



Savannah Economic Development Authority

Executive Summary

Competitive Positioning, Target Industry, Economic Development Strategy,
and Action Plan

Deloitte.





APPROACH



PHASE 1 | CURRENT STATE ASSESSMENT



PHASE 2 | PEER COMPARISON AND INDUSTRY ANALYSIS



PHASE 3 | STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND PRIORITIZATION



PHASE 4 | IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP



APPENDIX

This Executive Summary contains general information only and Deloitte is not, by means of this Summary, rendering accounting, business, financial, investment, legal, tax, or other professional advice or services. This Summary is not a substitute for such professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for any decision or action that may affect your business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your business, you should consult a qualified professional advisor. Deloitte shall not be responsible for any loss sustained by any person who relies on this Executive Summary. Information provided as a summary of the strategic planning process.



Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles have helped to steer the strategic plan and inform recommendations provided by Deloitte



Leveraging Existing Assets

- Ensure existing assets (e.g., port, regional higher education, Savannah region's quality of life, etc.) are being properly leveraged to attract preferred projects
- Identify existing assets that may not be fully leveraged



Targeted Pursuit of Projects

- Determine which industries and project types are best aligned with the future vision of the Savannah region
- Focus pursuit efforts on opportunities that best align with the future vision for the Savannah region



Retaining Talent Unique to Savannah Region

- Enhance the retention of exiting military talent from nearby bases and create opportunities to leverage unique skillsets (e.g., discipline, adaptability, etc.)
- Retain the Savannah region's strong creative talent pipeline



Build on Competitive Positioning

- Form strategic initiatives around Savannah region's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities as benchmarked against peer group
- Identify key areas to increase competitiveness over peers as it relates to project attraction (e.g., incentives, workforce, accessibility, etc.)



Leverage SEDA's Authority

- Ensure the unique constitutional authority SEDA has is fully leveraged as a competitive asset
- SEDA's authority to administer its own incentives and abate property taxes without additional approval is a significant advantage over competitor EDOs



Develop Existing Industry Opportunities

- Leverage existing industries to attract adjacent projects (e.g., HQ/office operations for existing industries like aerospace and automotive, suppliers, etc.)
- Consider how strength in aerospace, automotive, logistics / distribution / supply chain, and other industries can be used to achieve new opportunities



Determine Gap-Closing Actions

- Determine key initiatives and corresponding gap-closing actions for consideration
- Focus on initiatives that are not only important to SEDA and the community but also realistically achievable with strategic action

Phase 3 | Stakeholder Engagement Overview

A major component of this phase has been conducting stakeholder engagement through the visioning workshop, roundtable discussions, 1:1 interviews, and a virtual survey option

 **75** Total Stakeholders Engaged*

 **60** Unique Organizations Represented



VISIONING WORKSHOP

Stakeholders: **19**
Organization Represented: **13**



1:1 INTERVIEWS

Stakeholders: **19**
Organization Represented: **13**



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Stakeholders: **18**
Organization Represented: **17**



VIRTUAL SURVEY OPTION

Stakeholders: **19**
Organization Represented: **18**

**Deloitte reached out to 118 stakeholders with the opportunity to provide feedback; 75 engaged in feedback opportunities*

Phase 3 | Key Feedback

Recurring feedback highlights top-of-mind challenges for stakeholders; some areas are within SEDA's direct purview while others fall outside of it and require broader community collaboration to address

SEDA's Mission Statement: To help create, grow and attract new job opportunities and investment in the Savannah region



Top Barriers To Success¹

- Availability of Talent**
13/19 respondents
- Physical Infrastructure**
11/19 respondents
- Utility Availability / Capacity**
6/19 respondents
- Availability of Land**
6/19 respondents

Phase 3 | Key Themes

The Deloitte team identified 8 key themes for stakeholders' vision of the future of the region that were consistently noted throughout our stakeholder engagement

