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GWINNETT COUNTY, GEORGIA, A SUNBELT COMMUNITY:
THE INVENTION OF A POSTWAR SUBURB

by

KATHERYN L. NIKOLICH

Under the Direction of Jeffrey Trask (PhD)

ABSTRACT

The Sunbelt suburbs postwar rise changed the United States political narrative through coalitions and conclaves. Suburban scholars have traced the movement's social ramifications through various lenses, including White Flight and Urban Renewal. However, suburbanization through a suburb's viewpoint has remained unexplored. Gwinnett County, Georgia, is a southern suburb that transformed from a rural environment to a substantial political and economic power. Its trajectory is offset by about twenty years from the familiar pattern of suburbanization. Tracing its history raises several questions about United States suburbanization both in the chronology of postwar urban history and the historic dynamics that shaped it. Gwinnett County developed into a modern suburb about twenty years after World War II, so its social and political motivations followed a very different course to modernization. In spite of its delayed development, it became one of the largest suburbs in the south by the end of the twentieth century.

INDEX WORDS: southern history, southern identity, suburbanization, reverse migration,
Gwinnett County, Atlanta, suburbs, housing, education, housing policies

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by

KATHERYN L. NIKOLICH

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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THE INVENTION OF A POSTWAR SUBURB

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December 2015

DEDICATION

Family provides depth to my life.

My husband, Daniel, constantly offers me his loving support.

Victoria, James, and Julia were the reasons for my foray into suburban life.

I am a better person for all of them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with all academic endeavors, the path is crowded with people who guide, cajole, mentor, and offer constructive criticism. My experience was no different. Jeffrey Trask, my thesis advisor and advocate at Georgia State University, offered pointed, firm, and gentle guidance as I migrated from the history of urban planning to a focus on a single suburban community's development. Glenn Eskew and Larry (LG) Grubbs served on my committee, each imparting his particular passion of American history. The former is a foremost southern historian and the latter opened my mind to the legitimacy of sensorial history.

My interests in history is diverse in its accomplishments. Initially, it was my undergrad experience at Georgia Gwinnett College that fueled my academic curiosity to follow a path in historical study. Seth Kendall, Richard Rawls, Michael Gagnon, Dovile Budryte, and David Prince were instrumental in encouraging me to pursue a graduate degree in history. The first three mentors studied in vastly different historical interests, locations, and eras (Republican Rome military, philosophical medieval Europe, and 19th century Southern economics, respectively). Concurrently, two political scientists, Dovile and David, allowed me the latitude to historize my political studies in their classes. While Dovile encouraged the qualitative cases of scholarship, David showed me how quantitative data analysis lends legitimacy to a historical narrative. Through everyone's foci, I ended up developing an analysis on urban development and planning in the ancient world as well as the late twentieth century United States. Therefore, the blending of history and political science became inseparable in my research and studies.

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INTRODUCTION

In an August 15, 2015 *Atlanta Journal Constitution* article, the headline in the *Lifestyles* section declared that a “*Growing Family Makes School District a Focus.*”¹ Featured was a young couple, Elizabeth and Rey Vega, who moved from Chicago to Atlanta, in 2011. That year, Elizabeth received a Presidential Management Fellowship at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As a part of her fellowship, she worked in Zambia for six months. Rey joined his wife and volunteered at an HIV-AIDS orphanage. While there, the couple discovered that they were expecting. They returned to Atlanta where Elizabeth remained at the CDC as a public health analyst. In 2015, they were expecting a second child that prompted their desire to purchase a house.

The feature article articulated Elizabeth and Rey’s requirements for purchasing a house along with accommodating amenities for their growing family. They needed a house that had a guest suite to host any visiting family, a second-floor master suite to be on the same floor as the children’s bedrooms, a basement, and a yard for them to play. Furthermore, family friendly amenities were another concern. Even with the CDC located in east Atlanta and within Interstate 285, known locally as “The Perimeter,” the Vegas decided to endure Atlanta’s miserable -and well-earned reputation- for its egregious commute. They choose a home in Gwinnett County, which is a suburb roughly twenty-seven miles from the CDC. This commute can take as long as two hours. Regardless, between Gwinnett County’s highly rated school district and a vast housing selection that was specifically marketed for middle class families, Gwinnett County was their first and only choice.

¹ Carolyn Crist, “Growing Family Makes School District a Focus,” *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Aug. 15, 2015.

Gwinnett County is today a vibrant and politically powerful Sunbelt suburb. However, its ascension to that status did not begin in the same manner or decades as that of other suburbs. The Vegas' decision to relocate into Gwinnett County not only illustrates how attractive is the Atlanta suburb, but raises several questions about the history of United States suburbanization including our understanding of both the chronology of postwar urban history and the historic dynamics that shaped it. Gwinnett County did not develop into a modern suburb in the decades the immediately followed World War II, so its social and political motivations followed a very different trajectory from those familiar to suburbanization historians.

Urban and suburban scholars traced the rise of the suburbs through various perspectives. Beginning in the early 1980s, Kenneth Jackson's work was groundbreaking for the state of historians that followed him. His broader questions focused on several federal programs' effects on suburban development to answer why whites eschewed urban life and moved to the suburbs. Historians who have followed Jackson's lead in tracing suburbanization have then looked at similar processes based on locality. Some of those locations were specific cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Oakland, Boston, Philadelphia, and Atlanta. Others expanded to larger spaces such as Southern California or the state of Mississippi.²

² For the broad topic, see Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). For a social and architectural history for Chicago see Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth 1820-2000*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003). For Oakland, see Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland (Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). For Boston and Philadelphia, see Sam Bass Warner, *Greater Boston: Adapting Regional Traditions to the Present (Metropolitan Portraits)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) and Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987). For Atlanta, see Kevin M. Kruse *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005) and Clarence N. Stone *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta 1946-1988* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas). For Southern California, see Lisa McGirr *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). For the state of Mississippi, see Joseph Crespino *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

Suburban historians who traced significant developments relevant to Gwinnett County are Thomas Sugrue, Kevin Kruse, Lisa McGirr, and Joseph Crespino. Sugrue looked at Detroit's suburbs and policies and he overturned the long-held tenet that the unions were responsible for its economic collapse. Instead, he argues that postwar race-based policies begat a series of detrimental public policies bent on maintaining power and segregation by relocating businesses and industry into Detroit's suburbs. Whites were able to follow the lucrative jobs while the African Americans remained in the urban spaces. In the Atlanta metropolitan area, Gwinnett County was one of the suburbs that responded to migrating businesses. It set policies specific to attract them into their border in order to pay for a vibrant education system.

Tracing the movement out of Atlanta and into the suburbs is Kevin Kruse's discussion of "white flight." Policies -either from city or federal sources- drove the whites out of the city. White parents, worried that their children interacting with African Americans would undermine society's stability began to migrate to the suburbs. When they left, their staunch ideology for integration blossomed into conservatism. Lisa McGirr and Joseph Crespino echo Kruse with their discussion of the mid-1960s "coffee clubs" in Orange County, California and Mississippi, respectively. They assert that the suburbs were the crucibles for a conservative ideology that spread throughout the nation. With a common belief for segregation and anti-communism, the conservative movement formed in 1964. In that presidential election, five southern states, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana voted Republican -en masse- for the first time since the Civil War.³ Republican Barry Goldwater's unsuccessful presidential campaign prompted the new movement to remove the segregation plank and seek out other

³ Georgia never voted Republican since the Civil War while the other four states occasionally did. Alabama voted Republican in 1868, 1872 and 1948, Louisiana in 1872, 1876 and 1948, Mississippi in 1872 and 1948, and South Carolina in 1868, 1872, 1876, and 1948. National Archives, "Historical Election Results" *U.S. Electoral College*, 2015. <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/historical.html>.

tenets for their movement. They began a campaign to support a nebulous “family values” that eschewed pornography, feminism, and gay rights. The 1968 Republican platform affirmed President Abraham Lincoln as the de facto leader to which the party should follow. His words, quoted in the convention platform, “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves and then we shall save our country.”⁴

The rise of the conservative movement through suburbanization is well documented. However, what was not addressed was the process specifically from the suburbs’ viewpoint. Because urban historians focus on broader aspects of suburbanization’s effects on an urban environment or a national narrative, the suburbs became subaltern. This thesis traces the history of Gwinnett County, Georgia, through its transformation from a lawless, rural environment into a thriving, modern suburb. Gwinnett County’s growth in population, from 32,320 in 1950 to 805,321 in 2010, begs the question of how did this county respond to being one of the fastest growing in the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

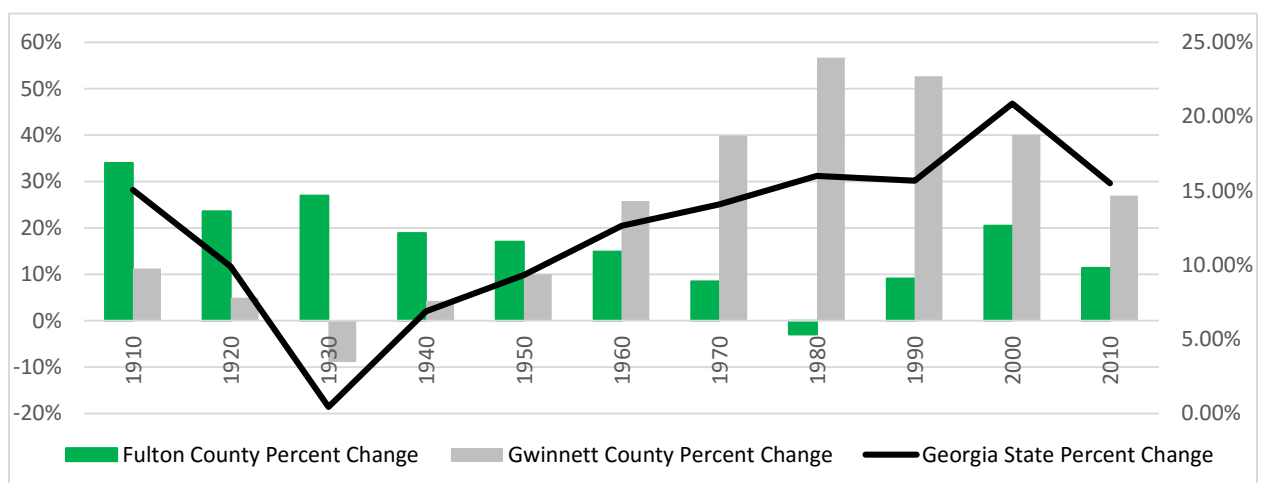


Table 1 Census population percent change -decade to decade- between Georgia, Fulton County, and Gwinnett County.

⁴ Republican Party Platforms, "Republican Party Platform of 1968," August 5, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25841>.

Table one shows the dramatic change in population, by percentage, decade to decade. The comparison is between Georgia, Atlanta's Fulton County, and Gwinnett County. This chart clearly shows how much the Great Migration effected the rural population of Georgia and Gwinnett County. Both were heavily reliant on agriculture whereas Atlanta grew in population because of its industry. The 1970s through the 1990s saw a dramatic reversal of population growth between the suburb and city. 1980 marked Gwinnett County's highest growth rate when it achieved fifty-six percent while Atlanta's growth fell to a negative three percent.

Table two demonstrates the county's accelerated growth. To be sure, there are other suburbs around Atlanta, but as table three shows, once Gwinnett County started growing in earnest, it captured a significant population share. The line traces the number of counties that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) determined that was in the Atlanta MSA. During the 1970s, with fifteen counties in the MSA, Gwinnett County gleaned between fifty-nine to thirty-two percent of the population growth. Even into the twenty-first century, Gwinnett County still continued to attract eleven percent of the overall growth within the thirty-two county MSA.

This change prompts questions about Gwinnett County's dramatic growth to which this thesis seeks answers through three overlapping areas, public policy, housing, and education. All three had to be in place to attract families into Gwinnett County, which table two clearly shows happened. With a growth rate of 2,392% between 1950 and 2010, there is little doubt that

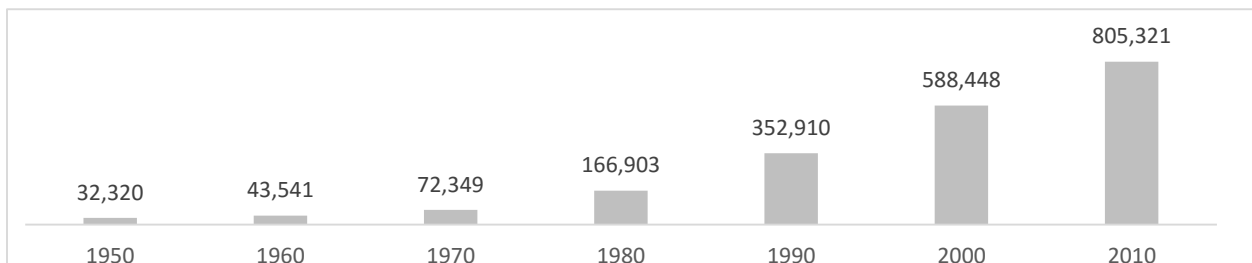


Table 2 U.S. Census Gwinnett County Population 1950-2010

Gwinnett County succeeded in becoming a modern suburb. So, how did it grow? What were the consequences of that growth?

Unlike the suburbs that Jackson, Kruse, McGirr, Crespino, and others have analyzed, Gwinnett County began its ascendance to a modern suburb around twenty years after World War II. The uncertain timing is due to some overlapping policies without which Gwinnett County could not have grown so quickly. During those early decades, Gwinnett County was predominately rural. But because it was only twenty-nine miles northeast of Atlanta with prime industrial land a mere sixteen miles away from the city, Gwinnett County drew the interest of suburban and urban leaders. One leader, in 1966, was quoted as saying that they expected the population in Gwinnett County to double by 1983.⁵ The prediction was considerably off. In 1970, the count was 72,349 which -when doubled- would be 144,698. The 1983 census was actually 208,337, representing a 188% increase in population. Indeed, the (OMB) included Gwinnett County in Atlanta’s MSA that had only five counties beginning in November of 1960.⁶

However, installing a massive infrastructure system was required before Gwinnett County could become a modern suburb. Water was the first and largest issue mainly because the

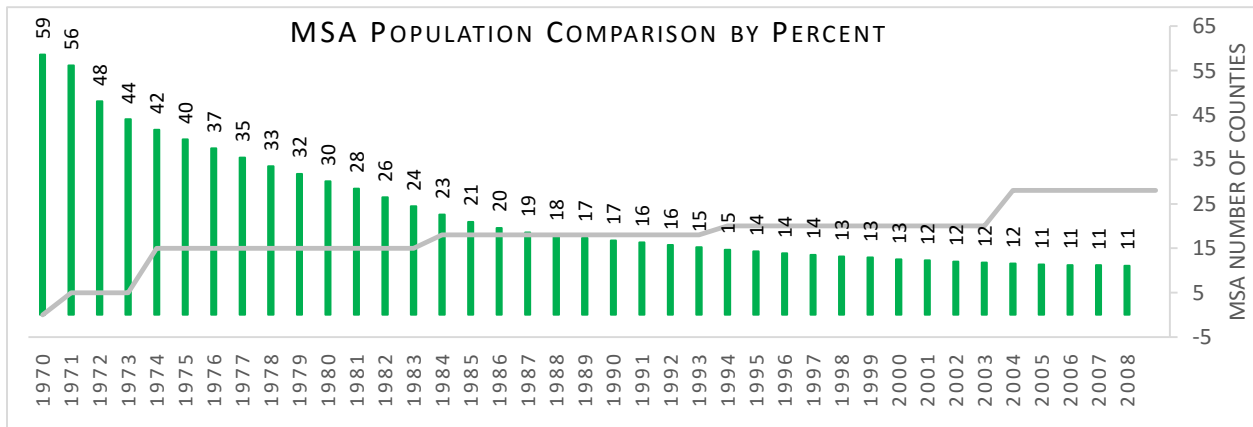


Table 3 Population comparison of Gwinnett County to the Atlanta MSA population. The line is the number of counties included in Atlanta’s Metropolitan Statistical Area. The bars represent the percentage of Gwinnett County’s population of the entire MSA. Source: U.S. Bureau of Census and Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University

⁵ Elliot Brack, *Gwinnett County: A Little Above Atlanta*. (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012), 174.

⁶ U.S. Census. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) and Components, 1960.

<http://www.census.gov/population/metro/files/lists/historical/60mfips.txt>

upland farms suffered from erosion and the lowland farms battled flooding. This is no surprise when looking at topographical map of Gwinnett County. The Chattahoochee River divides Gwinnett County's western border from Dawson and Forsyth Counties and the Yellow River flows from the county seat, Lawrenceville, towards Atlanta. Other rivers include the Alcovy, Mulberry, and Appalachachee as well as a system of creeks that flow down either side of the Eastern Continental Divide that parallels the county's western border.

Historically, because of the water availability, Gwinnett County was desired land to grow crops. The Land Ordinance of 1785 authorized the government to survey the available land into even forty-acre plats. This process effectively "objectif[ied] the Enlightenment in America" into a surveyed grid.⁷ Each plat then became available through a national lottery that represented an egalitarian ideal for agricultural property ownership. Forty acres was the size of a homestead that one family could farm, labeled, *boustophedonic* (as the plow follows the ox).⁸ The 1810 amendment to the 1785 Act determined that southern towns be allocated into six square miles, which lead to the founding of Gwinnett County on December 15, 1821. Lawrenceville, the only county seat for Gwinnett County, provided a courthouse in the center of town to adjudicate legal cases and a place to trade the crops. Buford, Norcross, Dacula (pronounced duh-KYOO-luh), Suwanee, and Lawrenceville were connected by railroad. It was agriculture that drove all of the policy decisions in the county.

In the early twentieth century, the southern region cotton crops suffered a boll weevil plague followed by a severe drop in cotton prices. Cotton had been the cash crop in the area. The Great Depression then finished many farms that prompted The Great Migration into northern and western cities. Farmers in the upland then turned to raising chickens. Because there was no other

⁷ John R. Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1580 to 1845* (New Haven: Yale, 1982) 87.

⁸ Michael P. Conzen, *The Making of the American Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2010) 129.

recourse, the farmers remained indebted to the company stores for supplies. There had been generations of indebted farmers since the Civil War. It would not be until the culmination of two major construction projects and the results of a federal program that Gwinnett County transformed into a modern suburb. The 1957 damming of the Chattahoochee River produced Lake Sydney Lanier to supply water for Atlanta and the early 1960s construction of Interstate 85 (known locally as the Northeastern Expressway) through the county were the projects.

