

CHOOSE
macon
choosemacon.com

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2026 – 2030 PROSPECTUS



Greater Together

The Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce is committed to driving growth, prosperity and innovation across Central Georgia. As Macon-Bibb's most significant, organized business community, we foster meaningful connections, advocate for pro-business policies and deliver strategic programs that support talent development, workforce retention and economic opportunity.

Since 1885, we have served as the unifying force for our local business community – supporting enterprise, strengthening workforce pipelines and advancing initiatives that shape our region's future. Today, with nearly 800 investors aligned with our organization, we work collaboratively to attract and retain talent for our region and host life-changing programs like Leadership Macon that build the future leaders of our businesses and community.

The Greater Macon Chamber is at the forefront of transformational growth and opportunity as we champion Macon as the place to make your mark. From a surge in downtown development and industry to making history as home to America's next National Park, the timing has never been better to invest in our region's economic vitality.

Our Vision: In Business for Business

Our vision is for Macon to be the most vibrant and prosperous place to do business.

Our Mission

The Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce advances business success through connection, collaborative leadership, advocacy and creating opportunity.

Progress

Forward Macon is a five-year (2020-2025), \$3 million, business-led investment strategy launched by the Greater Macon Chamber to drive economic

development, workforce growth and quality of life improvements, an effort that continues to generate lasting, measurable impact across Macon-Bibb. By uniting key stakeholders, Forward Macon laid the foundation for transformational progress – fueling job creation, strengthening talent retention and positioning Macon-Bibb for long-term prosperity. Today, Forward Macon funding continues to be actively reinvested in Macon-Bibb by addressing local challenges, supporting job creation and promoting sustainable growth across the region.

What Comes Next:

Choose Macon 2030, the Next Five-Year Plan

Initiative I: Talent Attraction and Retention

To compete, Macon-Bibb must foster a strong sense of belonging and community engagement among new and emerging talent. This initiative addresses that challenge by creating pathways for social connection, civic involvement, and professional integration. The outcome: a more rooted, engaged workforce invested in Macon's long-term success.

- **Choose Macon Marketing Strategy:** Manage a comprehensive marketing and employer resource strategy designed to support talent recruitment and retention in Macon-Bibb County.
- **Choose Macon Realtor Network:** Equip real estate agents to guide new and transitioning residents through the homebuying process, with a focus on affordability, livability and community connection when moving to Macon Bibb and specific training to assist with local relocation and down payment assistance (DPA) programs.
- **Macon My Move:** Provide relocation and navigation assistance, including coordinating incentivized welcome packages for new residents who move to Macon and join the local workforce.
- **Familiarization & Welcome Programs:** Organize annual welcome receptions to help new professionals connect with the community and create a sense of place in Macon-Bibb. These include:
 - New Medical Residents Reception
 - New Teachers Luncheon
 - New Executive Orientation (bi-annually)

- **MAC (Macon Area Connections):** Design social meetups to connect singles, young professionals and new residents to one another.
- **Leadership Macon U:** Manage a leadership and civic immersion experience tailored for graduating seniors from local colleges and universities, which includes a weekly community immersion program designed for summer interns working at local businesses.

Initiative II: Local Workforce Development

An available and skilled workforce is a critical issue locally and across the country. We must implement strategies that will increase the skill level of the labor force and support initiatives that enhance talent attraction, engagement, and retention.

- **Advanced Manufacturing Pathway:** Align education with the economy through a collaboration with Bibb County Schools, Central Georgia Technical College and Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority to develop, launch and promote an Advanced Manufacturing Pathway to students, parents and educators.
- **Future Workforce Fridays:** Enhance exposure and access to future career possibilities by producing video career spotlights and employer interviews delivered to Bibb County Schools, as well as providing hands-on business and industry tours for middle and high school students to Macon based employers with high-demand career pathways.
- **Greater Career Works:** Operate a digital platform connecting local students and adult jobseekers to career exploration tools, training opportunities, and education pathways, linking them directly to regional resources such as technical college programs, certifications, and local college degree options.
- **Second Chance Employment:** Support career pathway training and development for individuals with barriers to employment, especially those with criminal records, which reduces recidivism, expands the talent pool and creates more opportunities for economic inclusion.
- **Data Analysis:** Collect, analyze and maintain strategic demographic insights and localized workforce and economic trends to inform decision-

making and support business and talent development across the region.

Initiative III: Income Aligned Workforce Housing

Income-aligned housing is a key strategy for supporting our workforce, making sure employed residents can afford to live in the same community where they work and contribute. Accessible and affordable housing is increasingly a barrier to attracting and retaining workforce, especially in professional and emerging talent sectors. To remain competitive, we must implement strategies that connect employees to income-aligned homeownership and ease the transition for new residents. This initiative supports talent recruitment and stability through down payment assistance, real estate navigation and partnerships that make living in Macon-Bibb both attainable and appealing.

- **Down Payment Assistance (DPA):** Coordinate a powerful workforce incentive that helps attract and retain talent by making homeownership more accessible. When paired with employer support or public-private partnerships, DPA aligns housing costs with wages, promotes economic mobility and strengthens workforce stability. This program will match and promote DPA programs offered by employers and coordinate access to down payment assistance for their employees.

Outcomes with Your Help

Over the next five years (2026–2030), the Macon Chamber of Commerce and our partners will work together to meet desired outcomes that drive Macon forward as we **Choose Macon 2030**.

