

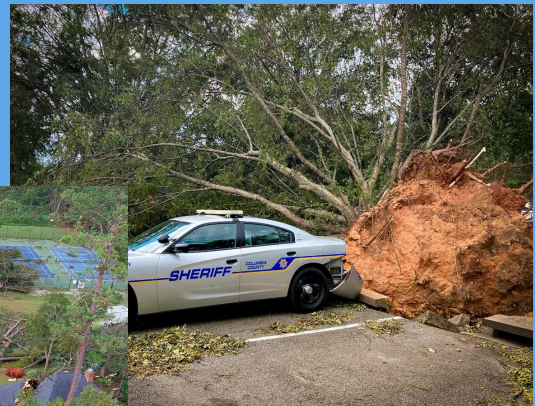
2026 GCCMA COMMUNITY PROGRAM AWARD



HURRICANE HELENE RESPONSE



1

**Hurricane
Helene
Recovery
Response**

2

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER



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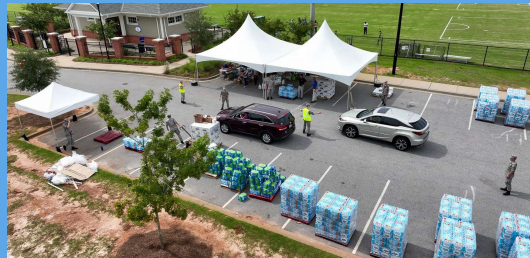