The infrastructure that Gwinnett County needed was to control the lowland flooding and the upland erosion that occurred from the Yellow River. In 1954, County Commissioners, Paul Dover, O.D. Cain, and Weldon B. Archer, applied for federal resources to the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention that was included in the Public Law 566. They wanted to build a series of dams for watershed protection and flood control. Under this law, Gwinnett County received funds to build fourteen dams between the years of 1965 to 1980. In 1965 first three dams were built at Brushy Fork Creek, Numbers 3, 22, and 25. Two years later a fourth dam at Brushy Fork Creek, Number 21 was built followed by two more in the Upper Mulberry River, Number 11 in 1976 and Number 7 four years later.

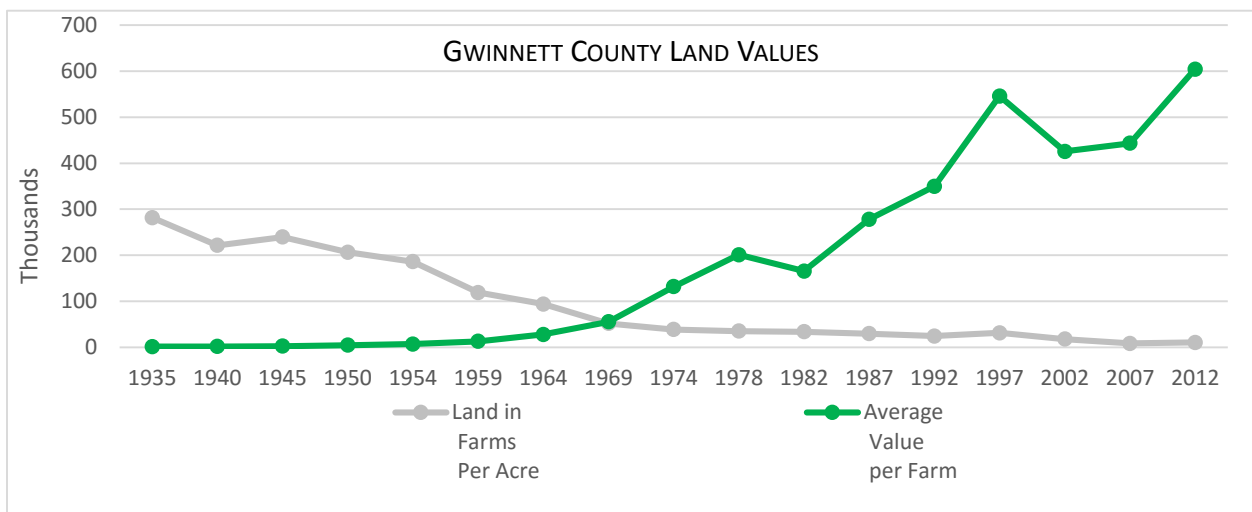


Table 4 Gwinnett County land values compared to the land available.
 Source: U.S. Agricultural Census taken every five years (except for 1974-8 to reset the intervals.)

Another federal program, the Resource, Conservation and Development (RC&D) established under the Food and Agricultural Act of 1962, served as a blueprint for suburban growth. It was tasked to study land resources in an effort to deliberately plan quick growth from urban sprawl. According to the Atlanta Metropolitan Planning Commission Director, Glenn Bennett, “the program...is to apply a sensible planning process to effect an orderly transition from rural to urban life.”⁹ Already identified for its location and land available for industry, Gwinnett County became one of only ten national projects to benefit and was the only southern area selected. Questions that the organizers asked included sources for new agricultural markets, new revenue streams to fund public services, effects of different and new taxes, how to organize grass roots programs, and harnessing existing agencies effectively as agents between the county and the region. The RC&D provided Gwinnett County’s leaders with a viable plan for a suburban focused infrastructure replete with an outline to develop cheap farmland into non-agricultural purposes. Table 4 demonstrates why the land would be attractive to developers. Because the farms were not profitable, their land was inexpensive. As Gwinnett County began to grow, economics principals took effect. Land became concurrently less plentiful and more desirable so the price per acre rose.

In spite of Gwinnett County beginning to form into sustainable suburb, the reality was that, during the 1950s and 60s, the county’s local and national reputation was one of lawlessness. It was not considered to be a modern, desirable suburb suitable for families to migrate. There were national articles written about Gwinnett County that were not on the RC&D plans. Included was a prison for the most violent inmates in Georgia was located near Buford Dam. Its practices were so egregious that when the inmates performed self-mutilation a *Time* article published the

⁹ Jeff Nesmith, “Gwinnett Program Designed to Smooth Way to Urbanization,” *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), May 2, 1966.

titillating details. Other acts included murder, kidnapping, chop shops, and bootlegging further deterred serious migration into the county during the 1950s and 1960s.

For those that lived in the county, they were predominately white, conservative, and segregationists -albeit Democrats. Certainly, the leaders fulfilled that description. Rumors circled that the Southern White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was active in Gwinnett County until as late as the 1990s.¹⁰ As recent as January 23, 1987, there were Klansmen who appeared from Gwinnett County to protest against civil rights marches in neighboring Forsythe County. On that snowy Wednesday evening, Mike Eddington, from Gwinnett County, and Bobby Starnes, from adjacent Barrow County, met in a Cumming restaurant to plan a counterdemonstration for Saturday's "march against fear and intimidation." The KKK had already disrupted the second annual celebration of the Dr. Martin Luther King holiday.¹¹ The nonplussed tone of these two men leads to the conclusion that belonging to the organization was neither uncommon nor socially unacceptable.

If the KKK was active in Gwinnett County, then its culture would have had no issue with a growing conservative suburban movement to eradicate obscenity. Because of this, Gwinnett County was in the national spotlight as the location when a white supremacist, Joseph Paul Franklin, shot *Hustler's* publisher, Larry Flynt on March 6, 1978. In this case, pornography and race converged as he was outraged by a published photo of an interracial couple. Gwinnett County became emblematic of social conflicts that growing suburbs suffered. By this time, integration was not only expected, it was law. And federal agencies were enforcing it.

¹⁰ The author witnessed an appliance repair shop on the corner of Braselton Highway & Buford Drive that, until it was razed in 2011, still had three working bathrooms, one for each men, women, and blacks. This is not proof of the KKK, but it is proof that Gwinnett County was highly segregated since such an establishment still existed for forty-seven years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

¹¹ Cudley Clendinen. 1987. "Georgia County Bracing for Trouble" *New York Times*, Jan. 23.

There were whites who resisted desegregation and Gwinnett County was no different. When Kruse argues that “White Flight” from Atlanta helped swell the population of its suburbs and founded the conservative movement, Gwinnett County was not a preliminary destination. During 1950s and 60s, the census reveals that the migration into Gwinnet County was 124% from 1950 to 1970. However, its significance pales when compared to the substantial growth in the 1980s and 1990s. From 1970 to 2000, the population increase is 713%. In Kruse’s monograph, there is only a cursory mention of any migration into Gwinnett County for which the census figures concurs. To partially explain the 1970s migration into Gwinnett County, James N. Gregory’s work traces the social impact of the Reverse Migration. He contends that the 1970s migration was not the elderly returning home but a younger generation who sought opportunities for a better life.¹² During this time, the leaders were busy tamping down the violent reputation from decades before, installing a formidable infrastructure, embracing conservative economic policies, attracting big businesses through creative tax policies, developing neighborhoods for families, and establishing an award-winning school district.

Eventually, families who were attracted to these changes, moved into Gwinnett County. They were also looking for the “American Dream.” As Jackson eloquently defined the suburbs as “affluent and middle-class Americans [who] live in suburban that are far from their work places, in homes that they own, and in the center of [enormous] yards.”¹³ As the Vegas demonstrate, race was irrelevant. They simply looked for the right house, neighborhood, and - above all- good schools to raise their children. Ultimately, Gwinnett County became an extremely built, inviting, and racially diverse suburb in the late twentieth century. By 2008, the

¹² James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2005), 323.

¹³ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 6.

county's population included Whites, African Americans, Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and Asians, a tenet that no one believed possible in the mid-1950s. By tracing Gwinnett County's history from rural obscurity into a modern suburb adds another layer to postwar suburbanization scholarship.

Methodology

Divided into three chapters, this thesis traces Gwinnett County's development from the mid-1950s to 2008. As Gwinnett County grew in population and expanded through physical development, it became a powerful political actor.

Chapter One examines Gwinnett County's history from 1953 through 1971. The Lawless County, traces the reasons and some attempts to transform Gwinnett County from a rural space rife with criminal elements into a modern suburb. Lawbreakers hid in the thick woods at the end of Interstate 85, committing a variety of crimes. 1972 marked Gwinnett County's transformation as its leaders deliberately enticed large commercial concerns to establish business in its borders.

The second chapter, The Ascendant Suburban County, begins with public policy decisions that solidified Gwinnett County's transformation into a modern suburb. A series of economic policies that included lower property taxes, an aggressive use of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), and favorable business levies proved beneficial. Other statutes were social and cultural in nature. Designated green spaces, an arts center, and professional sports kept people in the county.

Finally, the third chapter, Hooked on Education, focuses on the education system and its importance in developing this suburb. Its chronology overlaps with the first two chapters.

Through an innovative Gwinnett County School District (GCPS) for primary and secondary

education as well as founding two institutions of higher learning, the county unabashedly harnessed education as its hook to draw residents into the suburb.

Gwinnett County grew from a rural county, rife with criminal activities where people drove to the end of the road to dump bodies. Certain community leaders had the foresight to see that growth would happen regardless if they were prepared or not. In a series of astute political moves, the GCBoC decided to implement federal, state, and local resources to advance the county into a thriving suburb. Foremost in their plans was to affect a remarkable education system that enticed families to locate in the suburb. Once they did, the recreational, commercial, and cultural amenities retained them. Elizabeth and Rey Vega exemplify that Gwinnett County is a modern suburb with a compelling education system that became the primary reason for selecting a home and raising a family.

GWINNETT COUNTY

The Lawless County

During the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, American cities began to lose their elite and middle class populations as many fled into surrounding suburbs. Atlanta, Georgia was no different than any other city. However, Gwinnett County did not follow the same trajectory that other suburbs followed. This was due in part because it was still a rural area with its houses using well water and septic tanks. A modern suburb cannot develop without piped water and sewage. Gwinnett County did not begin installing a county water system until the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners (GCBoC) hired Vinson and Company, an engineering firm, to produce a report on how many gallons of water per day would meet the peoples' needs. They required a water plant to process sewage and locations of where to install distribution lines. Also on the agenda was a way to pay for the new system since the majority of the county's population lived

on small farms. Running lines to their property would be costly. To raise the funds, the GCBoC decided to sell a public bond, the “Water Revenue Anticipation Certificates.” They collected \$5,925,000 of the authorized \$7,000,000. Support appeared when E.R. Hawkins of Atlanta, a builder who understood the nature of building neighborhoods, offered to supply water lines to their proposed developments of three hundred homes in Norcross. Other developers followed suit for their houses.

While most of the water infrastructure began in the southwestern part of Gwinnett County, the balance of the county remained rural. During the 1940s, Gwinnett County produced cotton on 50,000 acres. By 1960, of the 275,200 acres in the county, only 2,000 were still producing cotton. Furthermore, there were only three pickers in the entire county and they were mechanical.¹⁴ Poor farmers turned to acts of crime to augment their incomes. Some of the crimes were serious acts of violence while others occasionally resembled a *Dukes of Hazzard* script. One instance involved a Gwinnett County sheriff who raided an illegal distillery with his deputies and friends, confiscated all of the supplies and still, and then moved it to another location to glean the profits for himself. An inhumane prison, bootlegging, chop shops, kidnapping, and murder were part of the lawless years that were published in local, regional, and national periodicals. This was another reason that Gwinnett County modernized later than the other suburbs.

Even though most of Gwinnett County was rural, there were a few small municipalities that existed to facilitate the farmers’ needs in supplies, trade, legal actions, and education. During the nineteenth century, the country was connecting towns and cities with the rail system and Gwinnett County was no different. In 1872 the Richmond and Danville Railroad (R&D)

¹⁴ Wayne Shackelford, interview with Clifford Kuhn (Jun. 18, 2007) 1.

connected several southern cities between the two named ones. That system became known as the “Piedmont Air Line” (now the Norfolk Southern). Within Gwinnett County, it moved goods between the towns of northerly located Buford, centralized Duluth and Suwanee, and southeasterly Norcross. In 1877, the Piedmont Air Line built a 9.6 mile spur from this line, the Lawrenceville Branch Railroad. It joined Suwanee and Lawrenceville. It was sold to R&D in 1885. Later, in 1908, Atlanta & Charlotte Air Line Railway purchased it. When, an early twentieth century boll weevil infestation devastated the rural county the company abandoned the line in 1920. The Georgia, Carolina, and Northern Railroad (now the CSX) opened a third ten mile track in 1898 that linked Loganville and Lawrenceville.¹⁵

The boll weevil infestation of the 1930s not only shut down railroads, it eviscerated the farming industry. Cotton had stripped the land of its nutrients and the boll weevil ate what could grow. Having been locked in a farm credit system since the Civil War, the farmers in the Georgia Upcountry found that they had no way to repay their debt to the country stores. Looking to any way to grow resources, they turned to raising chickens. The stores, which once provided farming supplies, switched to chicken supplies and the cycle of debt continued. Men had a new occupation, called “hatchery-men.” They built artificially heated wooden coops to promote a greater production in eggs and larger birds for meat. In an effort to market the new product, chickens that had once known as a “fryer” became a “broiler.” Eventually, the labor intensive breeding became automated in the late twentieth century.¹⁶ Large corporations bought the farms and provided all of the feed, machinery, and chickens were provided and the farmers had to

¹⁵ Steve Storey, “Railroad History” Georgia’s Railroad History and Heritage, 2015. Accessed Oct. 15, 2015. railga.com.

¹⁶ Monica Richmond Gisolfi. “From Crop Lien to Contract Farming: The Roots of Agribusiness in the American South, 1929-1939,” *Agricultural History* 80, no. 2 (Spring, 2006): 167-189.

repay them for all of the items used. This endless cycle of debt that kept the farmers poor and isolated may have contributed to the lawlessness of the postwar era.

The cycle of farming debt would likely have continued were it not for two substantial government projects, interstate construction and a water system. The National System of Interstate and Defense Highways Act of 1956 (commonly known as the Interstate Act). It became the United States' largest peacetime construction project. Interconnected roads linked military bases and cities by slicing through the urban centers. During World War II, President Dwight D. Eisenhower experienced the convenience of the American built, German *Autobahn*. In his State of the Union address of the same year, he proclaimed that the country now required "a grand plan for a properly articulated system that solves the problems of speedy, safe transcontinental travel; inter-city communications; access highways and farm to market movements; [and] metropolitan area congestion." He sold the country on the need for the highways by correlating statistics between fatal accidents and increasing numbers of vehicles on the roads. Mark Rose traces the process of passing the federal policy through its strenuous debate from private and institutional concerns. The results of this public policy and commercial interests reverberated for decades.

Construction of Interstate 85 (I-85) through Gwinnet County offered the potential for economic growth and modernization. The exact location of the highway was due to Governor S. Ernst (Ernie) Vandiver. Three paths were under consideration, to follow U.S. 23 through Gainesville, U.S. 29 through Athens, or a straight line from Atlanta to Greenville, South Carolina. The latter line cleaved Livonia, which was the governor's home town. That is the path he selected for I-85. Governor Vandiver asked the Georgia Highway Department to commission a study that traced his preferred path. He further promised the leaders in Gainesville and Athens

that there would a limited access highway to their cities. Interstate 985 (Sydney Lanier Parkway) to Gainesville happened, but the 1973 Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo drained the revenues so much that promised limited access highway to Athens did not happen. Instead, State Route 316 (University Highway) became a controlled access road.¹⁷

Construction of I-85 through Gwinnett County proceeded in five increments. As each section completed, the wooded ends provided excellent cover for the county's lawless reputation. Chop shop criminals and bootleggers used the unfinished roads as an easy access between Atlanta and Gwinnett County. The woods at the end of the highway afforded ample coverage and the interstate offered direct service for the stolen cars. The road slowly developed northeast from Atlanta toward South Carolina with stops at Jimmy Carter Boulevard, Beaver Ruin Road, Pleasant Hill Road, and Old Peachtree Road. The final leg through Gwinnett County was not completed until 1967.

The second happened when Atlanta began to realize that their growth required a dedicated source of water and not be reliant on other locations. In effect, this act signaled when Gwinnett County would begin to benefit from the "New South" evolution. Looking at the northern most border of Gwinnett County, Atlanta's Mayor William B. Hartsfield and other interested parties, selected a deep valley culminating in a narrow cwm at the confluence of the Chattahoochee and Chestatee Rivers that was just north of Buford. The Buford Dam served two purposes, to supply the burgeoning MSA's water supply and to provide electricity for the area. A benefit of Lake Sydney Lanier's was that it became a regional water recreational opportunity.¹⁸

¹⁷ Wayne Shackelford, interview with Clifford Kuhn (Jun. 18, 2008), 3.

¹⁸ Lake Lanier was one of the water sites for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics Canoe and Kayak Sprinting and all of the Rowing events. The Olympic Committee, "Official Olympic Report" *Official Past Games Reports Volume 2*. 342-5. http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/Official%20Past%20Games%20Reports/Summer/ENG/1996_Atlanta_Vol_2.pdf

Three decades before residents of the Atlanta MSA would enjoy Lake Lanier for its recreational properties, people resisted traveling into the county. Sensational stories printed in local and national periodicals about prison abuse, murder, kidnapping, bootlegging, and chop shops underscored Gwinnett County's criminal reputation. The actions may have continued were it not for the harsh light of public scrutiny. As the GCBoc Chairman Dudge Pruitt said in 1969, that they needed to reverse its reputation.¹⁹ Arriving to a point where the county's leaders decided to modernize Gwinnett County into a modern suburb took nearly two decades from the first of many events.

Built in 1949, a state prison, "Buford Rock Quarry Prison for Incurables," had a reputation for abusing its inmates. The new building with two turrets and an isolated location about ten miles from Buford gleaned it a nickname, "Georgia's Little Alcatraz." Like its namesake, the institution conjured a sense of dread, seclusion, and hopelessness.²⁰ This prison was where difficult and incorrigible convicts were transferred to serve a twelve month term breaking granite and pushing a wheelbarrow in a nearby quarry. They labored from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm with two half hour break in the morning and afternoon and a two hour lunch break. Guards wielded Winchesters and heavy sticks to ensure that all prisoners adhered to a strict discipline routine.

