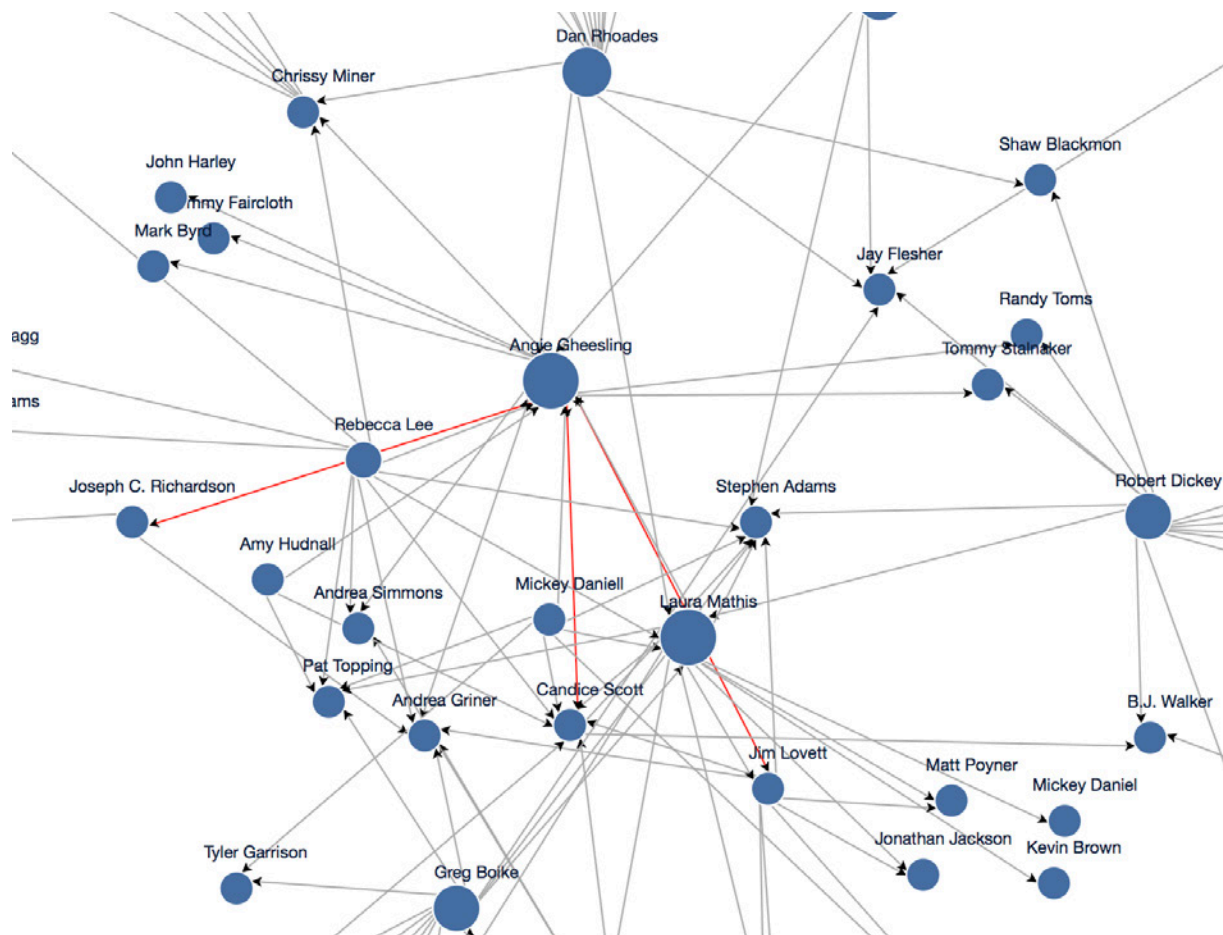
#### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- There is a strong eco-system at the core of the network around the collaboration topic.
- There are pockets of collaboration on the outskirts of the core.
- Angie Ghesling, Laura Mathis and Dan Rhoades are the individuals who collaborate the most on the collaboration map.