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DEBRIS SITES



POINTS OF DISTRIBUTION

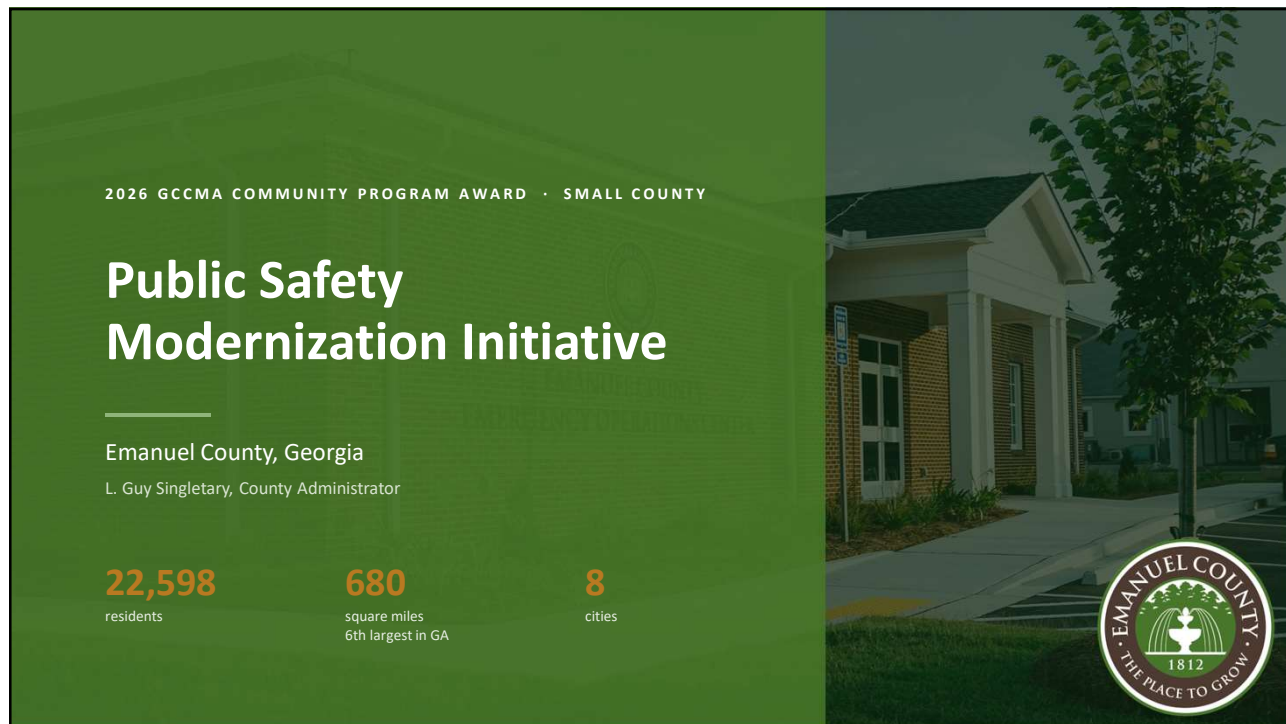


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FEMA/GEMA Funding Status

- Total Submitted to FEMA/GEMA: \$91,262,776.88
 - This amount remains subject to change pending:
 - Obligation of the remaining Category B (Emergency Protective Measures) funding
 - Determination of full eligibility for the 5% Management Cost
- Total Received from FEMA/GEMA to Date: \$64,782,492.05
 - Based on GEMA reimbursement records currently available.
- Amount Still Owed: \$23,415,474.38
- Total Expected Funding Upon Completion and Eligibility Determinations: \$93,206,582.00
 - This projected total includes anticipated funding from all eligible projects, including Category Z (Management Costs).





1

Where we started

A 1990s-era communications framework carrying 21st Century demand

- 1 A vulnerable 911 center**

Operated from the flood-prone basement of the Coleman Hotel since 1994. Myriad of problems:

 - Staff had to sandbag doorframes after heavy rain
 - Poor lighting
 - No redundancy
 - No room to grow.
- 2 Aging infrastructure**

Legacy equipment was increasingly costly to maintain and increasingly likely to fail.
- 3 No interoperability**

Separate repeaters and disconnected analog systems left dead zones across 680 square miles. Dispatchers repeated transmissions; multi-agency incidents lost time.





(Top, left and right) Basement stairs, analog portable radio
(Above) The "office" space in our old dispatch center



2

How we paid for it

Two projects, sequenced to available revenue (*versus one large capital undertaking*)

PHASE ONE

Emergency Operations Center

- Reserved FEMA and GEMA reimbursement funds over multiple years, earmarked for future emergency management infrastructure
- Partnered with the Georgia Department of Corrections to use state inmate labor for construction
- Sequenced CAD, phone, and supporting upgrades alongside the move

PHASE TWO

Countywide Digital Radio

- Commissioned an independent third-party communications assessment (strategy: neutral evidence, not a vendor pitch)
- Advanced the project through voter-approved SPLOST, spreading cost across residents and travelers alike
- Built public expectation **first**: civic clubs, faith groups, city councils, etc.



3

What it produced

200+

public safety personnel on one network

~150 mi

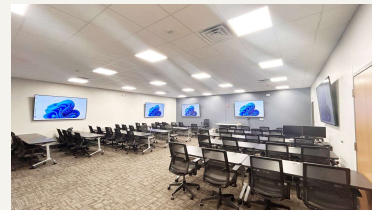
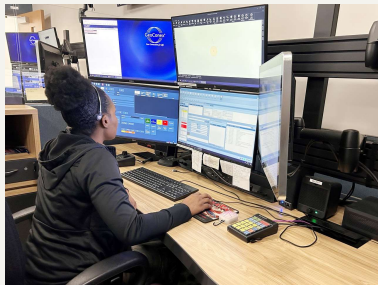
of I-16 corridor coverage for mutual aid

60

seat conference/training room/EOC and five 90" displays

6

position dispatch floor



First full activation: Hurricane Helene



4

If you're trying this at home...

Five things that made this project work in a rural county

01 Bank your reimbursements

Treat FEMA/GEMA recoveries as capital for the next emergency, not revenue for this year's budget.

02 Buy evidence early

A third-party assessment costs little and converts a sales pitch into a staff report your board can act on.

03 Look for partners

The Department of Corrections partnership did what no grant we qualified for could have done.

04 Build the expectation before the ask

Civic clubs, churches, and city councils heard about our problem long before a SPLOST question hit a ballot.

05 Sequence, don't wait

Phasing to available revenue beat holding out for one large appropriation that we weren't sure was coming.