Treatment of the inmates was so brutal that twice in five years they attempted to reap public support for prison reform through self-mutilation. The first time was Christmas Day, 1951. Following dinner, forty men attempted to slice their own heel tendons. Ten succeeded in this endeavor. Nothing changed for the prisoners.

¹⁹ Elliot Brack, *Gwinnett County: A Little Above Atlanta*. (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012), 164.

²⁰ Wayne Kelley, "Buford Quarry Changes Duo," *Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Dec. 12, 1965.

Five years later, a second attempt for public attention occurred in late July. Warden Hubert Smith explained the incident to Jack Forrester, the state director of corrections. Twenty-nine white and seven black men complained that their wheelbarrows were too heavy and the low 90s temperature was too hot.²¹ The incident was published on the Associated Press wire, adding to the national negative notoriety of Gwinnett County.

Time published an article, on August 13, 1956, about the case adjudicated in front of a before a Georgia legislative committee. According to the testimony, these who had “sunk so low on the scale of human hope that they had ducked out of the searing sun into the shadow of a rock pile, had smashed each other’s legs in a despairing gesture of mass protest.” Their guards’ treatment was so egregious that they protested by breaking each other’s legs. One person who testified was “a lanky, 46-year-old Negro [sic]” who described in detail how they protested.²²

“I was sitting there on the ledge watching them. They laid their legs across two stones. Three men came down the line with hammers breaking their legs. They were using 20-lb. hammers. I could hear the bones crack. They’d holler some, and turn aside, but they didn’t holler too loud. The guard, he was a pretty good piece off, and he couldn’t hear them. They asked me to join them, but I said no.”²³

These convicts claimed that they had been driven to madness because of the guards’ ruthless treatment. Of the forty-two men who protested, thirty six succeeded in breaking their own legs and ten of those men pulverized their bones.²⁴

The official response was predictable, “This leg-breaking was planned by these men to get public sympathy to bring pressure on the state to abolish this camp.” After a week, the commission found that the only grievances worth admonishing was that there had been too much

²¹ Associated Press, “36 Prisoners Break Legs with Big Sledge Hammers,” *Spencer Daily Reporter* (Spencer, IA), Jul. 31, 1956, 1.

²² Roy Alexander, “Men in Despair,” *Time*. Aug. 13, 1956, 16.

²³ Roy Alexander, “Men in Despair,” *Time*. Aug. 13, 1956, 16.

²⁴ Wayne Kelley, “Buford Quarry Changes Duo,” *Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Dec. 12, 1965.

cussing. None of the forty-one men's testimony was enough evidence to immediately affect prison reform.²⁵

Only one week later, a Gwinnett County grand jury was tasked to investigate the prison after the last six men -who had failed to break their legs- attempted a second time. One white man, Ernest O'Neal, who was branded as the ringleader by Forrester, broke his foot by slamming it in a door. The remaining five were black prisoners tore out lead plumbing pipes to use on themselves. Only one, Jimmy Lee Starks, succeeded whereas Oliver Traylor, James Avery, William Bell, and Alfred Smith did not.

Supplementing the inmates' accusations was a prison guard, Frank Miller's statement to the press. He categorically listed egregious behaviors knowing full well that he might lose his job. He witnessed men beaten for not pushing overloaded wheelbarrows, men beaten and cursed at for no apparent reason by the other guards. Finally, Miller witnessed Warden Smith beating prisoners. Defending his warden, Forrester claimed that Miller was an unreliable employee and that his statement had no credence.²⁶

As a direct result of the two-part incident, Governor Marvin Griffin ordered an immediate and complete investigation of the Buford Rock Quarry. The Gwinnett County grand jury formed a committee of three men, Frank Bailey of Norcross, J. Earle Simpson of Buford, and C. A. (Gus) Morton also of Norcross. Contrary to the testimony of the prisoners and the guard, their singular surprise visit produced a glowing report of the Buford Prison. It cited that the living conditions were excellent, clean, and orderly and the food's quality was excellent. Furthermore,

²⁵ Roy Alexander, "Men in Despair," *Time*. Aug. 13, 1956, 16.

²⁶ Eugene Patterson, "Griffin Calls Full Probe of Rock Quarry Prison," *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Aug. 7, 1957.

they found that the work was “not too strenuous for any of the inmates assigned there and working conditions [were] fine and well above the average.”²⁷

As the prison continued to dodge the many indictments regarding its practices, Gwinnett County was fully lawless. A thriving bootlegging community rendered dangerous the heavily wooded areas around unfinished roads and abandoned railroad tracks. What postwar land that was not farmed, raising chickens, or sold to the Norfolk Southern Railway for their attempted expansion, was heavily wooded. The dense foliage provided incredible cover for illicit activities, Gwinnett County became a destination for dropping off the finished whiskey by hiding it in the woods.

Since before World War I, it was common knowledge around the rural spaces that residents in the North Georgia Mountains homemade moonshine. They would then transport the cases of filled glass canning jars to Gwinnett County and hide it. Under the cover of darkness, locals delivered and sold the moonshine in Atlanta. Many neighbors were involved as couriers.

Elliot Brack, a journalist for the *Gwinnett Daily News*, interviewed several Gwinnett County people about their experiences with moonshine. One banker recounted that “We knew that some of our neighbors were somehow in the moonshine business. It was common knowledge.”

“One Gwinnett woman remembers as a child talking often with one of her best friends on the telephone, and inviting her friend over often to spend the night. “But we never went to her house. We knew her father was mixed up in some type of different business, and we shouldn’t go there.”²⁸

Moonshine running was so prevalent that even the Gwinnett County Sheriff office was involved. The activities of the sheriff’s department that transpired in early 1962 could have been

²⁷ Constitution State News Service, “Gwinnett Jury Praises Buford Prison Operation,” *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Sep. 18, 1957.

²⁸ Elliot Brack, *Gwinnett County: A Little Above Atlanta*. (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012), 161.

an inspiration for a stereotypical southern farce. Daniel C. Cole, the sheriff from 1960-3, his deputies Alex Evans and Thomas (Red) Ladford, and drivers Harry Gravitt and Marion (M.C.) Perry were arrested on August 22, 1962. Federal officers coordinated with the Lawrenceville City Solicitor Bryant Huff to raid a working still that Cole and his men had confiscated and transported to their property on January 26. Among the plethora of charges included were control of an illegal still, conspiracy to defraud the government, and possession of non-taxpaid liquor.²⁹

Cole was convicted of two charges on February 5, 1963. The first was for possessing 3,612 half-gallon jars to be used for non-tax paid liquor. The second guilty verdict was for willfully and unlawfully possessing and transporting 192 gallons of illegal whiskey. Among the other five charges that were dropped included conspiracy to defraud the government and control of a still. Following the verdict, on July 8, 1963, Jack Holland, the Solicitor General of the Gwinnett Judicial Circuit, filed a suit to remove Cole from his office. In the brief, he articulated the arrest details that lead to Cole's eventual dismissal on September fifth of the same year.

Cole, as sheriff, raided an illegal distillery in his county on or about January 26, 1962. At the distillery, he found and seized 1,380 pounds of sugar, an upright boiler, a large steel tank, a pre-heater and an oil blower--apparatus and appliances which were being used for the purpose of making whiskey. At the distillery, he also found and seized 301 cases of glass jars which the operator intended to use as containers for whiskey made at the distillery. He stored the sugar and jars in the barn of Horace J. Cofer, one of his deputies, and the other equipment in a garage at Lawrenceville, Georgia. Approximately 258 gallons of whiskey was also seized at the distillery and Cole carried it to the county's jail. On or about May 17, 1962, Cofer, by direction from Cole, turned over the sugar to Marion C. Perry, a "notorious bootlegger" and Cole knew that it would be used for the purpose of making illicit whiskey. Cofer, on direction from Cole, also turned over the glass jars to parties unknown to him, but well known to Cole, and was paid \$570 for them--a price fixed by Cole. They were delivered to such unknown parties about midnight and the money Cofer received for them was delivered to Cole who did not account for it to the governing authority of Gwinnett County. The parties who picked up the jars came to Cofer's home in a truck with the lights turned off and they were not turned on until the jars were loaded on it at Cofer's barn and the truck had reached a point about a fourth of a mile from Cofer's barn. During April 1962, Alex S. Evans, one of

²⁹ Achsah Posey, Cole Guilty on 2 Counts Out of 7," *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)* (Atlanta, GA), Feb. 5, 1963.

Cole's deputies and Thomas Ledford removed the upright boiler and oil blower from the place where Cole had stored them in Lawrenceville to an illegal distillery in Gwinnett County where they were again seized by other officers while being used for the purpose of making whiskey and Cole knew of such intended use of them and "condoned and consented" to such act by Evans and Ledford. The amended petition further alleges that Cole, as sheriff, or his deputies, on various occasions and particularly on or about May 19, 1962, June 20, 1962, and January 29, 1963, seized large quantities of nontax-paid whiskey at illegal distilleries in Gwinnett County; that such whiskey was moved to and stored in the basement of the county's jail; that Cole did not dispose of it as required by law; and that he and Alex S. Evans, one of his deputies, together with Marion C. Perry and Harry Gravitt, transferred and removed 240 gallons of it with a truck belonging to deputy Evans to a drive-in theater operated by Gravitt in Gwinnett County where it and the truck were seized by other officers.³⁰

All of the officers who were arrested in 1962 lost their jobs in 1963. Cole was fired in September by order of the Gwinnett County Supreme Court. Furthermore, bootlegging was not the only crime with which Alex Evans was a part. In 1964, he was involved with the most heinous murders in Gwinnett County, the shootings of three officers who answered a disturbance call and found three men beginning to disassemble a car in a wooded area around Beaver Ruin Road.

Concurrent with the illegal moonshine running in Gwinnett County, was also a prime destination for chop-shops. Thieves drove stolen cars from Atlanta to the end of the Northeast Expressway (Interstate 85). Beaver Ruin Road was one of the stops along the I-85 and that area was still densely wooded and a highly attractive space where cars could be disassembled in less than five minutes. Fred Banks was the deputy sheriff 1961-3 after having served as the Gwinnett Correctional Facility warden for ten years. This man, extensively experienced with criminals recalled his astonishment with chop-shops' efficiency. In an interview with Elliot Brack, he recalled, "At first I found it hard to believe, but I have heard individuals say that within five minutes after a stolen car arrived, they would have stripped it...All they wanted to take was the

³⁰ *Cole v. Holland, Solicitor General*. 219 Ga. 227 (Gwinnett Superior Court. 1963).

motor and the transmission...I finally realized how they strip a car in as short a time as five minutes.”³¹

Articles in the *Atlanta Constitution* discussed raids on rings of chop shop operations that favored Gwinnett County as a destination. One raid in Suwanee, headed by Sheriff Dan Cole, uncovered a ring so proficient that the investigator Special Agent J. T. McKibben of the National Auto Theft Bureau in Atlanta “termed [it to be] one the slickest, most extensive, and troublesome car theft operations in the nation.” He explained that a chop shop would, “buy a wrecked car of late model, then steal a machine of like model and substitute serial numbers and other marks of identification from the wrecked car.” Sheriff Cole clarified further that, “after replacing damaged parts of wrecked cars with unidentifiable parts of stolen machines, the remaining components of the stolen vehicles were stripped for salable parts, or cut up for junk.”³²

The financial damage was profound for the Atlanta metropolitan area. McKibben estimated that the ring they busted in June of 1962 had been functioning for about two years and likely averaged two cars a week. Based on about two hundred cars a year, the value of the operation fell somewhere between \$300,000 and \$500,000. In 1963, 3,417 Atlanta cars had been stolen and by April first of 1964 there were already 1,078 taken with total value of \$1,448,800. That accounted for eighty-five percent of the total crimes committed in the first quarter of 1964. Extending a monthly average, that year was on track to have 4,072 stolen. As a point of comparison, there were only 1,797 reported stolen cars in 1957.³³

Many believed that one reason there were so many car thefts was because the penalties were light. As the Atlanta Police Department explained, most of those cases resulted in

³¹ Elliot Brack, *Gwinnett County: A Little Above Atlanta*. (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012), 160.

³² *Atlanta Constitution*. 1962. "Gwinnett Raid Cracks "Slick" Car Theft Ring." Jun. 14: 3.

³³ *Atlanta Constitution*. 1964. "Syndicate-Style Crime Rings Blamed for Rising Car Thefts." Apr. 18: 7.

probation. In part, it was seen as a non-violent crime.³⁴ However, on April 17, 1964, that changed. An encounter between three thieves turned deadly when they shot three Gwinnett police officers after happening on a chop shop ring. What transpired is gleaned from newspaper articles and Major Alan Doss's official police report that interject a sense of "real time" narrative. It was written to afford a chronological continuity of everything that happened.

Early in the morning of Friday, April 17, a resident, A. C. Mills was restless and could not sleep. A little after 1:00 am, a car's headlights shone into his bedroom. He knew that it was pulling into an abandoned driveway of a nearby house that was located on a sedate, remote dirt road called, Arc Way. It was near the corner of Beaver Ruin Road and Pleasant Hill Road, which is presently a throbbing commercial area. Awakened, his wife joined him in the darkened room as they witnessed the dance of lights in the night and called the sheriff's department to report a "suspicious activity."

What the couple could not specifically see was the encounter between the responding police officers and the thieves. At the time of the call, car number twenty-eight with J. L. Bowen and Marvin Jesse (Pop) Gravitt was involved with a traffic accident near the Northeast Expressway. However, Gravitt had become ill at the accident scene and needed a ride home and his partner said that he could handle it alone. Having just finished their dinner at a local diner, police car number twenty-nine, driven by Jerry R. Everett, and his partner, Ralph Davis, picked up Gravitt and were on their way to his house when they were diverted by the Mills' call. They arrived to find three men at two cars, DeKalb County's Lawrence Hartman's 1963 Oldsmobile that they had stolen that evening and a Chevrolet. They were in the process of hiding their crime.

³⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*. 1964. "Syndicate-Style Crime Rings Blamed for Rising Car Thefts." Apr. 18: 7.

Venson Williams was changing ignition switches, Wade Levi Truett was changing the car's license plate, and Alex Evans was rummaging through the glove compartment.

Panicked, Truett jumped into the Chevrolet and attempted to speed away in reverse. Officers Gravitt and Davis chased him down on foot and forced him back to the original scene. When they returned, Officer Everett was in the driver's seat of the Oldsmobile, checking the ignition switch. The police reports assumed that because Officer Gravitt and Alex Evans had once worked together, he was not as alert as he normally was. This break in protocol proved deadly for Officers Everett, Davis, and Gravitt. Alex Evans had been involved with former Sheriff Cole who was now serving a sentence in federal prison.

The Mills saw the chase and later could see flashlight beams and cigarette lights as well as hearing loud arguments without being able to distinguish any words. They were fully aware that the conversation was heated. What they could not see was Evans pulling two guns on Everett and gaining a critical advantage on the officers. Evans had Truett cuff the three officers together with the 6' - 4" athletic Everett in the center. Purportedly, it was to prevent him from having a free arm with which to defend himself. After they were secured, he then wondered out loud what to do with the men. Williams' response was chilling. "When they put the uniform one, they automatically become dirty sons of bitches. It don't matter to me."³⁵ Truett suggested that they be cuffed to a tree. Instead, Evans and Williams choose to drive themselves and the officers in the Oldsmobile further down on Arc Way.

Truett first moved the police car off the road and followed his compatriots to their new location in the Chevrolet. Once he arrived, we heard "firecrackers" and the three officers were face down, bleeding with the other two holding the police officers' guns over them. One victim

³⁵ Elliot Brack, *Gwinnett County: A Little Above Atlanta*. (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012), 633.

was still alive, moaning and groaning. Truett took two bullets from the still breathing officer's gun belt and silenced the moaning. Dr. Larry Howard, the assistant director of the State Crime Lab, said that Everett had been shot first in the upper right thigh. He stood, bleeding, for a period of time between four and fifteen minutes. Furthermore, he described where the other thirteen shots were distributed. "Officer Davis was shot five times in rapid succession through the mouth, with the bullets traveling upward through the skull. At the same time Officer Everett suffered a fatal shot slightly from behind at the top of the right ear, and "one possibly two" shots in the back of the head. Officer Gravitt was shot five times in the head from the side and the back."³⁶ In total, Davis, Everett, and Gravitt took fourteen bullets from their own guns. After the murders, the three set the Oldsmobile ablaze to destroy any evidence.

While the perpetrators were unknown for over a year, all of the evidence immediately showed that there were three criminals. A massive hunt began and Georgia Governor Carl Sanders signed an executive order to grant police powers in Gwinnett County to the Georgia State Patrol and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. This allowed for independent investigations that proved fruitless. In August of 1964, Senator Zell Miller, critical of the FBI's inability to solve the case, offered a reward of \$15,000. Miller complained that the FBI's new assignment to find a black activist in Athens and a government offer of \$25,000 to find the three missing Mississippi civil rights workers had taken precedence over finding the Gwinnett County police officers' murderers.

For fifteen months, the local police continued to investigate. One tenacious detective, Lieutenant John W. Crunkleton from the DeKalb County Police Department, developed the evidence that eventually lead to the arrests of Williams, Evans, and Truett. Still involved with

³⁶ Jack Nelson, "Lights in Night - Death for Three Officers," *Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Apr. 26, 1964.

criminal activities, Evans was already in an Illinois federal prison on another illegal liquor charge. Evans claimed that he was innocent because he was not out the night of the murders. Furthermore, because he had once been an officer, he led an investigation of his own and had a list of suspects. Furthermore, he claims that he has evidence that will absolve him “when the time is right.”³⁷

At trial, Truett agreed to turn state’s evidence for immunity. He testified at both Evans’ and Williams’ trials and both were convicted of Everett’s death. No prosecutor sought convictions for either Davis or Gravitt, citing that there was no reason to pursue those charges. Both men received death sentences in 1965 that were eventually commuted to life. Williams was paroled in 1989, moved to Conyers, and never spoke of that night again. Relatives of the victims read in a newspaper article that he was released and picketed his home. Evans was never paroled and remains in prison claiming that he is innocent and he has information that will absolve him “when the time is right.”³⁸ Truett died in 1983.

Four years later, another crime centered in Gwinnett County that swept the national media and proved 1968 to be another disturbing year. Unlike the other crimes, this one was not perpetrated by any county residents. Rather, it was one that was transferred into the county because of the heavily wooded land. Barbara Jane Mackle, a 20 year old student at Emory University, was kidnapped and buried in a shallow grave near the Duluth. She was captured eight days before Christmas, there was an outbreak of influenza at the university and the medical facilities were full. Jane Mackle, her mother, drove up from the affluent suburb Florida Coral Gables to take care of her daughter in a motel. Barbara’s boyfriend, Stewart Woodward, visited

³⁷ Elliot Brack, *Gwinnett County: A Little Above Atlanta*. (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012), 634.