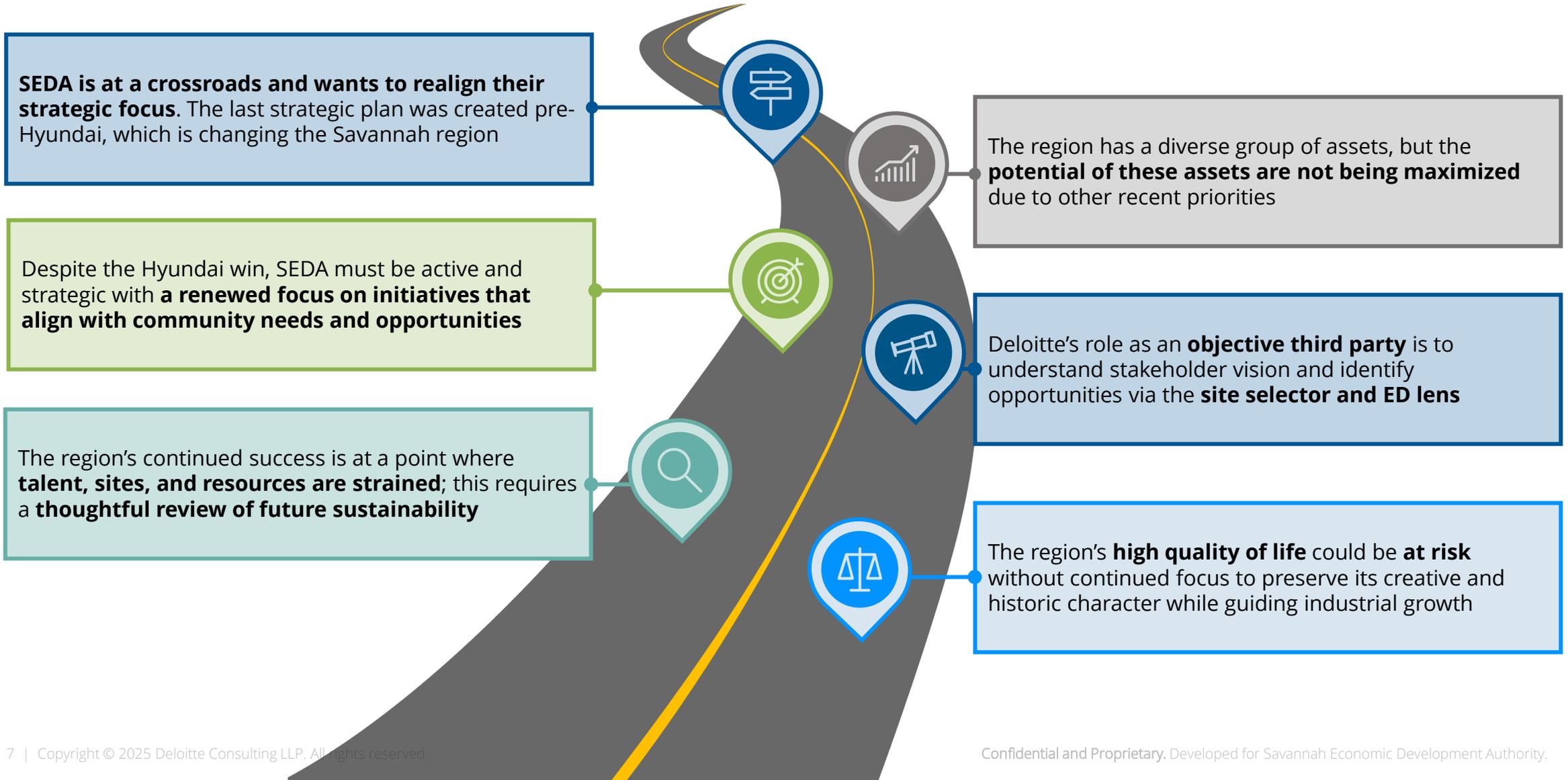


Priority Project Types¹

- Office / Headquarters**
12/19 respondents
- Creative**
9/19 respondents
- Advanced Manufacturing**
8/19 respondents
- Aerospace & Defense**
8/19 respondents

Phase 3 | Journey To Our Strategic Recommendations

When considering our recommendations, it is important to remember how we got here. The Deloitte team has kept the journey to and intent of this strategic plan top of mind through each phase



Imagine a Future Where the Savannah Region Is...