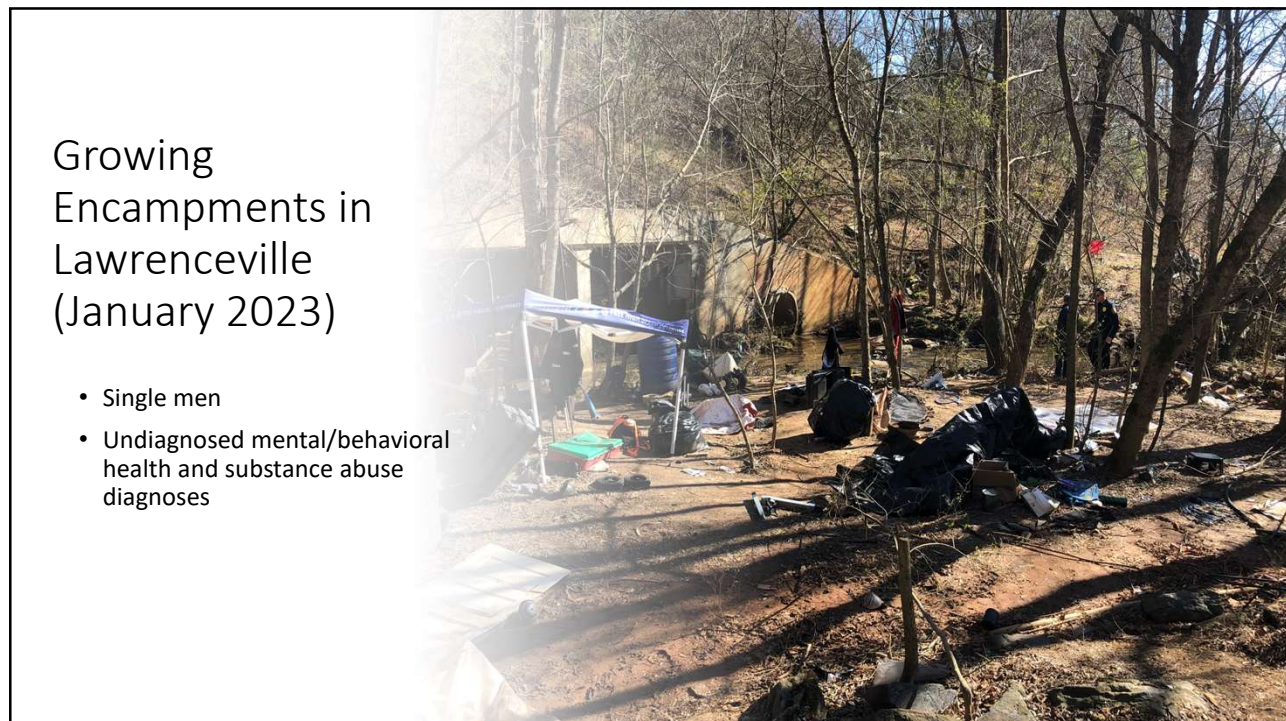


Need help?
Get in touch!





1



2

FIRST Housing Center

Renovated a 1957 10 unit apartment into an 8 room non-congregate shelter with 2-unit conversion office space and laundry

- A place for the LPD Community Response Team to take homeless residents
 - **Office Space** for Operational Staff and on-site laundry
 - **1 intake room** where clinician will provide a Psycho/Social assessment
 - Intake of a new participant and weekly case management/counseling services
 - **8 transitional units** for homeless residents up to 90 days
 - Fulltime case management-VP/I46
 - Fulltime Program Director-I46
 - PT Clinical Director-VP
 - 24 hr. monitoring and initiation by the LPD