³⁸ Elliot Brack, *Gwinnett County: A Little Above Atlanta*. (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012), 634.

the Mackles for the evening and left around midnight. He noted a blue Volvo station wagon with two people sitting in it, but dismissed them as residents at the hotel.

At 4:00 am, a knock on the door was answered by the elder Mackle where a large man stood poised with a shotgun. Gary Steven Krist forced his way into the room. Accompanying him was a woman, Ruth Eisemann-Schier, wearing a ski mask and wielding a pistol. He pressed a chloroform soaked cloth over the elder Mackle until she fell unconscious. Barbara begged not to have the same done to her with a promise that she would be good. She willingly left with her kidnappers and they placed her face down on the back seat and drove for twenty minutes to their destination in Gwinnett County. Once they arrived, Barbara was lightly sedated with a hypodermic needle. He then forced her to hold a crude sign that declared "KIDNAPPED" while he photographed her smiling - to ensure her family that she was alive. Once he was satisfied with the photo, he took an opal ring from her finger and confined her in a plywood box. Through her screams, he tightened the screws on the coffin. There was a modicum of humanity because, "There were two ventilating pipes [built] into the box which Krist referred to as a "capsule." Speaking into the tubes, Krist told the hysterical Barbara that she had food, water, a blanket, a small light and ventilating fan operated by batteries (that drained quickly), and a pump to get rid of water should it rain. A bed-pan was provided for bodily functions."³⁹

While her daughter was entombed, Jane regained consciousness to find herself bound with the Venetian blind cords and her mouth taped. She managed to stand upright and open the door from behind her back. Making her way to the car, she also opened it and began to honk the horn until the night manager came out to see what was wrong. Within ten minutes, the police

³⁹ Lindsey Williams, "How Barbara Mackle Was Kidnapped and Buried Alive" *LindseyWilliam.org*.

arrived and road blocks appeared. At 9:30 that morning, Barbara's father Robert, a wealthy developer from the Miami area, received the \$500,000 ransom demand.

On threat of her death, the delivery was to consist of only non-sequential twenty dollar bills, bundled into one thousand dollar packets. The drop was at a Miami sandy strip near Fair Isle Drive in Biscayne Bay. In an ironic turn of events, when the kidnapers arrived in a boat to retrieve the money, a neighbor who was unaware of the Mackle drama playing out in his backyard, called the police. There had been a rash of burglaries and he was concerned that they were arriving to rob his house. The police recovered the ransom monies that the kidnapers dropped. Fingerprints left behind traced a direct path to Krist and his arrest. Eisemann-Schier escaped and remained at large for months.

Terrified that the drop would be seen as a double-cross, Robert Mackle spoke with FBI Special Deputy Milton (Butch) Buffington and Charlotte County Sheriff Jack Bent to allow a for him to publicly publish a plea to the kidnapers:

I had nothing to do with the action Thursday morning of the Miami police who tried to arrest you and recovered the money which I had left for you. I regret that you did not get the money because my only interest is the safety of my daughter. I pray that you have not harmed my daughter. I did everything you told me to do. I had nothing to do with the accidental appearance of the Miami police on the scene. Please contact me again through any channel. I will do anything you ask so my daughter will be freed.⁴⁰

The plea worked. At 10:00 pm Mackle received a phone call from Krist who offered instructions for a second drop. This one was successful. Krist made a final phone call to the Atlanta FBI office at 3:00 pm of the same day giving the directions to find Mackle's daughter. After enduring eighty-three hours in a dripping wet, cold, and dark coffin, Barbara Mackle was alive. The next day, Krist was arrested with \$480,000 in twenty dollar bills, convicted of kidnapping, and served ten of his twenty years sentence. Eisemann-Schier was also arrested, but several months later in

⁴⁰ Lindsey Williams, "How Barbara Mackle Was Kidnapped and Buried Alive" *LindseyWilliam.org*.

Texas where she was working as a waitress. She served two of the three years for her part as an accomplice.

As Gwinnett County lived through the lawless years, there were two competing factions at odds. One was that the criminals had control of the county and their actions deterred migration from Atlanta. The other was a considered effort by county officials to reform the lawless image and change the rural space. To that end, leaders sought federal aid to implement a water system that would abate the lowlands' flooding and the uplands' erosion. Engineers were consulted for a plan to provide water mains and a sewage processing plant in Gwinnett County. And finally, a limited program, the Resource Conservation and Development literally provided a plan to transform the rural into a suburb. Gwinnett County's lawless years stunted its foray into suburbanization. However, as the next section traces, the delay did not stunt its growth in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. By the dawn of the twenty-first century, Gwinnett County had successfully sloughed its lawless image in favor of a modern, powerful, suburb.

The Ascendant Suburban County

Gwinnett County began reforming its law enforcement policies predicated on its negative experience in the 1950s and 60s. Bootlegging and chop shops dissipated because development into the county removed the thick brush that criminals used to hide their illegal goods. Completion of Interstate 85 provided transportation of goods through Gwinnett County. An auxiliary highway, Interstate 985, connected northern Gwinnett County with Lake Lanier in Hall County. Results of the construction was that county leaders promoted policies to entice industry along the resulting corridors. Developers built houses, stores, and recreational facilities. Through it all, the leaders worked to the benefit of Gwinnett County and for themselves. Some managed

to sit on the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners, instituting policies favorable for their businesses while others worked as permanent government employees. The changes, reforms, people, and government worked in tandem for Gwinnett County's suburban transformation.

Beginning in 1968, Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners (GCBoC) initiated a series of systematic reforms to the county governance, law enforcement, zoning, taxes, and housing. They replaced the agriculturally based statutes with policies to effect a modern suburb. The leadership became professional with most holding college degrees. Until then, the GCBoC consisted of three full-time commissioners all with equal power. They earned \$6,000 a year and managed a budget of over \$3 million.⁴¹ With only three members, a commissioner only required one other vote to form a majority.

On December 10, 1967, two of Gwinnett County's state representatives, Norris Nash and Jimmy Mason, announced that they were introducing four bills before the 1968 Georgia Assembly (GA) to change the county governance.⁴² Upset at two of the incumbent commissioners, Ray Morgan and Felton Thompson, Representative Mason, particularly, worked to install a five person commission. He proposed a bill that passed to restructure Gwinnett County's governance. It is divided into four districts for which each elected a part-time District Commissioner. The entire county elected a full-time Commission Chairman what was to be paid \$15,000 a year, (\$102,516 in 2015 dollars). The board stood for election in staggered four year terms, maintaining a consistency by having either two or three seats up for election every cycle. This new configuration was meant to make it difficult for one commissioner to strong-arm or

⁴¹ Bill Goodwin, "Gwinnett is Facing Big Issue of Change," *Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Dec. 10, 1967.

⁴² The Georgia State Representatives are part-time legislatures. The General Assembly meets beginning the first Monday in January and continues for forty business days. Because there is a limited span, bills are prepared, announced, vetted in committees, and prepared for debate before the annual session opens.

cajole another into agreeing to a personal agenda. However, there were still many strong personalities and the people who sat as Chairmen were frequently the strongest.

The newly reformed Commission first met on January 1, 1969, which also marked W.R. “Dudge” Pruitt’s first year as chairman of the GCBoc. Frustrated with Gwinnett County’s lawless reputation, Pruitt decided to address the problem immediately. On March 8th, the Police Chief Havard Norred, who followed Dan Cole after his firing on December 31, 1964, announced his own resignation. He was upset that he was not receiving the Commissioners’ support and decided to resign from his job and the law enforcement altogether.⁴³

With the old chief gone, Pruitt turned his attention to address the inept police force he left behind. Pruitt, along with other four commissioners, hired John Cunkleton, who had helped to solve the murders of Officers Gravitt, Everett, and Davis in 1965. He was described as being a fair, straight, and firm leader. Prior to this post as Gwinnett County Police Chief, he had been a deputy for the DeKalb Police Department. Because no one in any authority trusted any officer in the Gwinnett County Police Department, Cunkleton fired the entire staff. He then rehired two men, records keeper Gordon Parker and Charles Sorrels, the radio dispatcher on February 9, 1969. He then set about to hire thirty two people, twenty-seven of which were sworn officers, two who did not swear, and three investigators. All of these employees had to submit to a background check. That same year, Cunkleton instituted a Gwinnett County Police specific training program that required everyone to remain apprised of all the new law enforcement techniques. To this day, there has been only one police officer killed while on the job since April 17, 1964 and he was killed by a driver who did not see him writing a ticket on Interstate 85.⁴⁴

⁴³ Keller McCartney, “Norred to Resign as Gwinnett Chief,” *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Mar. 8, 1968.

⁴⁴ Michael Johnson, (Corporal in the Gwinnett County Police Department) interview with the author, Oct. 15, 2015.

Another area of reform were the prisons. An Illinois state warden and nationally recognized penologist, Joseph E. Ragen, published a report from the Bowdoin Commission on Georgia's prison system. Part of his findings stated that Georgia's penal system was one of the most antiquated in the country. This report along with a University of Georgia study conducted by Dr. Frank L. Gibson were sent to Governor Carl E. Sanders for consideration.

As a direct result of the report, the Georgia Prison System decided to change Buford Prison. Before, the prison held all of the inmates who could not be controlled in the other institutions. Buford changed to accept only youth under twenty-one years old. The new focus was on education and reform. Prompted by a two year study by the Governor's Commission for Efficiency and Improvement in Government, the committee found that the "bleak buildings with depressing dark-green walls and cramped steel cells for solitary confinement" should be condemned "as unfit for the confinement of human beings."⁴⁵

A fresh attitude of prison reform followed with a physical transformation. Walls that were once dark with despair were lightened with paint that was "eye ease green."⁴⁶ The new mess hall featured movable, small, restaurant style tables with individual chairs instead of the previous long, cold steel tables and benches that had been bolted in the concrete floor. There was a crude baseball diamond in the quarry close to the spot where the men once smashed in their legs. Guards had the new title of "corrections officer" and were explicitly forbidden from either cursing at or cuffing the inmates. Finally, the "hole," a basement cell where a reporter once found "Thay is no God [sic]" scrawled, had been dismantled as well as thirty-five other similar

⁴⁵ Wayne Kelley, "Buford Quarry Changes Duo," *Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Dec. 12, 1965.

⁴⁶ Wayne Kelley, "Buford Quarry Changes Duo," *Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Dec. 12, 1965.

cells and the steel mesh cages that surrounded the dormitory.⁴⁷ While Georgia only allocated a renovation budget of \$50,000, Superintendent J. H. Devinney declared that a library and a commissary were going to be built over time. Classrooms were also on the agenda. However, the budget constraints informed the process of using makeshift spaces and having any of the older boys who some education to act as the teachers. In 1965, the atmosphere in Buford Prison was hopeful, if local.

Concurrent with Gwinnett County's police reform, the southern suburbs were listening to the Republican law and order narrative who used this ideology to glean votes from a disenfranchised, conservative, southern, suburban electorate. Joseph Crespino discusses the "southern strategy," employed by the party during the 1968 Presidential election. The Republican candidate, Richard Millhouse Nixon, played to the fears of lawlessness, urban crime, and national security, but shied away from the George Wallace segregationists stating that Barry Goldwater weakened the party by including them.⁴⁸ Since the lawless years in Gwinnett County were still fresh memories for many residents, his message found willing ears. Also, the news was filled about stories of serial killers -i.e., the Hillside Strangler, the Zodiac Killer, Son of Sam, and Ted Bundy- it was no fantastic leap to understand the Republicans appeal. At its convention, the Republican Party's platform clearly articulates their law and order narrative.

Republicans believe that respect for the law is the cornerstone of a free and well-ordered society. We pledge vigorous and even-handed administration of justice and enforcement of the law. We must re-establish the principle that men are accountable for what they do, that criminals are responsible for their crimes, that while the youth's environment may help to explain the man's crime, it does not excuse that crime.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Wayne Kelley, "Buford Quarry Changes Duo," *Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Dec. 12, 1965.

⁴⁸ Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), chapter 6.

⁴⁹ Republican Party Platforms: "Republican Party Platform of 1968," August 5, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25841>

Furthermore, Republicans invoked a moral imperative for freedom. Freedom, it implored, was the bastion between excessive governmental power and man's liberty. In keeping with freedom and liberty, it further pledged for "an all-out, federal-state-local crusade against crime...support of legislation to strengthen state and local law enforcement and preserve the primacy of state responsibility...[and]...Better coordination of the federal law enforcement, crime control, and criminal justice systems."⁵⁰ The implication was that security was found in law and order.

Besides criminal activities, there was a spate of sexual issues that concerned suburban conservatives. Having lived through the "free love hippies" and a drug culture, the suburbs responded with staunch, conservative ideology. Lisa McGirr stated that "the rejection of liberal rationality, a middle-class counterrevolution against 1960s "permissiveness," and a search for community created a cauldron mix that fueled the growth of evangelical Christianity."⁵¹ They rejected anything that was perceived as deviant behavior, obscenity, pornography, feminism, and gay rights. Collectively, they became the glue that formed the 1968 and beyond conservative movement. Adding to the conservative narrative, on January 22, 1974, the United States Supreme Court ruled on *Roe vs. Wade*. They found that on-demand abortions were legal under the 14th amendment, which emphasized a growing concern that society's loose mores were undermining traditional family values.

Family was a familiar focus for Gwinnett County in the 1970s. Beginning in 1971, the GCBoC instituted several of the changes recommended by the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) to attract sprawl. They began a data collection system to track changes in

⁵⁰ Republican Party Platforms: "Republican Party Platform of 1968," August 5, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25841>.

⁵¹ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 243.

the various departments over time. Having more data points allows for a sounder economic forecast. The board also hired a county engineer, established a land use plan, organized garbage collection, passed leash laws, established business licenses, and instituted progressive county financing. Of most concern to the commissioners was being able to pay for the structural improvements and public safety. As governing goes, infrastructure costs money and it is not sexy enough to inspire voters to go to the polls. A fact that the commissioners learned in one day. Expecting the electorate to support the initiatives to build more infrastructure, the commissioners held a special election on Saturday, December 14, 1972. Each project, roads and bridges, fire protection, public safety building, library building, parks-recreation, juvenile courthouse, public health facility, and a new courthouse were on the ballot separately and were all soundly rejected.

Reeling from revenue losses, the commissioners turned to their Executive Assistant, Wayne Shackelford for alternative ideas. This position looked and acted exactly like a county manager only without the title. The distinction existed because because of a November, 1966 referendum in which they rejected the idea of a county manager. The voters feared that a county manager would remain out of touch with the people's needs. Regardless of the title, the GCBoc needed a director to implement policies and find the resources to fund them. Shackelford was critical to Gwinnett County's infrastructure and consequential growth during his tenure from 1974 to 1984 as the Executive Assistant. Not a native to Gwinnett County, Shackelford's photographic memory, integrity, honesty, intelligence, and ability understand how government works made him an effective manager.

After the voters rejected the bond to fund the needed infrastructure, Shackelford look to other counties to find an alternative method of managing revenue. Working closely with autocratic Wayne Mason, a land developer from Snellville and a member of the GCBoc from

1972-80 (he served as chair 1976-80), they established two authorities, the Public Facilities Authority and the Recreation Authority. The Water and Sewer Authority was already established in 1960 to facilitate laying water mains and sewage pipes. Shackelford relayed the importance of the Authorities because they are not accountable to the statutes imposed by the Georgia General Assembly (GA). Shackelford plainly stated:

[The] authorities under Georgia law are created for one reason, to defeat the Georgia Constitution. The Georgia Constitution says you got to pay your debts each and every year by the end of the year or you can't borrow a dime the next year. You create an authority. And authority is a body politic and a corporation public. It can enter into long-term debt, but it's got to have a source of repayment, so you contract between the authority and the general government to assure those payments.⁵²

Mason also remarked:

Authorities were the only way to finance these big-dollar, long-range improvements... We were operating the entire county on a budget of less than \$7 million... We would not have the water and sewer system today, which has been the backbone of our growth.⁵³

Now, the county had a debt that required repayment and the GCBoC had a legal method to ensure that they would always service their debt.

Wayne Mason, according to Elliot Brack, a Gwinnett County reporter for over thirty years, "was about the only one who could see the potential growth in Gwinnett."⁵⁴ While likely an overstatement, Mason was a major reason for Gwinnett County's growth. Wayne Mason's entry onto the board followed his brother, Jimmy Mason's, term as a State Representative. Regardless that Wayne Mason was a Democrat immediately began to institute conservative economic policies to attract commercial interests along I-85's corridor. He argued, to the balance of the sitting commissioners, that "firms provide industrial jobs at good salaries...and [would]

⁵² Shackelford, interview with Kuhn, 16.

⁵³ Elliot Brack, *Gwinnett: A Little Above Atlanta* (GwinnettForum: Lawrenceville, 2012) 37.

⁵⁴ Elliot E. Brack, *Gwinnett: A little above Atlanta* (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012), 182.

help give the county a more balanced tax digest, which also help[s] support and improve the schools of the county.”⁵⁵

In 1972, Gwinnett County landed its first major industry, Western Electric. Looking to move its warehouse operations into Georgia, Commission Chairman Ray Gunnin, a Southern Bell engineer, and Mason worked to convince the company that the Jimmy Carter Boulevard and I-85 was a better location over another one that a mile south on I-85 in DeKalb County. Brack observed that “it took an active county government plus significant innovations by forward-thinking county officials to snare the plant.”⁵⁶ Gunnin negotiated with DeKalb County to provide the initial sewer and fire protection for the plant. Gwinnett County was still in the throes of upgrading its water system and it could not handle the load from a warehouse.

Mason developed a tax abatement, called a freeport tax, to attract businesses into the county. This innovative levy allowed companies to store their goods free of taxes until they were sold. The tax abatement, the proximity to railroad and interstate transportation, and the powerful combination of Gunnin, Mason, and Shackelford convinced them to build their new complex in Gwinnett County. According to Mason, “the plant could just as easily have been located one exit south in DeKalb County, and Gwinnett would still have to educate the children of the Western Electric workers living in the county.”⁵⁷ Western Electric opened in 1972 for certification and achieved full staff of 2,317 employees by the end of 1973. Being the largest plant to produce copper wiring for the telephone industry. By 1977, the company employed 3,800 people where it remained until the court ordered the dismemberment of the Bell system in 1982.

⁵⁵ Elliot E. Brack, *Gwinnett: A little above Atlanta* (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012), 208.

