

Georgia*Forward* 

— 2018 —

# ANNUAL REPORT



## WORDS OF WELCOME

**“What are you working on BIG?  
Where do you want to go?  
How are you changing the world?  
With all you have, you gotta give.  
Don’t just dream; believe.  
Start working on something BIG.”**



These questions and challenges are the lyrics to the latest single by Georgia artist, Maggie Renfroe. This song, and the questions it poses, could be the theme for our Young Gamechangers program and the crux of *GeorgiaForward's* mission. In everything we do, we are looking for BIG picture solutions for all of Georgia. We push our Young Gamechangers to think BIG. Then, we ask them to think even BIGGER. At our Forum, we challenge statewide thought leaders to think about solutions to big picture challenges that affect communities of all sizes: Metro Atlanta, hub cities, and rural Georgia.

In 2018, we took a deep internal look at the work that *GeorgiaForward* has been leading across the state. Since 2012, our leadership action program has had over a \$12

million impact on the state of Georgia. This impact can be seen in small rural communities like Americus, Dublin, LaGrange, and Milledgeville, and hub cities such as Augusta and Albany, as well as in Metro Atlanta communities like Douglasville. With over 300 Young Gamechanger alumni, we continue to strengthen the vast networking web that connects communities, leaders, and ideas across all parts of Georgia.

If we think about the bigger picture, develop goals, and implement solutions that change our corner of the world, then we are truly moving Georgia forward.

What are you working on BIG?

**KRIS VAUGHN**  
Executive Director  
*GeorgiaForward*



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- AJ Robinson | *Chairman, President of Central Atlanta Progress/Atlanta Downtown Improvement District*
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## 2018 YOUNG GAMECHANGERS: ALBANY-DOUGHERTY COUNTY

*The 2018 Young Gamechangers worked in Albany-Dougherty County from January to August on the following challenge questions and developed the corresponding recommendations.*



### **In what ways can Albany-Dougherty County grow a sustainable downtown business corridor that will increase the vitality of the community?**

1. Placemaking: a plan for creating and sustaining a downtown identity
2. Downtown Development: a roadmap to increase residential and commercial property
3. Destination Recreation: fresh ideas such as a pedestrian bridge connecting Albany State University and Downtown Albany

### **How can Albany-Dougherty County leverage existing natural resources to develop a more connected and walkable community?**

1. Water Attraction: bring the community together through fun activities including water slides, cable wake park, and zipline
2. Brand Albany: upgrade Albany's digital presence, create distinctive unified signage, establish a connection between Albany and Albany State University
3. Albany Days and Albany Is: promote community service and connectivity with special events like Albany Service Day and Albany Culture Day

To read the 2018 Young Gamechangers report in its entirety, visit [GeorgiaForward.org/young-gamechangers](https://GeorgiaForward.org/young-gamechangers)



### **What can Albany-Dougherty County do to grow their talent pipeline and be the hub for innovation and business in Southwest Georgia?**

- 1.** Albany Innovation Village: a catalyst for developing world-class technical talent for manufacturing
- 2.** Apprenticeship Albany: a program to bridge the gap between local, qualified workers and gainful employment
- 3.** #ChooseTheGoodLife Campaign: market the community's assets such as cost of living, quality lifestyle, and business opportunities to young professionals

### **How can Albany-Dougherty County improve efficiency and effectiveness in the community to meet current and future challenges?**

- 1.** Connect the Dots: create a community web portal
- 2.** Connect-ED: establish a unified Dougherty County High School and Albany State University to meet future challenges and improve efficiency
- 3.** Connect the Community: consolidate Albany-Dougherty County government

# 2018 GEORGIA FORWARD FORUM

The 2018 *GeorgiaForward* Forum was held on October 10 at Georgia Farm Bureau in Macon and focused on “Engaging Georgia’s Next Generation of Leaders.” An inspiring keynote by Cathy Cox, Dean of The Walter F. George School of Law at Mercer University, kicked off the day. We were delighted to have a diverse group of emerging and seasoned leaders from around the state join us to discuss the advantages and challenges of working side-by-side. After two robust panels, attendees participated in interactive sessions and collaborated on ideas to help chart a course for Georgia’s future.

Participants divided into three groups – Metro Atlanta, hub cities, and rural Georgia – and considered pressing questions pertaining to Georgia’s social and civic life, and explored new possibilities for citizen engagement and leadership. A complete report of the Forum can be found online at [georgiaforward.org](http://georgiaforward.org).



# ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

Last year, *GeorgiaForward* hired Dr. Greg George, Director of the Center for Economic Analysis at Middle Georgia State University, to present an independent and unbiased assessment of the Young Gamechangers Program and their respective projects as administered by *GeorgiaForward*. Below is a summary of his report.

## Summary of Findings

- Young Gamechangers program has served six communities across Georgia, including Americus-Sumter County, Dublin-Laurens County, Douglasville-Douglas County, Augusta-Richmond County, LaGrange-Troup County, and Milledgeville-Baldwin County. Young Gamechangers has mobilized over \$6.7 million in funding, tax commitments, and donations. Combined, these investments will contribute over \$12.1 million in economic activity and up to 126 jobs in the served communities as their recommendations are implemented.
- Young Gamechangers has contributed proposals that total \$33,395,000. If implemented as suggested, the proposals would generate over \$60 million in economic activity and support 578 jobs statewide.
- The above results are to be considered conservative since they do not include quantified quality of life improvements. For example, parks, trails, and greenspaces add immeasurable benefits to the local community in terms of health, wellness, and a sense of place. Furthermore, educational programs, business incubators, and career development initiatives create additional opportunities for growth that are not fully captured by the quantified economic impacts.
- *GeorgiaForward* has been active since 2011 and serves as the administrative arm of Young Gamechangers. Based solely on its administrative activities, it has contributed a significant economic impact on the state of Georgia. An analysis of their financial statements indicates *GeorgiaForward* has contributed \$1,482,120 to regional economic activity and has supported 14 economy-wide jobs since 2011.



The full report can be found online at [GeorgiaForward.org](https://GeorgiaForward.org).





## 2019 YOUNG GAMECHANGERS

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GeorgiaForward kicked off our eighth Young Gamechangers project in Monroe-Walton County in January 2019. Over the next seven months, young professionals from across the state will work on the following four challenge questions:

1. *How can the City of Monroe become a “lifetime community” that encompasses every generation and makes them want to call Monroe home?*
2. *In what ways can Monroe attract and retain the next generation of entrepreneurs who want to succeed in Monroe?*
3. *With healthy living as a goal, how can Monroe utilize its natural resources, trail system, and green space to connect all walks of life?*
4. *How can Monroe-Walton County leverage existing assets and create new opportunities to strengthen its workforce pipeline?*



Join us on August 9 at The Engine Room in Monroe to hear their final recommendations!



## CALL FOR YOUNG GAMECHANGER HOST COMMUNITY

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We're looking for our next community! Interested in a fresh perspective to your community's challenges? Apply to host Young Gamechangers. Find more information at [georgiaforward.org/young-gamechangers](http://georgiaforward.org/young-gamechangers)

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# GeorgiaForward

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[GeorgiaForward.org](http://GeorgiaForward.org).

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