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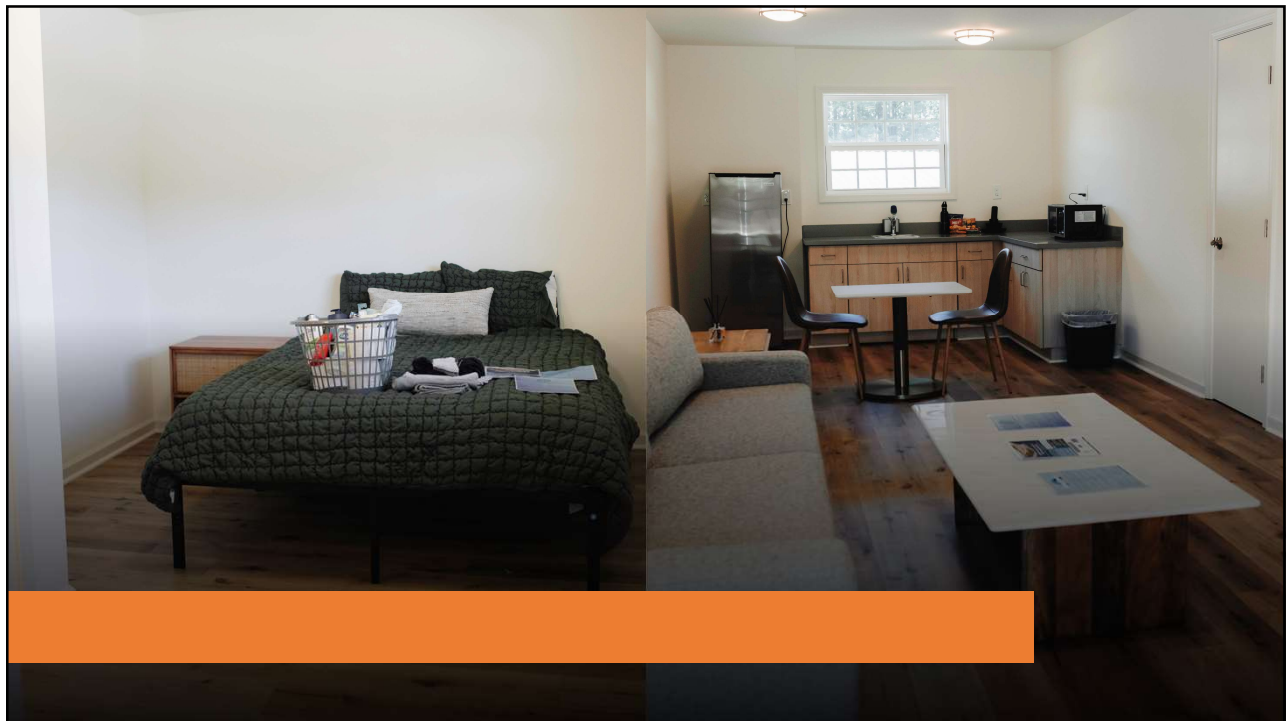
F.I.R.S.T. Housing Center: Operations

- **Operations: Serve up to 150 homeless individuals a year with Wrap-around and Housing services**
 - Co-Responder team interviews the homeless man and completes a background check and mini-mental health/substance use assessment- Makes an FHC referral if applicable
 - Intake specialist reviews the application and processes the request, presents at the weekly FHC team meeting (LRC team, Co-responders, Clinician, and Program Evaluator)
 - Stays up to 89 days while re-qualifying every 30 days- required weekly case management meetings and counseling sessions, connections and referrals to wrap-around service providers
- **Safety for FHC program participants and Lawrenceville residents:**
 - Qualifications: All FHC Participants are homeless men who have a diagnosed mental health and/or substance use disorder; can stay up to 89 days but re-qualify every 30 days based on meeting the requirements of their case management and clinical treatment plans
 - We do not accept any male with the following:
 - Felony murder, Aggravated Assault, Sexual Offender, Arson

4



5



6

6th Month Data:
January-July 2026

(Housing, Case
Management, Wrap-
around services, and
clinical services)

- **Housed 8 men**
 - **3 men are currently being housed since July**
 - Weekly case management appointments
 - As needed/requested counseling with VPH clinician
 - **2 men did not complete 90 days:**
 - 1 discharged for drug use- enrolled into a drug treatment facility after discharged
 - 1 struggled with his medication and left the premises voluntarily even though there was a housing referral
 - **1 completed 90 days, 2 found housing on their own**
 - FT Job, bought a car, leased an apartment
 - Met the conditions of their parole, medical treatment