FutureMap™

## 4.6.2 MIDDLE GEORGIA ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION MAP - CORE ECO-SYSTEM

The Economic Diversification map is built from people's responses to a question about who they work with on economic diversification.



### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- Similar to the Collaboration map, there is a strong core eco-system in relation to economic diversification. However, it is a smaller core than the collaboration core.
- There are economic diversification relationships occurring outside the core in pockets, however they are not working with the core eco-system.

FutureMap™

## 4.7 RECONVENING OF THINK TANK AND DEVELOPING STRATEGIC PILLARS

The original Think Tank from June was reconvened in early November 2018 with approximately 70 participants. This workshop was used to clarify the areas of shared vision for the future of the Middle Georgia region. The overall stakeholder engagement process was reviewed, including:

- Recap of Think Tank outcomes
- High level outcomes from Asset Mapping
- Review of data visualization results from stakeholder survey and stakeholder engagement sessions
- Review of data from Under 30's survey

*The Middle Georgia Think Tank was reconvened in order to deepen the input into key action areas defining the shared vision for the future of the region, and to help build ideas for the Regional Action Plan*

The participants at the Reconvening of the Think Tank were tasked with deepening strategic pillars, which had been identified throughout the engagement process. The pillars were split into two sections, reflecting the scenario matrix:

### **Building strong collaborative and connected region**

- Building safe and vibrant communities
- Foster an inclusive regional education system
- Build strong, connected and informed public leadership network

### **Revitalizing and diversifying the regional economy**

- Leverage region's natural, technological and intellectual assets
- Create a regional innovation eco-system
- Promote a business and industry desirable location

### **Six groups were formed with each group working on each strategic pillar. They were asked to:**

- Define the Issue
- Produce local examples of solutions being applied or tested
- Brainstorm ideas, strategic solutions and actions
- Prioritize ideas and actions
- Report back to the group

The following section presents the summary notes from each of the breakout group, that worked on each strategic pillar.



## 4.7.1 BUILDING SAFE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

### Define the Issue

- There are disconnected efforts at both county and regional level
- Definition of leaders – elected and community/key influencers
- Challenges around getting majority of elected bodies together in one place for open discussions
- Communication out is a challenge

### Local examples of solutions being applied or tested

- Houston County High monthly meetings
- Jones County
- Mayors in Wilkinson
- Quarterly Mayors Meeting in the region
- Legislative dinner – councils/commissioners and Reps/Senators
- Encroachment
- Regional leadership
- 75 Corridor

### Brainstorm ideas, strategic solutions and actions

- Regional leadership training for elected leadership
- Gatherings of all mayors and county commission chairs around periodic issues/challenges and opportunities
- Regional leadership champions program continues (emerging leaders), building on Houston/Bibb
- Regional legislative delegation gathering
- Quarterly meetings of mayors – outreach to all 20
- Quarterly meeting of chairman
- Your City Program – Perry
- Delegation meeting – great idea for emerging leaders
- Appointments to boards
- Authorities - leadership classes

### Prioritize ideas and actions

- Mayor Faircloth
- CGTC
- RAFB
- Middle GA State University
- Form new regional forum – Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem (for the time being), Chair, Vice Chair
- Success/Challenges/Opportunities
- Report out to all elected
- Survey current city/county collaborations and share champions (storm water district)
- Regional Leadership champions and program – and get elected officials to start naming board appointments
- Middle Georgia – Know your Region





## 4.7.2 FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE REGIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

### Define the Issue

- Increase awareness to give the regional education system a vision for the future