⁵⁶ Brack, *Gwinnett: A Little Above Atlanta*, (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012) 207.

⁵⁷ Brack, *Gwinnett: A Little Above Atlanta*, (Norcross: GwinnettForum, 2012) 207.

Mason was proven correct when Western Electric paid the county its first \$1 million dollar *ad valorem* check in 1973. To that moment, it was the largest amount ever presented to Gwinnett County. They used it to bolster its education system and to continue installing the much needed water mains. News of the cheaper land, easy access to transportation, and the generous tax policy attracted other big businesses that were considering moving into the Atlanta area. They first settled in the southwestern portion of the county, near Pinckneyville and Norcross. They then followed I-85 through the county toward Lawrenceville, Martins, Duluth, and Buford. Industrial levies attracted the companies and the resulting jobs, with great salaries, supported a rising tax digest. In turn, the schools began to improve with the influx of revenues. In an interview, Shackelford explained the coalition,

We were absolutely about to become a bedroom and a schoolroom for somebody else's job base and tax base. And it will bankrupt a community. The spillover was coming...Coming from Greater Atlanta. The spillover was coming, primarily out of the city of Atlanta and DeKalb. And we had to prepare for it. And it isn't easy. Your jail quickly get overcrowded. Your courts quickly get overcrowded. And your tax assessing and collecting process quickly gets outdated... No good government operates long without private sector leadership. Governmental boards need to be business men and women, citizens who care, who then find competent administrators who can turn their dreams and aspirations into reality. The great leaders of the world don't make decisions based on the next vote. They make decisions in spite of the next vote. They make hard decisions, and they make those of us who've served as administrators really have a great time. I had a great constitutional board years later, as commission of the Department of Transportation. Great leaders, great constitutional boards or statutory boards set policy and find the right leaders, and then the right leaders, with the confidence that these men and women have, can then turn their dreams and aspirations into reality.⁵⁸

Not every company's experience was smooth. By 1976, Gwinnett County tax policies were legally tested. The result of the legal action changed national and international trade policies. The problem began with an assessment of an *ad valorem* property tax levied against the Michelin Tire Company. "In 1973, the tax commissioner [Wages] and tax assessors of Gwinnett

⁵⁸ Shackelford, interview with Kuhn, 16-7.

County, Georgia, assessed *ad valorem* property taxes against Michelin's inventory held in its warehouse between 1 January 1972 and 1 January 1973. The assessments averaged about \$10,000.”⁵⁹ Michelin contested the tax predicated on an 1872 United States Supreme Court case that set international trade policy for over a hundred years.

The January 29, 1872 United States Supreme Court decision in the *Low v. Austin* case regarding wine importer, C. Adolph Low charged that his imported, unopened, and warehoused French champagne should not have an *ad valorem* tax imposed because it was not manufactured in the U.S., but stored in his warehouse. The San Francisco tax assessor levied the *ad valorem* predicated on an 1868 statute that, “all property of every kind, name, and nature whatsoever within the state” may be taxed.⁶⁰

In order to stay in business, Low paid the tax. Then he became the plaintiff in a suit against Alexander Austin, the tax officer for the city and county of San Francisco. Low argued that Austin improperly collected on his “imported merchandise, upon which the duties and charges at the custom-house have been paid, is subject to state taxation whilst remaining in the original cases, unbroken and unsold, in the hands of the importer.”⁶¹ He believed that since the imports are exempt from state imposed levies he was therefore due a refund.

Low’s case hinged on a lower court interpretation that imports are exempt so long as they retain their original packaging. The Supreme Court of the State of California heard the appeal and reversed the lower court’s finding. In 1871, the United States Supreme Court heard the case and found in favor Low saying in part,

⁵⁹ Walter Hellerstein, “Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports,” *The Supreme Court Review 1976* (1976): 102.

⁶⁰ Walter Hellerstein, “Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports,” *The Supreme Court Review 1976* (1976): 102

⁶¹ Supreme Court of the United States, “C. Adolf Low et al. v. Alexander Austin,” *The American Law Register (1852-1891)* 20, no. 6 New Series Volume 11 (Jun., 1872), 366.

Goods imported from a foreign country, upon which the duties and charges at the custom house have been paid are not subject to state taxation whilst remaining in the original cases, unbroken and unsold, in the hands of the importer, whether the tax be imposed upon the goods as imports or upon the goods as part of the general property of the citizens of the state which is subjected to an *ad valorem* tax.⁶²

The 1872 case forbade states from imposing the tax on imports that were still in their original packaging. This singular distinction is what began the court case between Michelin Tire and Gwinnett County. Wages claimed that since the warehouse commingled imported goods with those manufactured in the United States, he levied the *ad valorem* on the company.

Being a global company, even in the mid-1970s, Michelin Tire was headquartered in one state, warehoused stock in several states, and imported a percentage of their product from overseas. Because of the international component, Michelin Tire Corp expected a tax forbearance predicated on a longstanding interpretation of the Constitution.⁶³ Known as the “Import-Export Clause” it expresses -in part- that, “No State shall, without the Consent of the Congress, lay any Imposts or Duties on Imports or Exports, except what may be absolutely necessary for executing its inspection Laws: and the net Produce of all Duties and Imposts, laid by any State on Imports or Exports, shall be for the Use of the Treasury of the United States; and all such Laws shall be subject to the Revision and Control of the Congress.”

Gwinnett County levied the *ad valorem* on all of Michelin’s inventory because the internationally delivered tires were co-mingled with existing domestic stock in the local warehouse. Michelin argued that because they maintained a list of the serial numbers, they were tracking which tires qualified for the exemption or not. The crux of the conflict was in the semantics of determining at what point is an imported good no longer categorized as such.

⁶² Supreme Court of the United States, "C. Adolf Low et al. v. Alexander Austin," *The American Law Register (1852-1891)* 20, no. 6 New Series Volume 11 (Jun., 1872), 366.

⁶³ US Constitution, art 1, sec. 10, cl 2

Clearly, Gwinnett County argued that Michelin's inventory of "unpackaged tires...sorted, segregated by size and style, and commingled with other shipments had lost their status as imports and were subject to taxation."⁶⁴ The company disagreed with this assessment and sought adjudication from the courts.

Filing with the Gwinnett County District Court, Michelin found a favorable decision that "the automobile and truck tires in plaintiff's inventory are imports and until they have been sold are not subject to any *ad valorem* tax that may be levied against them by Gwinnett County."⁶⁵ With all expectations, the county appealed to the Georgia State Supreme Court. There, the county obtained a favorable decision based on Chief Justice Marshall's opinion regarding the original form or package as it relates to the Import-Export Clause. The Georgia State Supreme Court did not set aside the 1872 decision so much as determine that all but the unopened tubes no longer retained their original packaging and were therefore subject to the *ad valorem*.

Dissatisfied with this ruling, Michelin petitioned the United States Supreme Court for *writ of certiorari*. Argued in 1975 and decided on January 14, 1976, "The Supreme Court affirmed the judgment of the state supreme court, which held that the importer's tires were being held for sale and were thus subject to the county's *ad valorem* tax"⁶⁶ predicated on the following circumstances:

The Michelin Tire Corporation, a New York subsidiary of its French parent, operated as an importer and wholesale distributor in the United States of automobile and truck tires and tubes manufactured in France and Canada. Michelin operated distribution warehouses for its products in various parts of the country. One such warehouse was located in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Imported tires and tubes were shipped to this warehouse in two ways. Approximately 75 percent, including all those imported from France, were transported in sea vans, which are over-the-road trailers with removable

⁶⁴ Walter Hellerstein, "Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports," *The Supreme Court Review 1976* (1976): 106.

⁶⁵ Walter Hellerstein, "Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports," *The Supreme Court Review 1976* (1976): 106.

⁶⁶ Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages, Tax Commissioner, et al., 423 U.S. 276 (1976)

wheels. The vans were packed and sealed at the foreign factory, hauled to a port where the wheels were removed, and loaded on ships bound for the United States. At the port of entry, the vans were unloaded, their wheels were replaced, and they were hauled to the Gwinnett County warehouse, usually arriving within a week. The remaining 25 percent of the tires and tubes were transported from Canada in over-the-road trailers. They were packed and sealed at the Canadian factory and delivered directly to the Gwinnett County warehouse. Michelin owned none of the sea vans or trailers in question and there was no intermediate distribution point for any of the shipment.⁶⁷

Because this was a case calling a constitutional question, the United States Supreme Court heard it under a Writ of Error to the Supreme Court of the State of California. Justice Stephen Field delivered the court's opinion.

"The power and the restriction on it, though quite distinguishable when they do not approach each other, may yet, like the intervening colors between white and black, approach so nearly as to perplex the understanding, as colors perplex the vision in marking the distinction between them. Yet the distinction exists, and must be marked as the cases arise. Till they do arise, it might be premature to state any rule as being universal in its application. It is sufficient for the present to say generally that when the importer has so acted upon the thing imported that it has become incorporated and mixed up with the mass of property in the country, it has perhaps lost its distinctive character as an import and has become subject to the taxing power of the state, but while remaining the property of the importer in his warehouse in the original form or package in which it was imported, a tax upon it is too plainly a duty on imports to escape the prohibition in the Constitution."⁶⁸

The Justices found that the California State Supreme Court was in error and reversed a 104 years ruling for a separate status for imports into the country. The case, *Michelin Tire Corp v. Wages, Tax Commissioner, et al.* overturned that decision.

The Supreme Court decided in favor of Gwinnett County. However, the decision was less about the validity of the goods' import transference status than about the revenue definition. In his opinion, Justice Brennan stated that, "Georgia's assessment of a nondiscriminatory *ad valorem* property tax against the imported tires is not within the constitutional prohibition against

⁶⁷ Walter Hellerstein, "Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports," *The Supreme Court Review* 1976 (1976): 101.

⁶⁸ Supreme Court of the United States, "C. Adolf Low et al. v. Alexander Austin," *The American Law Register (1852-1891)* 20, no. 6 New Series Volume 11 (Jun., 1872), 366.

the 'laying [of] any Imposts or Duties on Imports'".⁶⁹ Since the nondiscriminatory *ad valorem* tax was not within the constitutional prohibition, *Low v. Austin* was wrongly decided and duly overturned. The Georgia State Supreme Court was upheld.

Furthermore, Justice Brennan employed an originalist point of view when he wrote how the Marshall Court had misinterpreted the framers' intent in three specific areas. First, he felt that for commercial relations with foreign states, they needed the Federal Government to speak with one voice. To do otherwise could jeopardize any foreign relations. Secondly, the framers were concerned that the Federal Government's revenues derived from the import levies and the states should not glean from that income stream. Finally, "harmony among the States might be disturbed unless seaboard States, with their crucial ports of entry, were prohibited from levying taxes on citizens of other States by taxing goods merely flowing through their ports to the inland States not situated as favorably geographically."⁷⁰ Reconciling the decision was a matter of determining that Gwinnett County's right to levy the *ad valorem* tax imports did not adversely affect the federal coffers.

Because the global definition of trade has changed since the Constitution's inception, both sides of the impending case were interested in adjudicating a decision to resolve several issues still in question. Chief among them is at what point does an import cease being an import? Gwinnett County challenged the Import-Export Clause as a local statute. What was once exclusively a federal trade policy was now suburban. The U.S. Supreme Court returned levies to local municipalities. Effectively, they desired to return to the original interpretation of the

⁶⁹ Walter Hellerstein, "Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports," *The Supreme Court Review 1976* (1976): 106-7.

⁷⁰ Walter Hellerstein, "Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports," *The Supreme Court Review 1976* (1976): 107-8.

Constitution and allow the local municipalities and state governments to assess the tax. Michelin claimed that since the goods were imported, they deserve the forbearance.

Gwinnett County began the 1970s with the mind to attract businesses at the expense of taxing stored goods. Unlike Michelin Tire, Western Electric received a Freeport “exemption for raw materials and goods in process, [as well as] finished goods held by manufacturers” within the county borders.⁷¹ The successful implementation of the freeport policy attracted enough industries that by the end of the decade Gwinnett County accounted “for 70 percent of the location of warehouse-distribution facilities of Metro Atlanta.”⁷²

While the Michelin Tire case favored Gwinnett County, the decision opened a variety of complicated questions in regards to import and transport. When the county presented its case, the Supreme Court sidestepped what constitutes an ‘original package.’ In a concurring opinion, Justice White pondered that if “none of the parties has challenged that case here, and the issue of its overruling has not been briefed or argued,” why was *Low v. Austin* overturned?⁷³

Prior to Gwinnett County’s rather brash re-interpretation of the 104 year old Import-Export Clause, no other local government attempted to levy a non-discriminatory tax on imports. However, for the Georgia county, the timing for this action sprung from a series of dedicated policies intended to grow the county’s population and infrastructure. Chief among them is to never default on their fiduciary responsibilities. To that end, they were willing to address long-standing statutes and laws in an effort meet their debt obligations. Michelin Tire Corp became an unwitting cog in the machine that was Gwinnett County in the 1970s.

⁷¹ Walter Hellerstein, “Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports,” *The Supreme Court Review 1976* (1976): 208.

⁷² Walter Hellerstein, “Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports,” *The Supreme Court Review 1976* (1976): 208.

⁷³ Walter Hellerstein, “Michelin Tire Corp. v. Wages: Enhanced State Power to Tax Imports,” *The Supreme Court Review 1976* (1976): 100.

The commissioners were not only focused on commercial policies. Families who were to move into Gwinnett County needed housing. However, in the early 1970s the county's water system incomplete. In 1972, the board had to either reject or table proposals for five subdivisions because of an inadequate water supply. One application was for fifty homes on a twenty-six acre tract near Dacula. They proposed to build homes worth between \$14,000 and \$16,000 and were marketing to annual incomes of \$5,000 to \$8,000.⁷⁴ In 2015, the figures translate to housing values between \$80,000 and \$91,000 and incomes of \$28,500 to \$45,500. Another application, for the Grayson area, had asked to rezone a forty acre tract for single family housing. Julian Archer, a District Commissioner, pointed out that it had to be tabled for six months because "I can't see punishing the people we are going to bring in here and punishing the people already there."⁷⁵ Another District Commissioner, Cravis P. Williams, had a harsher assessment of the situation. "Due to the overloading of our schools and until we get our water system straightened out, I recommend we disapprove these."⁷⁶ The commissioners were fully aware that the delays would cost Gwinnett County revenues from property, sales, and income taxes. They wanted to build the housing necessary to bring in families, but no water was a health hazard.

It should be noted that Wayne Mason was a developer and building subdivisions was his specialty. Through the years, there have been accusations that he was on the board of commissioners to institute favorable policies and that his efforts were a conflict of interest. It certainly looked like that. Amplifying the criticism was the fact that Wayne Mason was autocratic and a prickly personality. But, as Brack explained in an interview, he was the right man for the job at the time. Being a native to Gwinnett County, he what had been its reputation.

⁷⁴ Bill MacNabb, "Gwinnett Turns Down Housing" *The Atlanta Constitution*, (Atlanta, Aug., 23, 1974).

⁷⁵ Bill MacNabb, "Gwinnett Turns Down Housing" *The Atlanta Constitution*, (Atlanta, Aug., 23, 1974).

⁷⁶ Bill MacNabb, "Gwinnett Turns Down Housing" *The Atlanta Constitution*, (Atlanta, Aug., 23, 1974).

He had the vision of what Gwinnett County could be and the business acumen to effect policies to achieve it.⁷⁷

This autocratic, visionary attitude was not restricted to a Gwinnett County Commissioner. Twenty-five years earlier, three developers on Long Island, New York. During WWII, Levitt & Sons, father Abraham and his two sons, William and Alfred, perfected a system to build homes. By 1949, they applied this system to quickly construct houses and develop neighborhoods in New York and Pennsylvania. What and how they built homes would nationally reverberate for decades. These home builders not only assembled four thousand homogeneous homes a year, they forged a deliberate aesthetic for suburban living. Their work in housing construction and neighborhood development was so influential for suburban growth that Kenneth Jackson, a foremost suburban historian, credits this family with having “the greatest impact on postwar housing in the United States.”⁷⁸

United States suburbanization began its ascension because of dearth of housing. The influx of World War II veterans found that the sequential dual events, The Great Depression and World War II, had left short supply of housing. Nationally, the years 1930-1944 (inclusive), saw builders average only around 100,000 new homes per year. The shortage was exasperated by the significant marriage and birthrate spike from the celebrations of a safe return to a civilian life. That baby boom would have reverberating effects in the following years but the immediate need was shelter for the veterans and their families. By 1947, 500,000 families were living in temporary housing, while nearly 6,000,000 shared living space with relatives.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Elliot Brack (journalist for Atlanta Constitution, Gwinnett Daily Post, Gwinnett Daily, and GwinnettForum) in discussion with the author, Nov., 2014.

⁷⁸ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 234.

⁷⁹ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 231-232.

To illustrate the intense housing need, in Los Angeles, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) announced that it would distribute 1,000 housing permits on the morning of Monday, May 21, 1945. An event that emulated a contemporary Black Friday queue formed during the entire weekend prior to the FHA accepting applications. With federal restrictions on the permits, both individual families (allowed one each) and housing developers (allowed up to 25 each) appeared in the line. The only caveats for these houses was that construction had to begin immediately and that it could not exceed a cost of \$7,000. Accounting for inflation, the 2015 value of that amount is \$92,534. Otherwise, there were no other restrictions such as zoning or design.

The news of this possible new housing, either for families or developers to building eager to build, prompted hundreds of people to camp on the sidewalk of Main and 9th Streets in Los Angeles. From early Friday morning, professional builders hired detectives -presumably because they were trained men and willing to withstand threats- to stand in for them in eight hour shifts at \$30 (equivalent to \$397 in 2015's value) per hour. One participant, Jack J. Tilley, was fourth in line to represent Jacmar Home Builders. On Saturday evening, a desperate individual offered Tilley \$2,000 (being \$26,438 in 2015's value) for his spot. He refused. Other people, off duty policemen, wives, and children stood in the stead of individual families and building contractors all weekend. Tempers flared when the rumors abounded that that front was loaded with developers and they would procure all of the permits. After the police were called, the FHA officials had to appear on the sidewalk to assure every one of the 450 waiting hopefuls would get an interview. Furthermore, the individual home builder would be given first consideration. The

first individual home builder to receive an interview was E. H. Baller, a man who arrived on Saturday morning and stood 20th in line.⁸⁰

Just as the builders in Los Angeles were identifying profitability predicated on a housing need, so were the Levitts in New York. In 1949, Levitt & Sons were expected to turn a profit of over \$2 million. Accounting for inflation, in 2015's value, that would be the equivalent to \$20 million. Their success to construct houses wholesale, in a matter of weeks, attracted the attention of *Architectural Forum*. Featured in their April, 1949 issue, the wordy heading read, "4,000 Houses per Year. Levitt & Sons demonstrate the economies of the big builder's management, purchasing, and production know-how. 1949 models feature modern design, packaged sales appeal, and prices with deft competition."⁸¹

Their technique to build homes echoed Henry Ford's approach to production. *Forum* explained that the Levitts construction model is best described as vertical integration. A "recipe for a mass produced house: capital, machinery, and intelligent management" kept the entire process in-house and meted out materials, craftsmen, and finished components as needed.⁸² Men who specialized in a particular job would do only that job on each house. Each part of the construction process was planned, organized, and executed with surgical precision. The walls were framed on the ground and raised into position rather than building the wall on the sole plate. This saves on materials and time, which added to the profit margin.