Talent Attraction and Retention KPIs:

- Grow the number of 28-day active users on ChooseMacon.com by 70% over the next five years, reflecting increased awareness, engagement, and conversion among current and prospective residents, employers, realtors and jobseekers.
- Attract new residents whose combined earnings generate at least \$1 million in new annual household income within Macon–Bibb County over the next five years through targeted relocation and incentive programs, creating a measurable economic impact of Choose Macon’s talent attraction strategy and expansion of the local tax base.

Local Workforce Development KPIs:

- Grow enrollment in the Advanced Manufacturing Pathway to its maximum of 40 students over the next five years in partnership with Bibb County Schools and the Macon–Bibb County Industrial Authority, ensuring continued growth in the number of local students earning industry-recognized credentials that align with in-demand careers in Macon’s manufacturing sector.
- Strengthen and expand Macon–Bibb County’s workforce to reach and sustain 85,000 total covered jobs by 2030, positioning the region for future economic growth and shared prosperity. Through initiatives that enhance workforce retention, skill development, and employer partnerships, the Chamber will help ensure Macon–Bibb is prepared to meet the talent demands of a growing and evolving economy.

Proposed Budget		
	Annual Budget	Five-Year Budget
Initiative I: Talent Attraction and Retention	\$400,000	\$2,000,000
Initiative II: Local Workforce Development	\$300,000	\$1,500,000
Initiative III: Income Aligned Workforce Housing	\$200,000	\$1,000,000
Total	\$900,000	\$4,500,000

Our Leadership

The Macon Chamber Team

Jessica Walden | President and CEO

Jennifer Bronner | Vice President, Finance

J.R. Olive | Vice President, Operations

Renita Patterson | Vice President, Engagement

Alex Mason | Director of Development

Rebekah Hollar | Manager, Programs & Marketing

Jen Marshall | Manager, Investor Relations

Sherry Singleton | Manager, Communications

Zenobia Minter | Manager, Community

Reid McLain | Programs & Strategy Manager

The 2025 Forward Macon Board

Robbo Hatcher | H2 Capital, Inc., Chair

Jessica Walden | Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce

Cyndey Busbee | Atrium Health

Steve Daugherty | Piedmont Macon Medical Center

Bill Underwood | Mercer University

Chris Blake | Middle Georgia State University

Ivan Allen | Central Georgia Technical College

Alex Habersham | Habersham Enterprises

Stan Shepherd | AT&T

David Thompson | Piedmont Construction Group, Inc.

Jim Manley | Synovus Bank

Karen Lambert | Peyton Anderson Foundation

Calvin Hays | Hays Service, LLC

Danny Gibson | MetroPower (retired)

Patrick Harris | Georgia Power

Alison Bender | Leadership Macon Advisory Board Chair

The 2026 Chamber Executive Board

Luis Fonseca | All-State Electrical, Chair

Christy Kovac | Sheridan Construction, Past Chair

Patrick Goff | Jones Cork, LLP, General Counsel

Bruce Leicht | Cadence Bank, Treasurer

Jessica Walden | Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, President and CEO

Meaghan Blight | Wesleyan College, Chair Elect 2027

Kesia Stafford | Stafford Builders and Consultants Inc, Vice Chair of Workforce

Robbo Hatcher | H2 Capital, Vice Chair of Choose Macon 2030

Chrissy Miner | The Miner Agency, Vice Chair of Regional & Government Partnerships & Military Affairs

Allison Bender | Brookdale Resource Center, Vice Chair of Leadership Macon, Advisory Board Chair

The Macon Chamber Board

Stephen Adams | Macon-Bibb Co. Industrial Authority

Cameron Bishop | Wesley Glen Ministries

Cyndey Busbee | Atrium Health Navicent

Katrina Cohens | Cohens Consulting

John Cozart | Robins Financial Credit Union

Stephen Daugherty | Piedmont Macon Medical Center

BJ Dunwody | Dunwody Design Development

Penny Elkins | Mercer University

Tonya Fitch | ASTRE Wellness

Robby Fountain | Macon-Bibb Co. Industrial Authority
Richard Frazier-Sostillio | Theatre Macon
Caryn Frey | COX
James Fritze | NewTown Macon
Miguel Garcia | Prince Service & Manufacturing
Tyler Garrison | Terracon
Chris Graham | Atlanta Gas Light Company
Tony Green | YKK Corp
Johari Hemphill | Robins Air Force Base, 78th Air Base Wing
Jenny Howell | Fickling & Company, Inc.
Karen Lambert | The Peyton Anderson Foundation
Paul Little | Bibb Mt. Zion Baptist Church
Laura Mathis | Middle Georgia Regional Commission
Lester Miller | Macon-Bibb County
Alex Morrison | Urban Development Authority
Eric Nyantaki | Macon Coca- Cola Bottling Co.
Robin Parker | Piedmont Macon Medical Center
Monica Pirela | NotiVision
Jonathan Pitts | Piedmont Occupation Medicine
Jimmy Puckett | SPINEN
Starr Purdue | Hutchings Funeral Home, Inc.
Bowen Shoemaker | Georgia Power
Tracie Revis | Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve Initiative
Jeff Ruggieri | Macon-Bibb County
Scott Seigel | Truist Bank
Dan Sims | Bibb County School District
Dan Slagle | 21st Century Partnership
Win Stewart | Bibb Distributing
Michel Wanna | Macon Water Authority
Gary Wheat | Visit Macon
Eric Williams | Unified Defense
Julia Wood | Community Foundation of Central Georgia
Shaneke Wooten | YKK AP