### Local examples of solutions being applied or tested

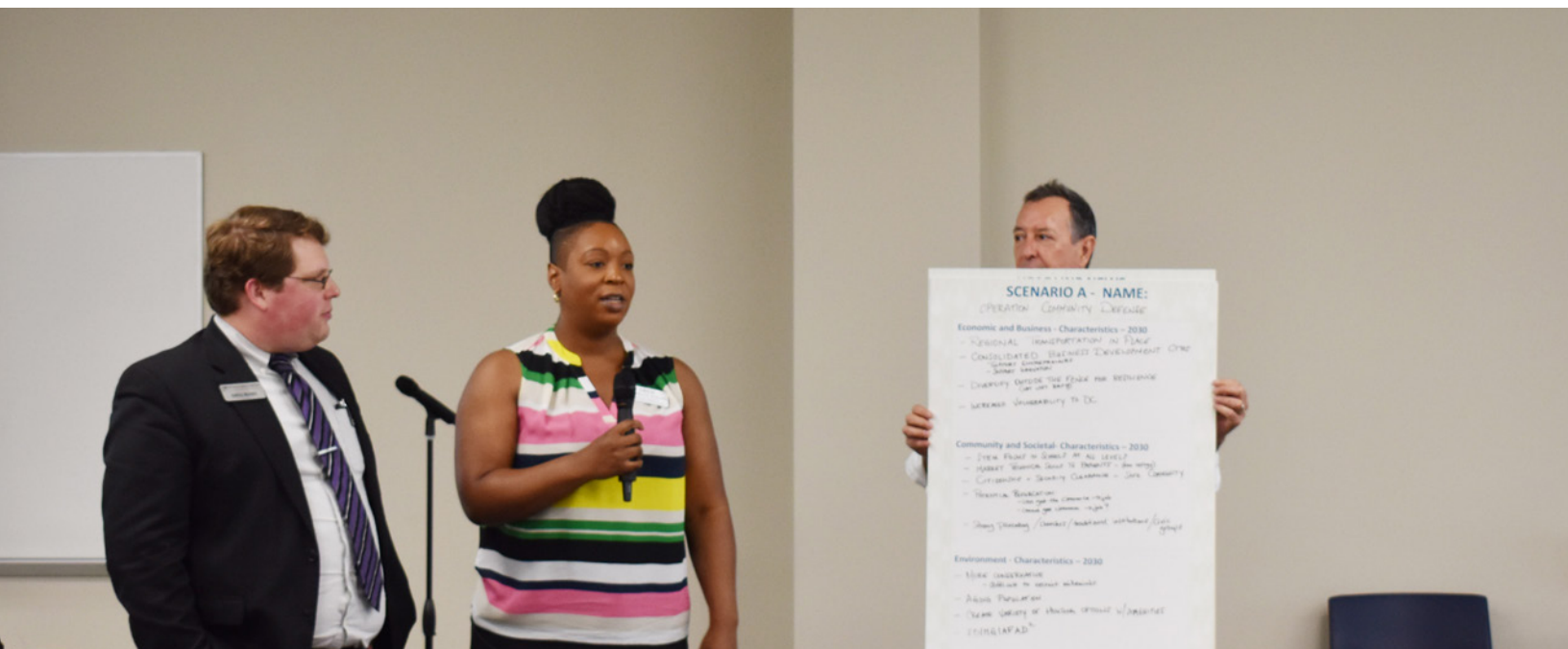
- Externships
- CTAE Pathways
- Articulation Agreements
- Dual Enrolment
- Internships
- High Demand Career Initiative
- Career Academies

### Brainstorm ideas, strategic solutions and actions

- Educate parents
- Share 'best practices' between counties, regions and states
- "You science"
- Ensure counsellors are well educated
- Open Houses (on a Saturday)
- Look for Grant Sources (to be able to bring the message to the parents)
- Mobile FAB Labs

### Prioritize ideas and actions

- Build the message
- Get the message out
- Go where the parents and care givers are located
- Collaborate within the region
- Look for grant resources to support the action of getting the message out