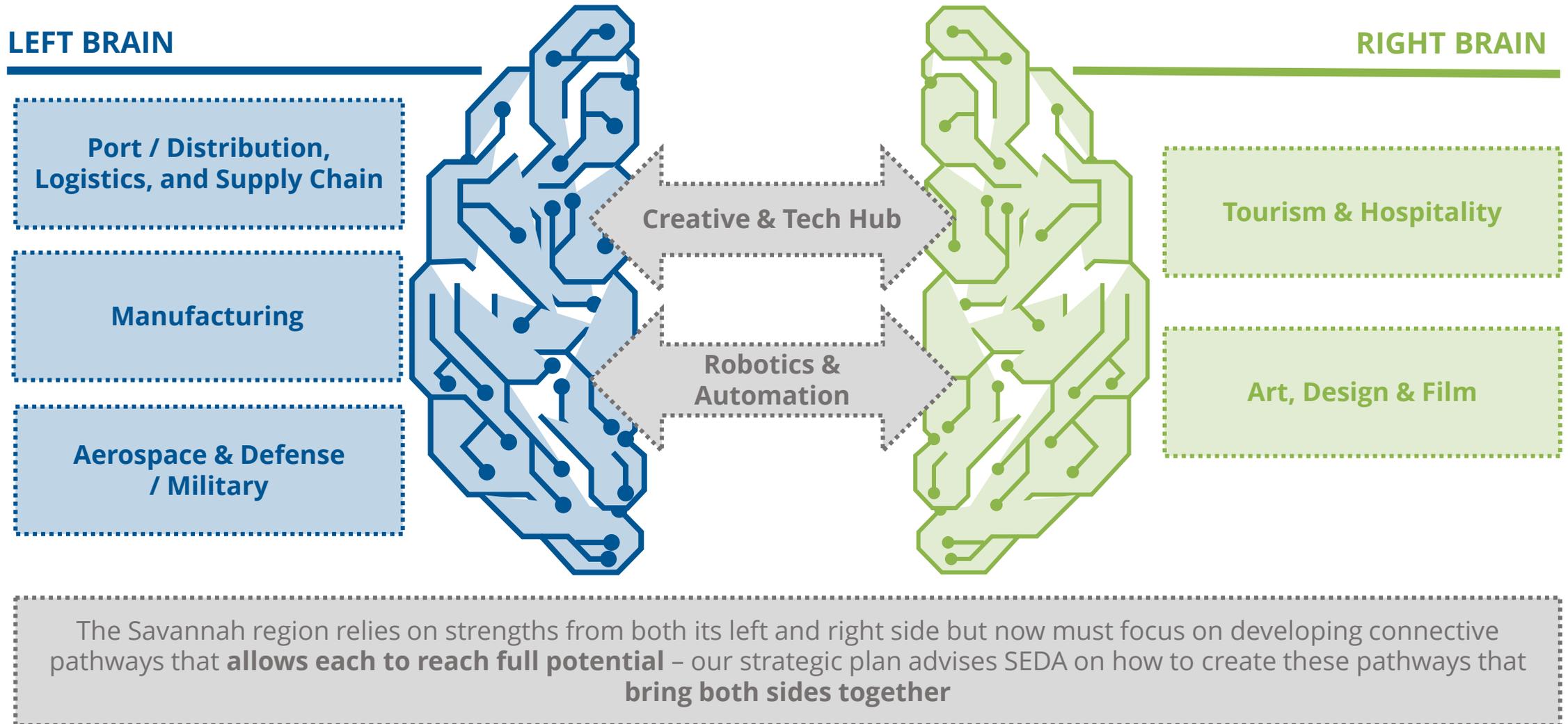
Before you review our strategic recommendations, we encourage you to imagine your future vision of the Savannah region



As you imagine a future Savannah region... what steps will it take to get there?
Our strategic plan aims to provide the framework and steps to guide you to where you want to be

Phase 3 | Our View of Your Strategic Plan

Your unique community assets are like two separate sides of the brain – the left is analytical while the right is creative. Our strategic plan builds the connective pathways between these two for a successful and cohesive future, as the whole is greater than the sum of its parts



Phase 3 | Recommendation Overview

1

Exercise a selective approach to manufacturing

2

Position the Savannah region as a center for logistics innovation

3

Make the Savannah region a design hub

4

Expand the knowledge-based work ecosystem

Phase 3 | Exercise a selective approach to manufacturing

WHY?

- Chatham County is experiencing a **shortage of industrial sites, touch labor, and utility / infrastructure resources**
- Savannah's manufacturing success and strong military presence and retention may be **leveraged to better suit community needs and opportunities** (e.g., talent availability, wage requirements, infrastructure capacity)
- A selective manufacturing approach may support **character of life** otherwise **strained** by fast-growing manufacturing and logistics / distribution / supply chain industries

RECOMMENDATION DETAILS

Adjust Pursuit of Manufacturing

- Dedicate more efforts toward **advanced and light manufacturing**
- **Establish "guardrails"** for what types of projects SEDA wants / can accommodate for and **socialize / market to partner organizations**
 - Within Chatham County, **target projects with smaller, cleaner footprints and high-tech operations** (*detailed on next slide*)
- Target projects that **leverage existing strong industries** (aerospace, automotive, healthcare) to amplify assets and help their growth
 - Develop **robotics and automation hub**
 - Pursuits based on **job type** and **community impact**
 - Prioritize **high wage, high tech jobs** for talent to upskill
 - Explore **healthcare adjacent manufacturing** – potential for more professional, R&D, light industry
 - Leverage **veteran skillsets** to specifically apply to **aerospace and automotive manufacturing** opportunities

Prioritize Industrial Development

Prioritize development of **infill and brownfield sites** ready for manufacturing to support **greenfield shortage**

Invest in High School Tech Programs

Developing regional high schoolers **interest and skills in robotics and simulators** for technology used by regional employers
(see slide 27 for details)

HOW DOES IT CONNECT?