As for the houses, they were a simple design. Each eight hundred square foot home sold for \$7,900 (\$78,946 in 2015 values). They had a twelve by sixteen foot living room that anchored the public spaces in the back of the house. The room sported a picture window

⁸⁰ Henry R. Luce. 1945. "Rush for Houses: Los Angeles Home Builders Stand in Line for Three Days for FHA Permits" *Life*, June 4.

⁸¹ Doug Haskell. 1949. "4,000 Houses per Year" *Architectural Forum*, April.

⁸² Doug Haskell. 1949. "4,000 Houses per Year" *Architectural Forum*, April.

overlooking the backyard of the house as well as featuring a cozy fireplace. At the front of the house was a kitchen replete with modern appliances. It also had a larger window facing the front yard for the woman's convenience to watch her children. Two bedrooms and a single bath completed the house plan. There was a staircase that lead to an unfinished attic that was ready for the homeowner to finish it if desired. Even the landscaping was included in the house design. While not innovative in design, the homes were mass produced and therefore affordable for the middle class family.

Finally, the Levitts required all homeowners to sign a covenant that became a predecessor to the contemporary Home Owner's Associations (HOA). This type of contract bound residents to a common aesthetic that served as a model for future subdivisions. Residents who did not adhere to the property maintenance schedule and doctrines were assessed fines. Among the items were that the grass had to be cut and weeds pulled every week between April fifteen and November fifteen. Absolutely no fences -organic or static- were allowed. Parents were warned to keep their children, particularly boys, from playing on the grass or riding his bike through the plantings. Not noted in the contract but known in Levittown was that Abraham Levitt threatened to take away any boy's bicycle who rode through the plants. His autocratic edict was predicated on his personal declaration that he since he raised two boys and had five grandchildren -none of whom would consider throwing trash on the ground- he was in a position to expect the same in the residents. Levitt enlightened the residents that training was the key to discipline.

As strict as the covenant was, there was an egregious clause that promoted the family's racial bias. "THE TENANT AGREES NOT TO PERMIT THE PREMISES TO BE USED OR OCCUPIED BY ANY PERSON OTHER THAN MEMBERS OF THE CAUCASIAN RACE

[sic].”⁸³ In 1948, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that while privately owned racial restrictive covenants that were not unconstitutional, enforcing racially them was.⁸⁴ Because the court left a useful loophole, Abraham Levitt simply removed the offending statement and continued with his racist tenet. He continued to accept only white, married family men.

David Kushner, in his book about the Levitts and their suburbs, traced one African American family, Bill and Daisy Meyers’, harrowing experiences of living in the Philadelphia Levittown. Bill Meyers was an engineer and his wife, Daisy, was an administrator. The housing race restrictions were still enforced when, in 1950, they looked for house to raise their children. However, the Levitts relied on local culture and practices to prevent any family of color to purchase a home in their neighborhoods. In a practice known as “racial steering” real estate agents would refuse to show or rent any white neighborhood homes to blacks. The Meyers, having spent their entire lives fighting the race barrier, finally found an agent who was willing to sell them a house in Levittown. Other races following through the years, but the struggle was real -and some cases- dangerous.

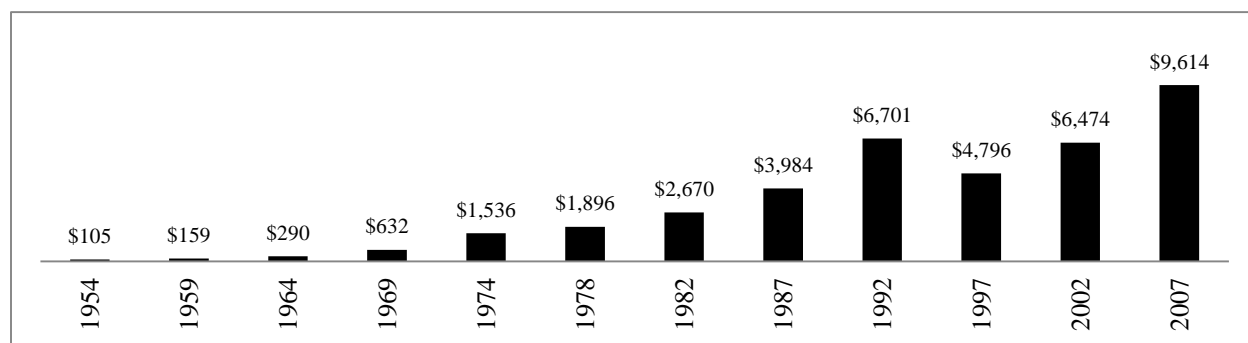


Table 5 Average Gwinnett County Land Value per Acre
Source: U.S. Agriculture Census

⁸³ David Kushner, *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, Inc., 2009), 43.

⁸⁴ The Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, “Historical Shift from Explicit to Implicit Policies Affecting Housing Segregation in Eastern Massachusetts.” BostonFairHousing.org. Accessed Oct. 15, 2015. <http://www.bostonfairhousing.org/timeline/1948-1968-Unenforceable-Restrictive-Covenants.html>

Race in Gwinnett County was still predominately white in its ascending years, which was likely a reason that it first attracted families. As Kruse traces, Atlanta parents were upset that their children were mingling with blacks in the parks, playgrounds, and swimming pools. Regardless of the city’s famous motto, “Too Big to Hate,” integration was a slow process. By the time that Gwinnett County began to modernize, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was law. That did not mean that anyone immediately dropped their cultural and personal mores because of the law, it did mean that people of color could leverage the courts to affect changes. One way that whites could prevent integration was to move.

Gwinnett County became a favorite relocation destination. Use of the authorities finally gleaned the commissioners enough resources to finish the water system by the 1980s. Land was still inexpensive. Table five traces Gwinnett County’s land value from 1954 to 2007. Economic theory holds that as a commodity is in greater demand and is less plentiful, the market demands a higher price. Table six demonstrates the number of permits Gwinnett County Planning and Development Zoning issued from 1973 to 2008.

The highest peak occurred with the opening of the Gwinnett Place Mall on February 1, 1984. Two other malls, the Mall of Georgia on August 13, 1999, and on November 2, 2001 the

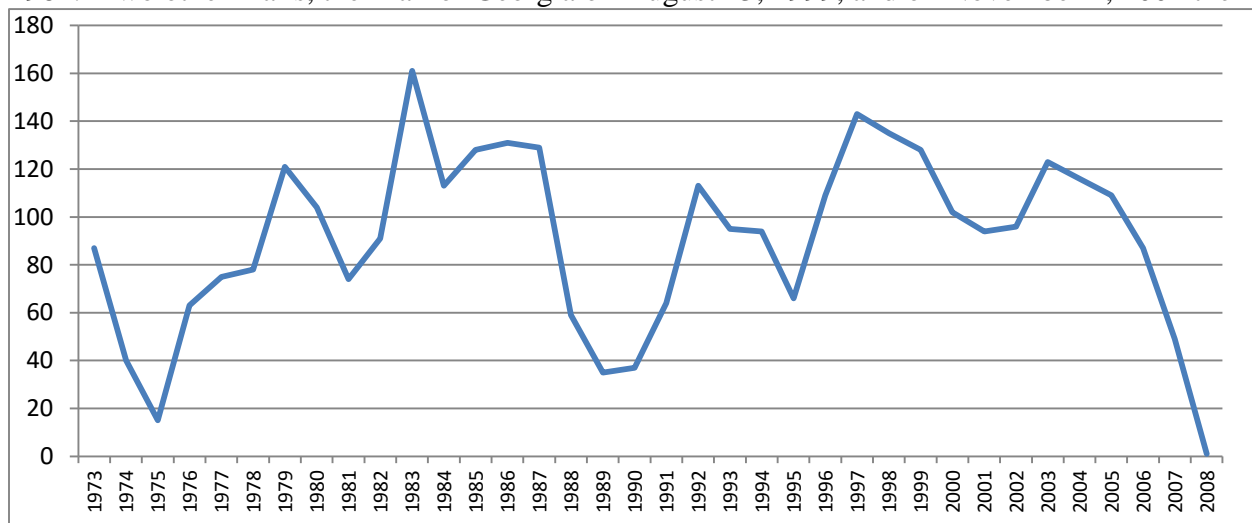


Table 6 Gwinnett County Subdivision Residential Housing Permits 1973-2008
Source: Gwinnett County Planning and Development Zoning

Discover Mills Mall (now Sugarloaf Mills Mall) also had an impact on housing. To show that the relationship between the malls' construction and the housing spikes, a statistical model was produced. For the regression, a lag of five years (one prior to opening and four after) was applied because the permits' spike. When an annual coefficient of 1983 is multiplied with the fifteen years of mall building activity, the result is a 4% significance to building permits.⁸⁵ Results of the regression model clearly shows that there was a significant relationship. Without the three malls, it is likely the growth might have slowed earlier than it did.

As Gwinnett County grew, the commissioners redirected their attention to instituting policies that managed growth rather than focusing on attracting growth. This period coincides with the strengthening suburban conservative movement that demanded accommodations for their children, aside from education concerns. Since Gwinnett County was growing so rapidly, it became a metropolitan leader for family considerations. In 1984, the Board of Commissioners were Republican for the first time. In the 1994 Newt Gingrich "Republican Revolution" under the motto of "Contract with America," Gwinnett County sent its first conservative Representative for District 7 to Congress. Bob Barr served 1995-2003, followed by John Linder 2003-2011, and the present Congressman is Rob Woodall.

Conservative leaders preferred that the mother remained home, the reality was that not all could -or would. As early as 1972, the Gwinnett County commissioners recognized that child care needed strict regulations. They approved an ordinance that prevented commercial and private day care centers from being located in dense residential areas. Furthermore, they required that there be three hundred square feet of play area per child. The board of five men debated whether to allow a neighborhood parent be allowed to watch children. If so, what would be the

⁸⁵ The Regression Model is available in the Appendix.

maximum number allowed, five or two? They decided that day care centers that have more than five children must be located on commercial zoned property.⁸⁶ When a spokesman complained about the land required per child because of rising land costs, Ray Gunnin responded, “I’d suggest that they go to California.”⁸⁷ (California only required one hundred square feet per child.) Finally, the commissioners recommended that day care centers must meet all state and Gwinnett County health regulations.⁸⁸ This sanction was not included in the formal vote.

Gwinnett County’s ascension to a modern suburb was founded in its rural history. Choosing to eschew the lawlessness, the commissioners selected a Police Chief who led the department into a respected force. Applying for federal grants to abate water issues got Gwinnett County noticed by the Agricultural Resource Development and Conservation program. Together with the county leaders, the RD&C plan for Gwinnett County transformed the cheap, rural, land into a modern suburb. It connected the scattered farms and municipalities through an infrastructure of roads, water mains, and sewage lines. Visionary leaders that included engineer Ray Gunnin, whom Brack called a “social thinker,” government expert Wayne Shackelford, and builder Wayne Mason formed a powerful coalition to develop Gwinnett County. They funded the necessary infrastructure through innovative tax policies that attracted companies to locate in the county. As the county grew in population and political power, they successfully overturned a 104 year old international trade policy. Finally, the Levitt inspired subdivisions began to appear. Families settled into the county, prepared to live a life of segregated harmony.

⁸⁶ Gregory Jaynes, “Day Care Rules Voted in Gwinnett,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, (Atlanta, Dec. 20, 1972).

⁸⁷ Gregory Jaynes, “Day Care Rules Voted in Gwinnett,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, (Atlanta, Dec. 20, 1972).

⁸⁸ Bill MacNabb, “Gwinnett Day Care Zoning Proposal Would be U.S.’s Toughest,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, (Atlanta, Dec. 18, 1972).

However, as federal and banking policies began to allow home loans for people other than white men, Gwinnett County's population diversified in the 1990s and 2000s. More families of color began to move into Gwinnett County, seeking the same values espoused by the conservative movement. Those changes are reflected in the next chapter on education.

The last, and arguably the most important policy for families, was education. It was a major point in Wayne Mason's argument that Gwinnett County needed to draw commercial interests so that they could pay for a good school system. As the Vegas stated, their primary concern was for a good school district. In Gwinnett County, the school system became the greatest reason that families moved into the county. Local and state politicians responded to the needs for a strong education system. Their success grew Gwinnett County.

Hooked on Education

Since the 1950s, "White Flight" had people moving out of Atlanta and into the surrounding counties. The Atlanta schools began to receive transfer requests out of integrated schools because "The rights to equal education are inseparably connected with rights to freedom...to associate with whom one pleases and the right not to associate with whom one pleases."⁸⁹ In the 1960s and early 1970s, the African Americans also left to raise their children in a better neighborhood. Distraught with the African Americans mingling with their children in the schools again, the white families moved out further. A narrative that was repeated in an article about the urban schools population decline when the Atlanta Board of Education reported that

⁸⁹ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) 161.

their enrollment dropped by 5,000 students in 1974.⁹⁰ Conversely, Gwinnett County expected to enroll about 2,000 students and hire over ninety teachers the same year.⁹¹

Education has been the main factor in Gwinnett County's growth. Beginning as way to maintain segregation, the schools were on par with the surrounding districts. However, in the mid-1970s, the Superintendent, Alton Crews forged a curriculum that improved the district above the others. This attracted the attention of families to move into the county. In the mid-1980s, the next person to hold the office, Alvin Wilbanks superseded his predecessor's successes and won national acclaim for the Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) for excellence and diversity. Previous to his time as the Superintendent, Wilbanks formed an alliance that built the county's first institution of higher learning, Gwinnett Technical College. In a symbiotic relationship, its mandate was to support the technological companies that were moving into the county partially for access to skilled people. Finally, a third coalition succeeded in opening a four-year institution, Georgia Gwinnett College in 2005. While it is too soon to quantify whether this institution has had an effect on population growth, the diversity of the student and faculty there are symbolic of Gwinnett County's changes.

During the tumultuous years of the early 1960s white leaders extolled the virtues of desegregation while Blacks pushed through an agenda to break the egregious Jim Crow laws and customs. Education was both a volatile ground and understood to be of utmost importance. Black leaders recognized that inadequate education denies lucrative employment opportunities. In 1963, Roy Wilkins, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Executive Secretary, implored that the only way a "the Negro can help [himself is] through dedication to the task of self-improvement, as well as through judicious use of his

⁹⁰ Mark Berman, "City Schools Lose 5,000" *The Atlanta Constitution*, (Atlanta, Aug., 23, 1974), 10A.

⁹¹ Mark Berman, "City Schools Lose 5,000" (*The Atlanta Constitution*, Atlanta, Aug., 23, 1974), 10A.

political and economic power.”⁹² His words published in the periodical, *Ebony*, whose demographic was primarily the African American community, were at once hopeful and uncertain. Nearly a year before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Wilkens’ article questioned the process of desegregation while insisting that equality would be a slow, attainable goal. Any hopes for whites to maintain school segregation were quashed by the United States Supreme Court 1971 ruling of *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*. It held that busing school children was an appropriate remedy for integration. Families in Gwinnett County, being so far from Atlanta, were not concerned about integrating their children. While upsetting to the whites, it set in motion a series of social changes that eventually diversified Gwinnett County.

The Gwinnett County schools during the early phases of suburbanization concentrated around the established municipalities along the existing train lines. Lawrenceville, Dacula, Buford, Snellville, and Norcross contained the clusters associated with Berkmar, Central Gwinnett (then Lawrenceville), Dacula, Duluth, Norcross, North Gwinnett, and South Gwinnett high schools. Each cluster comprises of a high school, one or more middle school(s), and two or more elementary schools. This form of neighborhood schools solidifies the idea of a node, an identity born in a “hegemonic tradition.”⁹³ While the residents of each cluster rally around each node, i.e., the Dacula Hawks or the Lawrenceville Knights, they become subsumed for a common identity outside of the county’s borders. Outside of the county residents answer, “I live in Gwinnett.” However, within the county they identify their location by the clusters in which

⁹² Roy Wilkins, “After Desegregation, What Next?” *Ebony*, September, 1963.

⁹³ Harvey Molotch, William Fredenburg, and Krista E. Paulsen, “History Repeats Itself, But How? City Character, Urban Tradition, and the Accomplishment of Place,” *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 6, (Dec., 2000): 791.

they live. The individual school clusters maintain a sense of place within and while the collective GCPS dominates outside the borders.

With the clusters locating people's identity, so does the success of the associated schools. Included in that measure is academic success. Of course there are no cheerleaders extoling the virtues of a social science program in a rhythmic cadence before an excited audience. That booster role belongs to the real estate industry and education system. Real estate listings highlighted the school cluster that the children attend in an effort to the sell an area as well as a house. One of the largest -and nationally recognized- methods of the measuring school accomplishments is through the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). While Gwinnett County's 1978 scores were above Georgia and Atlanta, they fell far below the national mean. More importantly, they were below Cobb, DeKalb, and Fulton counties scores, which would not translate to growth.⁹⁴

The Gwinnett County Board of Education (BoE) proposed beefing up their curriculum. To combat the problem, Alton Crews, the GCPS Superintendent during 1977-89, reasoned that, "The basics have been inundated in a flood of other activities" because alternative courses offerings diluted the traditional offerings of literature.⁹⁵ To improve the education system, Crews decided to return to basics, which required a thorough internal evaluation. Upset at the high school array of alternative curriculum offerings that included courses on witchcraft and cartoon illustrations. In 1978, Crews directed the schools to offer less electives and focus on core courses of mathematics and grammar. Rather than offering more classes during the day, which diluted

⁹⁴ Emma Edmonds and Tyrone Terry, "Educators Giving Tests by the Score, But Parents Don't Always See Results" (The Atlanta Constitution, Atlanta, Apr., 22, 1979), 17B.