## 4.7.3 BUILD STRONG CONNECTED AND INFORMED PUBLIC LEADERSHIP NETWORK

### Define the Issue

- What do we need to do to enhance our communities to make them more conducive for people to want to live, work and play

### Local examples of solutions being applied or tested

- GICH (Georgia Initiative Community Housing) across several communities
- Revitalising of old buildings. Repurposing rather than destroying
- Funding assistance with home repairs to make them safer
- Enhancements to existing parks
- Family friendly events
- 'On the Table Discussions' – engaging the community in various issues – talking!
- Various groups working with youth groups
- Conversion of old schools/buildings for Senior housing

### Brainstorm ideas, strategic solutions and actions

- Review zoning for strategic and planned housing development
- More mentorship programmes
- Know your Neighbour initiatives
- Afterschool programs/activities for latch key kids – with transportation
- More family friendly activities, entertainment, playgrounds and parks
- Regional 'one stop' place to find out what is available/diversify activities
- Housing for seniors (downsized with support services)
- Promote existing services
- Training for zoning officials
- Review community plans and enforcement mechanisms
- Transparent platform for community awareness of issues
- Church and non profit collaboration
- Encourage community pride
- Calendar of needs

### Prioritize ideas and actions

- Calendar of needs, events, services – region wide
- Strong community identities folded into a regional plan. Show our uniqueness! Brand
- Strategic/regional safety community plans
- Strategies to address crime
- Strategies to address the perception of crime



## 4.7.4 LEVERAGE REGION'S NATURAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND INTELLECTUAL ASSETS

### Define the Issue

- There are lots of resources and assets within the region
- Often separated from the community by a 'fence'
  - Sometimes structural in nature
- We need to find the gates
  - Forums for discussion/interaction
  - Entities that cross silos
- We need coordinated planning to overcome turf wars
- Additional networking/bridges

### Local examples of solutions being applied or tested

- ATTC – off base work versus the base – teaching us about the technology needed at base
- VECTR Center – Catalyst for veterans assets. Train to meet local needs
- Apprenticeship models (Houston County) – College/ Career Academy
- Marketing of natural assets - Lake County, Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve

### Brainstorm ideas, strategic solutions and actions

- Market what we do to youth/young professionals via social media
- Market towards retirees also
- Develop collaboration groups – ascertain what is the place for this? What is the platform? Need to bring together
  - Hack a thons
  - Young Gamechangers Brainstorming model
  - Educational partnerships (with existing Dept. of Defense) – Opportunity to bring into private sector
- Grow from business and industry forums and tackle mutual challenges
- Specialised groups – including competitions, awards and grants
- An intensive focus on Quality of Life which will attract intellectual capital and make them want to live here
- Also – quality of education, safety, affordable/ quality housing

### Prioritize ideas and actions

- Get people talking and interacting with specialised groups and topics
- Develop relationships
- Sponsor student groups as part of this collaboration
- Identify champions for this collaboration
- Look at the course offerings where private sponsors can enter and support.
- Get to the specific applications
- Look to the chambers and develop a structure
- Market the results and communicate



## 4.7.5 CREATE A REGIONAL INNOVATION ECO-SYSTEM

### Define the Issue

- Bring workload to region
- Patents drive innovation
- Need to increase number of patents to diversify the economy
- Develop new innovation and individual patent holders
- Create entrepreneurs
- Must start in schools (STEM)

### Local examples of solutions being applied or tested

- VECTR Center
- Spark Macon
- Firestarter
- AATC
- Mercer Innovation Center
- Mid GA STEM Alliance
- CGTC

### Brainstorm ideas, strategic solutions and actions

- Fort Valley – agricultural innovation center
- Mobile Labs – take to rural schools
- MGSA (Mid Georgia Soaring Association)
- Expand framing construction and include innovation in construction
  - Is there any industry to provide assets?
- Project Management Education
- Prestige in Trades
- Co-working stations