May stimulate **industry diversity** while allowing for **resource / effort reallocation**

For workforce demand, students may be **"job ready" sooner** if given pre-grad awareness and training

Phase 3 | Illustrative Guardrails for Manufacturing Selectivity

Deloitte advises SEDA to establish guardrails via a filter to determine what manufacturing projects to pursue in Chatham County given land, labor, and resource constraints. These should be socialized to partner organizations to bring awareness of preferred projects

Within Chatham County

ILLUSTRATIVE¹

Is it advanced, light, or high-tech manufacturing?

Is it adjacent to a strong existing industry or in a target industry?²

Can it be accommodated by current industrial site inventory?

Are average wages at or above average Chatham County wages?³

Does it match community capabilities?⁴

Appropriate Project To Pursue

¹This illustrative filtering system focuses on the post-client disclosure stage and may need to be adjusted to accommodate unknowns during RFI stage and other preferences

²Strong existing industry includes aerospace, automotive, and other highly concentrated industries in the region; target industries include healthcare-adjacent manufacturing, high-tech/clean manufacturing

³Average Chatham County hourly wage as of Q1 2025 is \$29.77 ; source: JobsEQ

⁴Community capabilities refers to Chatham County's ability to support the project's needs including talent, utilities, and infrastructure

Phase 3 | Exercise a selective approach to manufacturing

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Manufacturing projects will be **primarily advanced manufacturing** with a **focus on the existing industries** noted in the recommendation details
- Measurement of success will shift from number of jobs / investment size to **type of jobs created, wage thresholds, and impact of operation on the community**
- **Focused on matching projects with community needs and capabilities** instead of playing “catch up” to meet project needs
- Projects that do not fit these specifications for Chatham County **will not be pursued**
- SEDA will **prioritize development of industrial inventory**, primarily infill and brownfield options, to support target manufacturing pursuit efforts

PRELIMINARY TIMELINE MILESTONES



Estimated Timeline To Implement: *1-2 years*



Estimated Timeline To Results: *3-5 years (excl. simulator KPI)*

Phase 3 | Position the Savannah region as a center for logistics innovation

WHY?

- Region's existing industries – specifically supply chain, distribution, and logistics – can be **amplified** through the addition of new technologies, namely **robotics and automation**
- **Ideal hub for testing and implementing new supply chain / distribution / logistics technologies** due to the port and SAV's logistics backbone; this can **create upskilling opportunities** for existing talent while contributing to **establishing SAV as a tech hub**
- The port and supply chain / distribution / logistics industry **will continue to grow** regardless of economic development efforts; therefore, it is important for SEDA to use that growth to **progress its own strategic initiatives** (e.g., attracting targeted projects, boosting high-wage jobs, etc.)

RECOMMENDATION DETAILS

Develop A Logistics Innovation Consortium

- **Develop a consortium to address logistics innovation needs**
 - While Georgia Tech Institute of Robotics and Intelligent Machines in ATL exists, the SAV region needs its own **dedicated, local asset** instead of a state-wide resource
 - Potential to weave into existing SHIP program but needs to be approached as a **distinct initiative** with a unique focus
- Will serve as a **foundational asset** in developing the region as the **center of logistics innovation** in the county (*detailed on next slide*)
- Intended to create a place where **economic development, higher education, R&D, and industry** all meld together

Focus Logistics Project Efforts

- **Focus incentives** on logistics projects that specifically advance this initiative
- **Leverage Amazon Robotics' success** as an anchor firm for attraction efforts

Invest in High School Tech Programs

Invest in programs developing regional high schoolers **interest and skills in robotics and simulators** for technology used by regional employers

HOW DOES IT CONNECT?

Take advantage of **port-related growth** to accomplish SEDA's strategic initiatives

Supports **controlled logistics growth** while catering to vision of more **high-tech, upskilled opportunities**

Aims to result in a two-fold benefit – **more knowledge-based projects** and **targeted logistics projects**

Phase 3 | Deep Dive: Logistics Innovation Consortium

The Savannah region is poised to transform their strong logistics backbone into a center for innovation. Deloitte believes the first step in this journey is to develop a consortium that converts the knowledge from regional education systems into tangible concepts

WHAT AND WHY?