⁹⁵ Emma Edmonds and Tyrone Terry, "If You Were a Student Today" (The Atlanta Constitution, Atlanta, Apr., 22, 1979), 1B.

the students' attention, there would be fewer classes for a longer period. The attendance would remain between 6.5 and 7 hours, there would simply be one or two fewer classes.

Crews had quantitative proof. The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores were declining and his focus was to have the graduating seniors well prepared for college.⁹⁶ In 1980, Gwinnett County students' SAT scores were improving already as they edged closer to Fulton, DeKalb, and Cobb counties. By the mid-1980s, Gwinnett County's scores either met or surpassed the rival county scores and have remained there ever since. In 2005, Gwinnett County posted its highest scores ever.⁹⁷

With a view that a having the community involve will strengthen the education experience for the students, Crews and the BoE invited the public into the proceedings to offer a legitimate voice in the education program development.⁹⁸ The community extended beyond the families, so Crews reached out to the local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce asking them what they needed from the county's high school graduates. The business community responded with a list of attributes they deemed necessary for an employee to succeed with their company. An ability to read, do critical thinking, and perform basic arithmetic were on the list.⁹⁹

Another clear indication that the county's education system was beginning to experience growth involved finances. Predominately white, educated, middle class families continued to relocate into the county that strained the physical resources as "the student population was

⁹⁶ Emma Edmonds and Tyrone Terry, "If You Were a Student Today" (The Atlanta Constitution, Atlanta, Apr., 22, 1979), 1B.

⁹⁷ Laura Diamond. "County posts it best SATs ever Gwinnett students outperform state, national averages" (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Atlanta, Aug., 31, 2005), XJ1. See Table 3 for a comparison between Gwinnett County and the state's scores.

⁹⁸ Emma Edmonds and Tyrone Terry, "Some Bright Spots Appear In Turmoil Over Education" (The Atlanta Constitution, Atlanta, Apr., 30, 1979), 1B.

⁹⁹ Emma Edmonds and Jerry Schwartz, "Gwinnett Dares to Tackle New Schooling Ideas" (The Atlanta Constitution, Atlanta, Apr., 24, 1979), 1B.

growing by a classroom a day.”¹⁰⁰ Crews recommended a \$128.8 million budget for the 1984-5 school year and asked the board to approve a ten percent teachers’ raise paid through a 3.4 percent property tax hike. He predicted that the education system would require another bond every three years for a decade. The latter half of the 1980s proved him to be terribly shy of the real growth that was about to occur in Gwinnett County aided -in part- by the realtors who seized upon the nationally quantified improvements in test scores to sell more houses. By 1998 the schools system had to take out loans, unsecured by the bonds, to maintain its constant construction.¹⁰¹

Other quantifying methods of academic achievement were the state mandated Gateway tests. GCPS solely implement these standardized tests.”¹⁰² The educators administered the “high stakes test” to the fourth, seventh, and tenth grades to ensure that the students were learning the material and were not being “socially promoted.”¹⁰³ The A+ Education Reform Act of 2000, instituted the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT). It required “that all students in grades one through eight take the CRCT in the content areas of reading, English/language arts, and mathematics. Students in grades three through eight are also assessed in science and social studies.”¹⁰⁴ The program retired in 2013-4 school year for the Georgia Milestone Assessment System. The first year of this assessment, Gwinnett County passed with great marks, another

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Diane R. Stepp. "Counties turn to borrowing for schools Cash needed: Cobb and Gwinnett systems take loans to maintain constant construction." (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Jan. 12, 1998): C1.

¹⁰² Sophia Lezin Jones. "Gwinnett schools map guidelines for Gateway tests." (The Atlanta Journal, Nov. 10, 1999), H6.

¹⁰³ Sophia Lezin Jones. "new test raises stakes in Gwinnett Yardstick: Gateway exam will be the sole measure used for rising 4th-, 7th-, 10th-graders." (The Atlanta Journal the Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 10, 1999), G1.

¹⁰⁴ Georgia Department of Education. Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT). Accessed Feb. 11, 2015.

sign of the focus on a premiere education system. One hundred twenty-seven schools scored a “3” on a scale of five. Only six earned a “2,” while twenty earned a perfect “5.”¹⁰⁵

The assessments provide a data-driven understanding of the schools’ growth and success. The physical plant offers a visual assessment. After thousands of students streamed into the district, the schools had to contract the use of trailers to serve as classrooms to augment the overflow of students. In the 2002-3 school year, fifteen schools were under construction and the forecast was that many of the temporary classrooms were becoming permanent. Bonds could not keep up with the need for more buildings and infrastructure.¹⁰⁶

GCPS had to find funds to purchase more land and build new schools. In 1990, there were 59 schools, nearly doubling from the twenty-nine in 1975 and a 438 percent increase from the eleven schools at beginning of the growth in 1960.¹⁰⁷ Georgia had instituted a new local tax to alleviate the pressure from the state coffers. The Special Purpose Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)

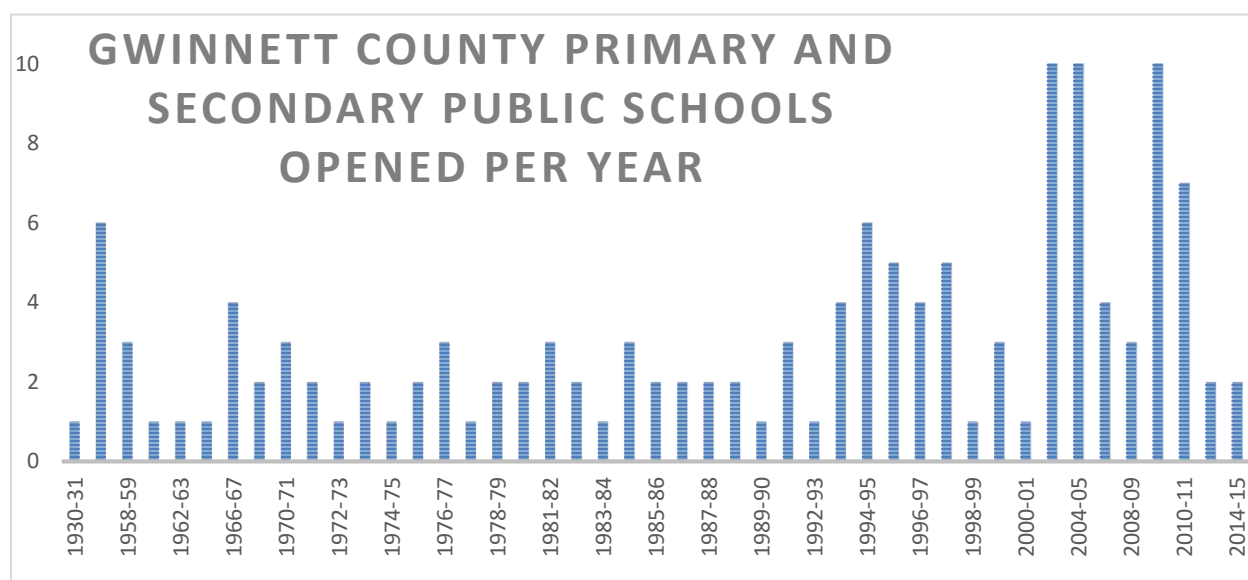


Table 7 Gwinnett County Primary and Secondary Schools Opened per Year
Source: Gwinnett County Schools Office of Research and Evaluation

¹⁰⁵ Keith Farnar. “Gwinnett schools fare well in new statewide rating system,” (Gwinnett Daily Post, Mar. 17, 2015) Accessed Mar. 11, 2015. <http://www.gwinnettdaily.com/news/2015/mar/17/gwinnett-schools-fare-well-in-new-statewide/>

¹⁰⁶ Aileen D. Dodd. "Gwinnett's Classroom Crunch: County schools may never outpace need for portables." (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Dec. 1, 2002): A1.

¹⁰⁷ Gwinnett County Schools Office of Research and Evaluation See Table 7.

was a one penny raise on sales tax (excluding groceries) for the general use of each county. The voters approved the tax hike eight of nine ballots from October 1985 to April 2014. From the point of instituting the tax to March, 2014, Gwinnett County collected \$2,841,100.00 with another projected \$485 million until March, 2017.¹⁰⁸

Since the program worked so well, the state then granted the school boards the right to place an E-SPLOST on the ballot for funds specifically and exclusively for education purposes. In the four times the referenda appeared, the voters have supported the second one penny hike. The current projected income for the 2014-9 E-SPLOST is \$876 million. Because of this program, all construction, maintenance, technology procurements, schools security, and renovations were funded by this stream of revenue. Because they can repay the short-term bonds quickly, the GCPS enjoys an AAA bond rating, one of only twelve school systems in the country. The balance of the school system's financial obligations, i.e., payroll, supplies, transportation, and programs, stem from traditional property taxes. The more people in the county, the more houses and the higher the revenues for the schools to ensure that a strong education system continues.

SPLOST (Special Option Sales Tax)	
Tax Period	Revenues (in Millions) Collected
Oct. 1985-Sep. 1987	\$65.7
Apr. 1988-Mar. 1992	\$162.7
Apr. 1992-Mar. 1996	\$249.1
November 1996	0
Apr. 1997-Mar. 2001	\$414.8
Apr. 2001-Mar. 2005	\$496.1
Apr. 2005-Mar. 2009	\$851.5
Apr. 2009-Mar. 2014	\$601.2
Apr. 2014-Mar. 2017	\$498 (forecasted)

Table 8 SPLOST (Special Option Sales Tax)
Source: Gwinnett County Department of Revenue

The Broad Prize offered school officials another promising revenue stream. This organization offers an annual competition for a one million prize to offset scholarships to “large school districts that show the greatest academic performance and improvement while reducing achievement

¹⁰⁸ Gwinnett County Government. Gwinnett County Department of Revenue. See Table 8.

gaps among poor and minority students.”¹⁰⁹ GCPS is the only district to win twice, once in 2010, alone, and again in 2014 with Orange County Public Schools in Florida for a total of \$1.75 million. Gwinnett County was also a finalist in 2009.

Since a major component for winning the Broad Prize is proof of diversity, the fact that Gwinnett County won -twice- proves that the students are no longer from a majority white, middle class, educated families. Once a decidedly white community, the county now attracts people from many nations. In 2002, 15% of the GCPS students did not speak English as a first language. The percentages of the varying languages were: Indian 2.9%, Chinese 2.4%, European languages 2.2%, Russian 1.8%, Vietnamese 7.1%, Korean 8.1%, Spanish 51.4%, and others were 24.1%.¹¹⁰ From 2004 to 2013, the white enrolled students in dropped from fifty percent to 29%. These statistics quantitatively counters a narrative that suburbs remained a humongous society. Gwinnett County started as a haven for whites to prevent mingling with other peoples, but since the 1990s, the argument no longer holds.¹¹¹ In general, the white population has dropped to a majority minority today. The 2010 census shows that whites are now 53% of the population and the statistics project the rate to continue dropping.¹¹²

Many Businesses moving into the county spurred demand for vocational education. Technology was a focus for the commissioners. Electromagnetic Sciences, firm that facilitated satellite communications, DSi Engineering build with rolled cold steel, and Scientific-Atlanta manufactured satellite dishes and television converter boxes. Many of these companies located in

¹⁰⁹ Broad Prize for Urban Education. Source: <http://www.broadprize.org/>

¹¹⁰ Andrea Jones. “One County, Many Languages: Gwinnett translates change.” (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Mar. 6, 2002): A1. It is important to note that since Gwinnett County’s reputation is lily white, this article appeared on the front page of the newspaper. Therefore, the diversity is significant.

¹¹¹ “2013 School Profile Report: Gwinnett County Schools,” *2014 Georgia School Council Institute*. <http://www.georgiaeducation.org/schoolprofile.jsp?ORGNUM=010076670000>

¹¹² United States Census Bureau. <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>. Also see Table 2 in the Appendix.

Norcross' Technology Park or Oakbrook Technology Park. They then required a well-trained workforce to fill industrial positions, i.e., welders, electricians, and mechanics.

Armed with the businesses' needs, Alvin Wilbanks, who was then the Director of Vocational and Technical Education for GCPS, joined a committee with Eugene Younts, the University of Georgia Vice-President for Public Affairs. In 1983, they formed the Needs Assessment Committee to form a consolidated college curriculum. Working closely with David B. Kelley, the Associate Dean of Gainesville Junior College, they addressed the needs of the Gwinnett County Schools and patrons in the following broad categories and general needs of the community. Advanced Placement (AP) courses and joint enrollment opportunities for the gifted and motivated high school students were top of the list. Specific professional courses that included college credit were important. Since trades were specifically mentioned by the industries, vocational technical training that led to earning an associate degree and direct employment. Other needs that were identified were college courses for the general public including research facilities and laboratories for special projects.¹¹³

The committee was comprised of representatives from the Gwinnett schools, administrators from the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, Southern Tech, DeKalb Community College, Gainesville Junior College, and members from the Board of Regents. In a time when online courses did not yet exist, an alternative motive by the University System was to formulate a new state-wide model for a system of higher education that was not constrained to a singular institution. They hoped to harness the success of this program, and offer college

¹¹³ Needs Assessment Committee Notes from the August 5 Meeting, Aug. 18, 1983 Box 1, Folder 10, Eugene Younts Papers Collection, The Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia.

courses in various existing high schools, to “provide a consortium of services to the community.”¹¹⁴

In May of 1984, the committee commissioned a “Survey of College-Level Educational Training Needs Assessment of Gwinnett County.” According to Senator Don Balfour, a State Senator from Gwinnett County’s District 9 during 1992-2014, this was the key to understanding county residents’ higher education needs. The results showed that 47% of the respondents had a high school diploma, 17% a junior college degree, 25% a bachelor’s degree, and 10% a master’s degree. Only 31.5% had lived in Gwinnett County for more than fifteen years. There was a 49% interest in pursuing a university in the county and 33% with some interest. 28% were skilled workers, 13% semi-skilled, and 21% in middle management. The greatest area of interest was for a Business Administration degree at 30%. Computer Science was second with a 10% interest.

One of the final outcomes of the meetings was the understanding that the county required an institution of higher learning. Influenced by local commercial concerns for a trained workforce, Wilbanks decided to open a trade school rather than a four year institution. In 1984 the Gwinnett Area Technical School opened, and he served as the founding president. Four years later the school changed its name to Gwinnett Technical Institute (GTI) and the Technical College System of Georgia granted them the right to offer Associate Degrees of Applied Technology in six programs. The following year it received accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS). GTI was one of the first technical schools and the fastest accreditation process in SACS history to that point. Later, the Georgia A+ Education Reform Act allowed technical institutes to realign their schools as a

¹¹⁴ Denise Nealey, “Panel to Coordinate College” (Gwinnett Daily Post, Lawrenceville, Jun. 19, 1983), Box 1, Folder 10, Eugene Younts Papers Collection, The Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia.

college, which prompted another name change to Gwinnett Technical College (GTC).¹¹⁵ Finally, the University System of Georgia began steps to conscript the college into the state system. Until this point, GTC had remained under the direction of the Gwinnett County Board of Education. The attitude that the schools in Gwinnett belong to Gwinnett governance underscores further the development of a separate identity from Atlanta. However, the idea of relinquishing financial responsibilities to the state convinced the board to transfer the institution to the state. Wilbanks is quoted as saying that, “Each time the council always felt like Gwinnett Tech could better serve the community by remaining under the Gwinnett County Board of Education. The state would like to have all schools under its government structure. They will be getting a plum in Gwinnett Tech.”¹¹⁶

Once commercial interests got their trained workforce they set their sights on a four year college. In 1992, the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce sponsored a survey to see if there was interest in a higher institution of learning. The response was overwhelmingly in favor. Armed with this information, Governor Zell Miller, a well-known advocate for education, called Wayne Hill, who was then the chair of the GCBoc, and after ten minutes informed him that the state would support the creation of a four-year, new college in Gwinnett.¹¹⁷

The Metropolitan Atlanta Planning Council of the University System of Georgia, composed of twelve metropolitan Atlanta university presidents, met to determine the education

¹¹⁵ “Gwinnett Tech History” *Gwinnett Technical College*.
<http://www.gwinnetttech.edu/content.cfm?PageCode=hist>

¹¹⁶ Rick Badie. “Gwinnett Tech may fare better under state.” (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Jul. 12, 2002): C4.

¹¹⁷ Wayne Hill (1993-2005 Chairman of the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners) interview with the author, Dec. 9, 2014.

needs for the next century. Without the availability for public comment, they funded a research group with \$30,000 to determine the support and needs in both Gwinnett County and Roswell.¹¹⁸

However, Gwinnett County, forewarned by Governor Miller, in 1994, the GCBoc, chaired by Wayne Hill, had purchased 182 acres at the corner of State Route 316 (University Highway) and Collins Hill Road for \$5.92 million. Senator Don Balfour, representing District 9 from 1992-2014 in Gwinnett County, related that they then donated the land to the University System of Georgia -with no strings- but with the understanding that it would be used for a potential four-year college.¹¹⁹ Hill said that it was the best way to ensure that the land would still be available and affordable.¹²⁰

By the time of the land purchase, Gwinnett was in the throes of an explosive growth. The New York Times had already proclaimed Gwinnett County to be the fastest growing county, greater than 100,000 people, in the country. It was a fact that prompted Hill to state that one focus of his time on the GCBoc was to slow down the growth. Available and inexpensive land along with an improved school system attracted families to migrate into the county. In an effort to control development, the zoning department's process took two years to sell any land. Not only did it help with control, it allowed for the zoning department to maintain their records under the extensive pressure to improve property.¹²¹

Gwinnett County last gem in the education system was its first four year institution, Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC). Originally stemming from the Chamber of Commerce's survey and its creation supported by Governors Zell Miller and Roy Barnes, the school is the

¹¹⁸ Diane Loupe. "Leaders to help plot course of higher learning Researchers will lead discussion of needs," (The Atlanta Constitution, Aug. 7, 1995): J1.

¹¹⁹ Don Balfour, (1992-2014 State Senator for the 9th District) interview with the author, Feb. 25, 2015.

¹²⁰ Wayne Hill, interview with Katheryn Nikolich.

¹²¹ Wayne Hill, interview with the author.

newest stand-alone institution in Georgia. The land that Hill and Untermann procured had two buildings already constructed that housed Georgia Perimeter College and the last vestiges of the Consolidated College Curriculum. The Georgia Board of Regents appointed a PhD in International Relations, Daniel J. Kaufmann, who was a retired one-star U.S. Army general as the charter school President in September of 2005. He brought along Dr. Stanley “Stas” Preczewski, also a retired U.S. Army officer, as his Vice-President. The third important person in developing the school was Georgia Senator Don Balfour. Aware of the survey and the intent of the University System of Georgia, he ran primarily to form the new four-year college in Gwinnett County.