Strengthening Democracy through Local Action and Innovation

September 23, 2026

1



Miracle League Ball Field &
Playground of Possibilities



2

Inclusive Recreation Through Public-Private Partnership

- Created through a City–ESP public-private partnership
- Inspired by ESP CEO Laura Whitaker and Mayor Dave Shearon’s call to “make no small plans”
- Formed a diverse steering committee of healthcare, business, civic, citizen, ESP, and city leaders
- Built the Miracle League Ball Field and fully ADA-accessible Playground of Possibilities
- Cost ~ \$3M with city contribution of \$440,000 in SPLOST funds toward the project and Oconee County donation of \$150,000
- Opened June 6, 2022
- Reaches 150+ visitors and 50-100 ESP program participants daily
- Creates a place where children and people of all abilities can play together



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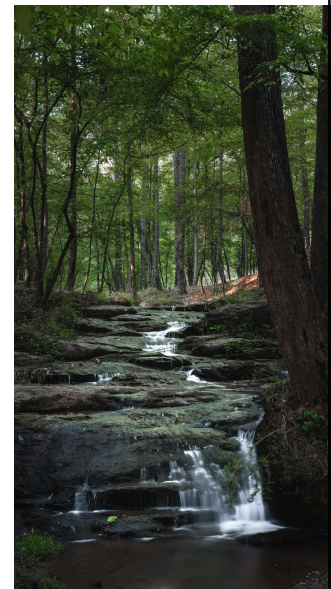
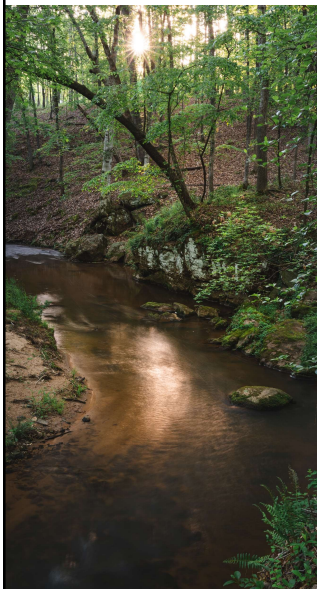
Rocket Field: Reimagined & Revitalized

- Historic downtown Watkinsville field dating back to late 1950s/early 1960s
- Gifted to the City by the Oconee County Board of Education in the 1990s
- Serves Little League, community events, Fall Festival, OCAF parking, and Christmas Parade needs
- Revitalization launched in 2022 through a public-private partnership
- Public input meetings shaped the final improvement plan
- Upgrades include refurbished ballfield, new restrooms/concessions, bleachers, LED field lighting, scoreboard, stage, petanque courts, sidewalks, and flexible greenspace
- City used SPLOST funds to improve parking and stormwater facilities
- Preserves legacy while expanding year-round community use



5

Thomas Farm Preserve



6

Thomas Farm Preserve: Preserving Land, Expanding Access

- November 2023 - City purchased 100-acre Thomas Family farm via a \$3.55M 20-year, 1.63% GEFA loan and \$1M in ARPA funds
- Debt repayment via 1 Mil property tax increase
- City established a Thomas Farm Steering Committee
- December 14, 2024 – Opened
- Largest undeveloped parcel within Watkinsville city limits, now preserved in perpetuity (per GEFA loan deed restriction) for future generations
- Includes 60 acres of open pasture, 33 acres of pristine woodlands, 2 ponds totaling five acres, and more than 1/3 of a mile of frontage along Calls Creek.
- Adds accessible recreation: 1 mile paved, 10' wide wheelchair-accessible paths, 2 miles gravel trails, and 2.3 miles backcountry biking/hiking
- More than doubles the city's usable green space
- SPLOST funded improvements include a pavilion, bathrooms, a sidewalk connection to downtown, and a future café space