### Prioritize ideas and actions

- Intentional regional partnerships among innovator, disrupter and anarchist
- Implement more strategies for local governments to compete for efficiency
- Increase the prestige of trade labour
- Forge corporate partnerships with adult and child education
- Create a regional committee of Chief Executives of Board of Register, Technical Colleges and private higher education
- Create additional coworking spaces that provide a fractional share of specialised spaced and equipment
- Adapt urban success in innovation to rural areas



## 4.7.6 PROMOTE A BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY DESIRABLE LOCATION

### Define the Issue

- Promote quality of life
- What is necessary to create a Business and Industry Desirable location? Policy or incentive?
- Need Industry targets
- People are trained here, but are going elsewhere. We need a strategy to retain young professionals
- Political climate – leadership
- Film Industry Tourism
- We have large existing industries
- We need small businesses and entrepreneurs and one stop shop for them

### Local examples of solutions being applied or tested

- Charter School
- Career Academy programmes geared to meet industry needs
- Bluebird Industrial Programme
- Putnam construction for legacy
- Brainstorming for INTERFOR
- Houston – MNTC tech
- Existing B:I group – sharing best practices among the industries
- MERC – Girl scouts 4th and 8th grade. Stimulate interest in engineering and STEM
- 1-75 corridor organisation – promoting regional assets and locations
- FVSU – supply chain management programme. Certificates allowing students to work on Base.

### Brainstorm ideas, strategic solutions and action

- Best practices – existing industry needs and educational best practices
  - Workforce apprenticeships
- Public Safety and Crime
  - Collaborate regionally to improve results
- TSPLOST – Better educational effort
  - What is in it to benefit the region?
- Middle GA Regional Runway extension
- Inland port
- Regional industrial mega site
- Telecom infrastructure
- Make our area more attractive for suppliers – Bluebird, Vertical Integration, Incubate
- More instruction, training on Entrepreneurship

### Prioritize ideas and actions

- Workforce – Amazon
- Leadership development and collaboration
  - Regionalism – TSPLOST
- Regional mega site – one infrastructure to attract 1000's of jobs
- Quality of life that address public safety concerns, creates opportunities, adds more culture, art, music and entertainment
- Walkable communities that provide live, work and play

## 4.7.7 PRIORITIZING THE STRATEGIC PILLARS

At the end of the Reconvening of the Think Tank workshop, participants were asked to rank the six strategic pillars in order of importance looking out over the next 5 years.

**The following aggregated chart shows the distribution.**

Strategic Pillar	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Building safe and vibrant communities	19	16	12	12	10	14
Foster an inclusive regional education system	16	16	14	8	11	5
Build strong, connected and informed public leadership network	16	14	14	14	7	9
Leverage region's natural, technological and intellectual assets	12	13	9	10	8	9
Create a regional innovation eco-system	5	10	9	12	11	4
Promote a business and industry desirable location	10	15	13	10	9	12



### KEY THINGS TO NOTE:

- The bulk of the responses highlighted the need to build local leadership and safe and vibrant communities. This was seen in this workshop as a critical future shaping issue.
- The region has some significant assets, that should be leveraged to build new opportunities.

FutureMap™





*Each of the engagement processes emphasized the strategic pillars as factors that the region's stakeholders desired in order to obtain both a strong, collaborative and connected region but also a revitalization and diversification of the regional economy*

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning initiative involved an exhaustive stakeholder engagement process. This process involved three extensive surveys, a Think Tank, engagement session workshops, network mapping and the Reconvening of the Think Tank.

The network mapping process identified that the eco-system is small, but very connected at its core. There will need to be a concerted effort so that those outside the core of the eco-system are collaborating and working on economic diversification as an entire eco-system. This will benefit regional collaboration and revitalization and diversification of the regional economy. The Under 30 survey exemplified how many of the younger people in the region wish to leave when they get older due to issues such as lack of amenities and activities, as well as career aims that cannot be fulfilled in a region that is focused very much on defense.