Kaufman and Balfour complimented each other in their managing styles. Kaufman’s autocratic, militaristic attitude meant that he attacked the process of accreditation and building a new school with a determined strategy. Balfour’s role was to procure the funds in the Georgia Assembly to build classrooms, hire staff and faculty, and to develop a curriculum that the Board of Regents could approve. While Balfour refused to challenge “the General” on any decisions regarding the education program, he would pepper him with questions. Presented with a list of needs for the college, Balfour would implore him to prioritize the items, yet Kaufman simply stated that they were all necessary. The exasperated Senator would respond, “But this is impossible. Doesn’t he know that this is impossible?”¹²² The recalcitrant General would brook no refusal. He felt that the entire list was essential. Balfour had to form soft power in the GA to render the funds required to start a new college.

However, in his position as the Chair of the Rules Committee, Balfour was able to finesse the House Representatives to introduce the appropriations bills with the promise that his or her

¹²² Don Balfour interview with the author.

bill would come out of committee for a vote. Just as with the Federal Congress, all appropriations must be introduced to the floor by a member of the House of Representatives. To date, GGC is the only education institution with a line item in the state budget rather than simply becoming another entity in the collective education allocations.¹²³ Balfour's advocacy for the school through the Georgia Assembly became so synonymous with his name, that the members called it "Balfour University." However, this proved to be a bit of a hindrance because many members forgot the real name of the school.

After Balfour marshaled GGC through the state's funding processes, Kaufman had to navigate the education system for accreditation. Normally, the process takes six years to complete because there are programs to develop, faculty to hire, and there must be graduated students before consideration. The University System of Georgia requires that the last thirty credits a student earns must be from the conferring institution he or she graduates. Like Hill, Shackelford, and Mason, the General circumvented the letter of the process. He managed to consolidate the regulations. Because the deans and faculty had yet to advise students and they had to be on campus, they were tasked to develop the degrees and supporting documentation. That sliced off about two years. Then he "got some [114] juniors from somewhere, I don't know where, but he found them" to finish their Business, Chemistry, and Biology degrees at GGC.¹²⁴ That eliminated another two years. Because of Kaufman's intense organization and ability to plan for the future, the day after the first graduation he presented the Board of Regents with all of the required documentation. This saves another six months. GGC received accreditation in eighteen months and became the first new United States four-year college in the new

¹²³ Don Balfour interview with the author.

¹²⁴ Don Balfour explained his understanding of what happened and his astonishment of Kaufman's efficiency.

millennium.¹²⁵ As of the 2014 enrollment, the school has enrolled nearly 11,000 students who herald from 97 countries.

Education in Gwinnett County was the most important piece of its growth. As with the Board of Commissioners, the Gwinnett County Public Schools required a strong leader with a clear vision. Crews recognized the issues and immediately introduced a new curriculum to address the faltering system. Consequences of this his efforts produced a school district that attracted families into the county. As the schools continued to produce well-educated and prepared students, more people choose to move into Gwinnett County. The growing population then required better jobs. Local businesses moved into the county for the favorable tax policies then expressed a need for people to fill skilled positions, which enticed still more migration. By the mid-1980s, a fruitful coalition between surrounding colleges and universities, county leaders, and state politicians formed Gwinnett Technical College. Twenty years later, another coalition opened Georgia Gwinnett College. When it opened in 2005, GGC had 125 students. Ten years later, it registered over 13,000. Like Gwinnett County, GGC suffered from growing pains, but it continually developed, adapted, and attracted more people. Education, at the primary, secondary, and collegiate levels is the largest reason for Gwinnett County's growth.

CONCLUSION

Gwinnett County's rise as a Sunbelt suburb is a significant piece of understanding suburban agency. While urban scholarship on cities focuses on reasons for flight into the suburbs, it often misses how the suburbs become strong and independent actors. Beginning with Atlanta's "White Flight" in the 1950s and 60s, and the more important national migration into

¹²⁵ Stas Preczewski. (Georgia Gwinnett College Vice-President 2005-2013) interview with the author, Nov. 9, 2014.

the south, Gwinnett County enacted public policies to attract families to settle there. There were many other areas that they could choose to live. However, over the span from the implementation of a water system in the early 1950s to the present, Gwinnett County became a primary choice for families.

Gwinnett County's rise did not follow the traditional understanding of United States twentieth century suburbanization. Rather, it remained a rural area until a spate of visionary leaders instituted policies that physically changed the county. Even though Gwinnett County's rise was offset by about twenty years from the accepted 1945 start, it rose to become a powerful suburb faster than most of the others. In the 1950s Gwinnett County's was still a rural space with only chicken farmers and 2,000 acres of cotton as the primary sources of income. Residents had to leave the county to earn a living, which eliminated a substantial tax digest for Gwinnett County. To grow Gwinnett County into a suburb, the leaders had to implement policies that would attract new residents and find ways to keep their income in the county.

The first issue was water. Once the Board of Commissioners obtained federal grants to address the upland's erosion and the lowland's flooding issues, the county was able to connect farms and municipalities. The Water and Sewer Authority provided financing for the commissioners to start installing water mains, sewage pipes, and a water treatment plant. Because the leaders reached out to the federal agencies for revenues, the county was also became involved as a pilot project for the Resource, Conservation, and Development program that literally produced a plan for an orderly transformation from a rural to an urban space.

Concurrently with the water installation, the county had a well-earned reputation for being a lawless area that deterred Gwinnett County from being a designation for families. Secluded from an urban influence, the Buford Prison for hardened and incorrigible inmates

became an example of egregious practices perpetrated on the inmates. When they rebelled by either slicing through their own Achilles tendon or smashing their legs with a sledgehammer, the state ignored their plight. It was not until the national narrative on prison reform that the institution changed to house juvenile inmates.

Seclusion was not exclusive for the prison. Gwinnett County was heavily wooded, especially in the lowlands and along the Eastern Continental divide that runs along the county's western border. In the 1950s and 60s, the federal government constructed the interstate system and part of I-85 runs through the county. It connects Greenville, South Carolina with Atlanta. The combination of the woods and a partially built road gave easy accessibility for criminals to hide their activities. Bootleggers came down from the uplands to hide their illegal whiskey in the brush for others to collect and sell in the city. Thieves stole cars in Atlanta, drove them to the end of the highway and dismantled them for parts.

The criminal activities of one fateful night, April 17, 1964, changed the trajectory of law enforcement in Gwinnett County. Answering a call from a resident, three Police Officers, Jerry R. Everett, Ralph K. Davis, and Marvin Jesse "Pop" Gravitt were shot and killed by three chop shop criminals. One of the murderers was a former Gwinnett County Police Deputy that had been fired by the Board of Commissioners (under orders of the Gwinnett County Supreme Court). He had been an accomplice with Sheriff Dan Cole's illegal bootlegging operation.

In 1972, a new Chairman Commissioner from the newly restructured Board of Commissioners W. R. "Drudge" Pruitt hired the man, John Crunkleton, who had solved the officers' murders. The commissioner wanted to install a "no-nonsense" chief. This ideology was in part due to Pruitt's embarrassment for the county's reputation as well as the national narrative that was prevalent. During the 1968 election, the Republicans campaigned with a "law and

order” stance. This resonated deeply with the growing conservative movement developing in the Sunbelt suburbs. Police Chief Crunkleton fit that bill exactly. He instituted wholesale changes to the department. He fired everyone and all new hires had to submit to a background check. A modern training center with mandatory, regular training opened the same year. The police department became a respected institution. To today, only one Gwinnett County Police Officer has lost his life in the line of duty since that April night of 1964.

The Board of Commissioners continued on the path of modernization. Several members, including Wayne Mason, Ray Gunnin, and Pruitt, instituted tax policies to entice commercial interests into Gwinnett County. Mason, in particular, was a driving force to modernize the county. His experience as a developer, along with the original RC&D plan, lent insight into seeing how to grow Gwinnett County. The county landed Western Electric to settle in the county because of its offerings, an innovative freeport tax, easy access to railroads and I-85, and the county’s promise to provide skilled people, its resources attracted more industry. In 1984, Alvin Wilbanks, a leader in the education community, fulfilled that promise when the Gwinnett Technical College (nee Institute) opened. As a result, vibrant community of technological firms moved into Gwinnett County adding to the commercial and residential tax digests.

By far, the most visible change was Gwinnett County’s development. Subdivisions began in the 1970s and continued with abandon until the housing crash of 2008. Three malls, Gwinnett Place Mall, The Mall of Georgia, and Sugarloaf Mills Mall (nee Discover Mills Mall) helped to keep the residents spending in the county. Growth exploded in the 1980s that the official Gwinnett County website proudly declares “For three consecutive years, 1986 through 1988,

Gwinnett ranked as the fastest growing county in the U.S. among counties with a population greater than 100,000.”¹²⁶

In order to attract families, Gwinnett County recognized that it needed a top notch school system. In 1969, there were nineteen schools, eleven elementary, three middle, and five high schools. The district was mediocre until the Gwinnett County Public Schools Board of Education named Alton Crews as Superintendent in 1977. Standard Aptitude Test (SAT) scores demonstrated that Gwinnett County student were not succeeding as well as surrounding school districts. Crews believed that it was because of district’s curriculum filled with classes that are not required for college. Therefore, he instituted a “back to basics” curriculum that focused on grammar, mathematics, and reading. Also, the high school classes were limited to six and the periods extended. These changes worked. SAT scores began to rise and, in five years, surpassed the other districts, the state of Georgia’s average score, and the national average.

Real estate agents, eager to sell more houses, used the school information as an enticement. Families, concerned for their children’s education, moved into the county. This began a growth circle. The more houses built and sold, the more schools were needed for Gwinnett County’s expansion. Between 1990 and 1998, twenty-nine schools opened. Another forty-four opened in 2003-11. Presently, the Gwinnett County Public School District has 137 schools with twenty clusters with 164,007 students enrolled.

While the 1960s and 1970s migration was predominately to maintain segregation, the high influx of the 1980-2000s changed the demographics of the county. In 2013, the student population reflected the diversity that happened in Gwinnett County. Many languages spoken in

¹²⁶ <https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/portal/gwinnett/AboutGwinnett/History>

the home, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and several Slavic or other European languages, has changed the dynamics of the county.

Where Gwinnett County began as a segregated, isolated, rural county in the 1950s, it is now a thriving, modern suburb replete with a diverse population. Through all of the years since the leaders began to modernize Gwinnett County, there were many changes. Water and sewage, economic policies, education, and housing changed the county. Without these Elizabeth and Ray Vega could not have selected Gwinnett County as their choice to raise a family. They wanted a place that would nurture their cultural heritage, their family values, and provide a safe neighborhood. The reasons for their selection of Gwinnett County underscores that education was the biggest attraction for families to choose Gwinnett County to live.

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APPENDIX

Regression Model

Equation: Building Permits = X0 + Malls*X1 + Recession*X2 + Atlanta MSA Growth*X3

Regression Statistics

Multiple R	0.914074239
R Square	0.835531714
Adjusted R Square	0.820580052
Standard Error	1159.805854
Observations	37

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	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	3	225509740.5	75169913	55.8822	0.00%
Residual	33	44389937.43	1345150		
Total	36	269899677.9			

		<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Reverse %</i>
Intercept	X ₀	1963.483345	535.8134747	3.66449	0.09%	99.9138%
Malls ¹	X ₁	1983.193678	468.6094178	4.232082	0.02%	99.9827%
Recession ²	X ₂	-2264.569894	514.8967129	-4.39811	0.01%	99.9893%
Atlanta MSA Population Growth ³	X ₃	0.033034592	0.005341654	6.184338	0.0001%	99.9999%

Note #1: Malls qualitative variable for the 5-year build-out surrounding for Gwinnett Place Mall, Mall of Georgia and Discover Mills Mall

Note #2: Qualitative variable for the presence of an economic downturn as defined by the National Bureau of Economic Research and adjusted using the coincident economic indicator series from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia for Georgia

Note #3: Atlanta MSA population growth

Note #4: 5 year period (beginning 1 year before opening of mall)

Table on the next page.

Year	Single Family Building Permits	Malls With Build Out Period	Recession	Atlanta MSA Population Growth
1973	2173	0	1	68,400
1974	1372	0	1	53,800
1975	1774	0	1	18,400
1976	2152	0	0	25,100
1977	2510	0	0	41,700
1978	3347	0	0	40,500
1979	3984	0	0	60,100
1980	3680	0	0	42,451
1981	2671	0	1	64,975
1982	3580	0	0	50,097
1983	5847	1	0	62,896
1984	5849	1	0	77,184
1985	6923	1	0	95,489
1986	5746	1	0	95,347
1987	4710	1	0	96,653
1988	3893	0	0	83,431
1989	3184	0	0	67,693
1990	3488	0	1	48,659
1991	4175	0	0	113,362
1992	5840	0	0	96,413
1993	7099	0	0	109,966
1994	6784	0	0	121,340
1995	7215	0	0	120,691
1996	7629	1	0	120,981
1997	7215	1	0	122,240
1998	8243	1	0	132,466
1999	8469	1	0	136,154
2000	8852	1	0	105,393
2001	9646	1	0	184,969
2002	9371	1	0	122,540
2003	9029	1	0	117,656
2004	9384	1	0	129,154
2005	9894	1	0	144,712
2006	7886	0	0	172,629
2007	4278	0	1	147,886
2008	1363	0	1	118,059
2009	617	0	1	89,627

Table 9 Malls' Effect on Housing Permits Regression

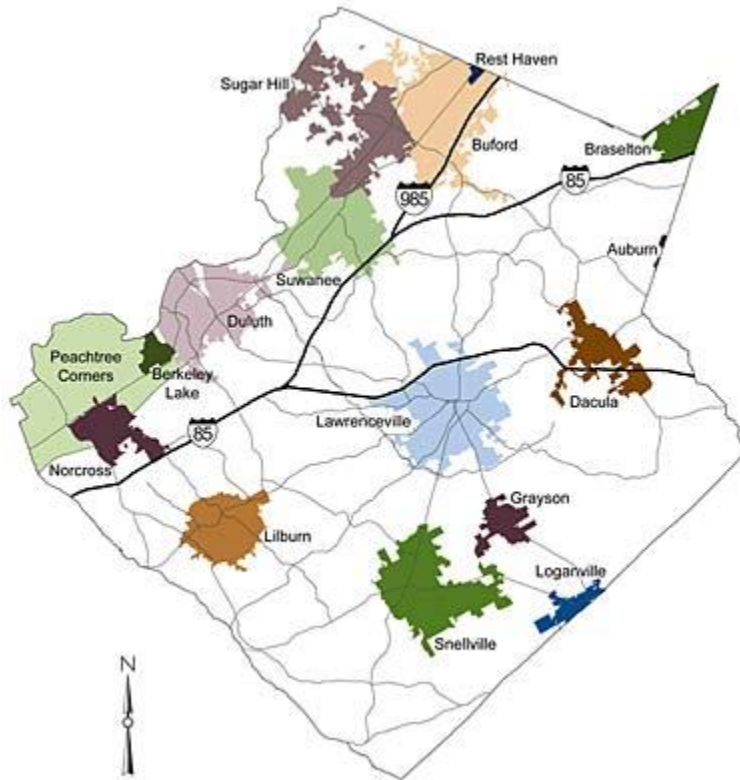


Figure 1 Gwinnett County Municipality Map
 Source: gwinnettcounty.com

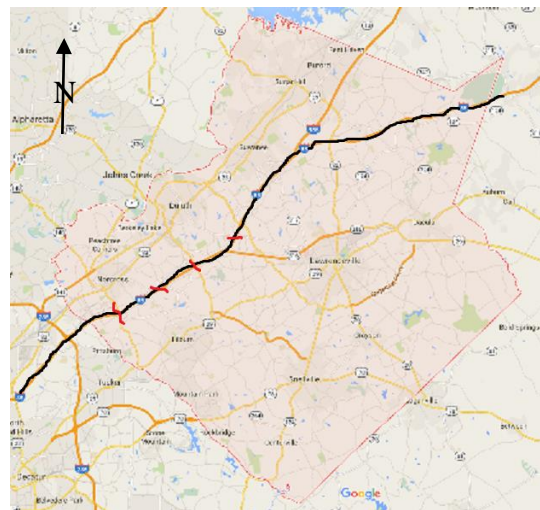


Figure 2 Road Map of Gwinnett County
 Heading North by Northeast, the four stages
 of building I-85 (signified by red lines):
 Jimmy Carter Boulevard
 Beaver Ruin Road
 Pleasant Hill Road
 Old Peachtree Road

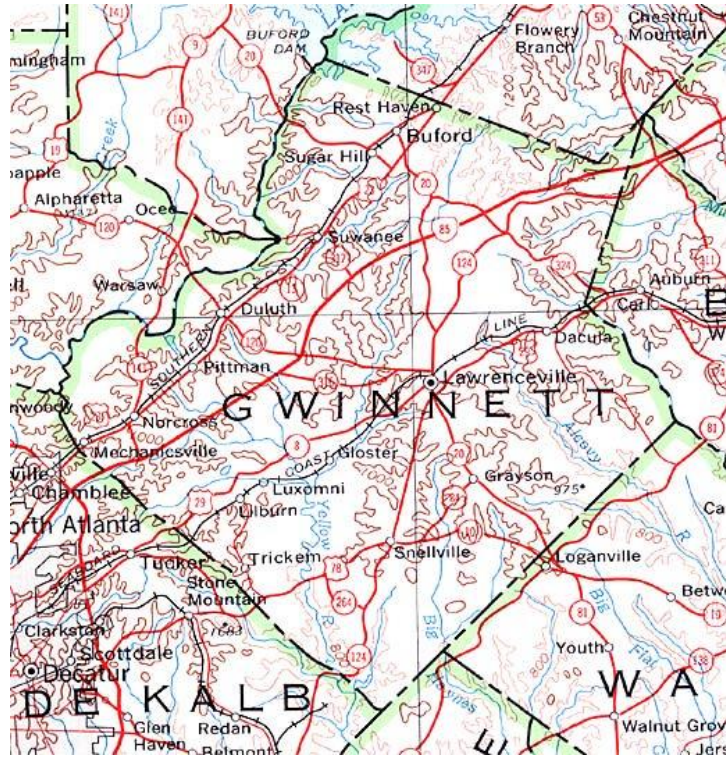


Figure 3 Gwinnett County Physical Map with Water System
Source: GeorgialInfo.galileo.usg.edu