The following strategic pillars were identified, redeveloped and reinforced throughout the process. Each of the engagement processes emphasized the pillars as factors that the region's stakeholders desired in order to obtain both a strong, collaborative and connected region but also a revitalization and diversification of the regional economy.

### **Building strong collaborative and connected region**

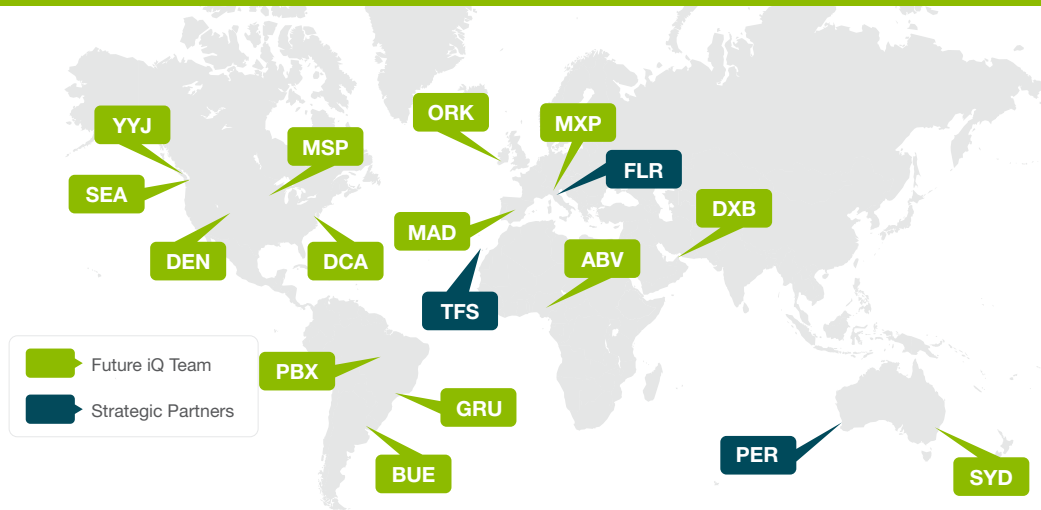
- Building safe and vibrant communities
- Foster an inclusive regional education system
- Build strong, connected and informed public leadership network

### **Revitalizing and diversifying the regional economy**

- Leverage region's natural, technological and intellectual assets
- Create a regional innovation eco-system
- Promote a business and industry desirable location

These strategic pillars, and the information collected through the engagement process, will help inform the development of the Regional Action Plan.





## 6.0 ABOUT FUTURE IQ

Future iQ is a market leader in the development and application of scenario planning; network analysis, industry and regional analysis, and community engagement and capacity building. Future iQ specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. With over a decade of business experience, the company has grown to have a global clientele spanning three continents.

To learn more about Future iQ, and our recent projects visit [www.future-iq.com](http://www.future-iq.com) or by email at [info@future-iq.com](mailto:info@future-iq.com)

### Stakeholder Engagement Report prepared by:



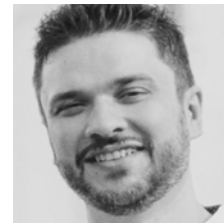
**Celine Beurle**  
Chief Operating Officer



**Marc Rassel**  
Creative Director



**David Beurle**  
CEO



**Walter R. Paixão-Côrtés**  
Data Engineer



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## 8.0 FOR MORE INFORMATION

**For more information on the Middle Georgia Charrette and Regional Planning initiative, please contact:**



**Angie Gheesling**, Project Lead  
Development Authority of Houston County  
Phone: (478) 923-5470  
gheesling@houstoncountyga.net

**For more details, and to access additional reports, please visit**

<http://lab.future-iq.com/middle-georgia-economic-alliance/>



Middle Georgia Charrette  
and Regional Planning Initiative

Scenario-Based Think Tank Workshop Report  
June 2018



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