-  Think about **spinning** this advanced automotive concept into a **logistics / supply chain-focused concept**
-  To become the center of logistics innovation, investment in a consortium that **marries R&D, education, economic development efforts, and industry** is a critical component
-  The region **has the assets** (port, industry presence, economic developer) but **lacks the melding** of this with R&D and education

FORGING DEEPER COLLABORATIONS

Core Partners ¹	Reasoning
Georgia Southern University	1 hour to main campus + GS-Armstrong Campus in SAV; engineering, logistics and supply chain; existing SHIP partnership
Georgia Institute of Technology	Major talent pipeline; engineering, supply chain, robotics, and industrial design programs; no direct access to port environment
Savannah State University	Regional institution; engineering technology, technology, transportation studies, logistics and supply chain
Georgia Ports	GPA is the glue pulling all these organizations together; physical asset that the region and logistics industry is centered around

CASE STUDY: CU-ICAR

Overview: The Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research (CU-ICAR) is an **advanced-technology research campus** “where **education, research, and economic development collaborate** to create a global venue for the automotive industry.”

-  R&D, investment, and other outputs of CU-ICAR have influenced **several impactful economic development projects** in the South Carolina region
-  **5 research clusters** including advanced manufacturing & materials, design & integration of complex systems, and human factors
-  **20+ global industry partners** including BMW, FormelID, JTEKT, Ford, Bosch, Bridgestone, Toyota, Autodesk, and Michelin
-  **250-acre campus** home to **200+ auto engineering students** with R&D labs, testing facilities, office space, and shovel-ready sites

SPOTLIGHT: DEEP ORANGE

CU-ICAR's Deep Orange is a **rapid prototyping program** allowing automotive engineering students the opportunity to **test vehicle design, engineering, prototyping and production.**

Notable sponsors include BMW, Ford, GM, Honda, Toyota, and U.S. Army



Phase 3 | Deep Dive: High School Engagement Strategy

FIRST ROBOTICS TEAM SPONSORSHIP



Can be a relatively small investment with a significant impact on **getting high school students interested in robotics, engineering, and tech**



Engaging student interest in these fields early is an important step in bolstering the local talent pipeline and consortium efforts



While Savannah currently has two high school competition teams, could be **more competitive with additional sponsorships**



Opportunity for the region's major advanced manufacturers (Gulfstream and Hyundai) with **significant needs in these talent areas** to sponsor teams

SIMULATOR PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP



Invest in simulators to be implemented in local high schools with target of **reducing touch labor strain** in the region



Intended to **introduce high school-aged students to high-demand career opportunities** existing in the Savannah region; a key theme voice by several stakeholders



Opportunity for high schoolers to get **training** before graduating, resulting in **reduced time** to entering labor force

Market	No. of Teams ¹	No. of Teams per 100K Pop. ²	District/Regional Rankings
Savannah	2	0.46	49 th , 65 th of 94
Charleston	2	0.23	3 rd , 14 th of 46
Jacksonville	2	0.11	230 th , 1088 th of 1946
Chattanooga	1	0.17	1538 th of 1946
Boise	3	0.35	132 nd , 1087 th , 1114 th of 1946
Greenville	2	0.20	9 th , 20 th of 46
Huntsville	3	0.55	512 th , 940 th , 1578 th of 1946

WHY?

- Engaging students in the FIRST robotics program aims to strengthen the **regional knowledge-based talent pipeline** (e.g., engineering)
- Simulator sponsorship aims to **interest and prepare students for high-skill roles** before graduation in efforts to alleviate the strain on touch labor
- If **talent retention and preparedness** is going to be prioritized, students must be educated as early as possible regarding **career opportunities in the Savannah region**
- Ties into **manufacturing** and **logistics recommendations**

Phase 3 | Position the Savannah region as a center for logistics innovation

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- **Focus on developing the region as an innovation hub** for supply chain and logistics technologies
 - This will require long-term investment to **develop an innovation ecosystem** that has the supports to flourish
- Objective is not necessarily to create an influx of jobs but to create opportunities for **upskilled, high-wage jobs** for lower wage, existing supply chain / distribution / logistics talent
- **Targeting incentives** specifically towards supply chain / distribution / logistics companies that are **bringing innovative technology and opportunities**
- **Fostering the innovation ecosystem** needed to attract these types of supply chain / distribution / logistics companies while **creating strong partnerships** between regional organizations and assets

PRELIMINARY TIMELINE MILESTONES



Estimated Timeline To Implement: *1-2 years*



Estimated Timeline To Results: *2-5 years*

Phase 3 | Make the Savannah region a design hub

WHY?

- The Savannah region's creative pipeline and environment is a **major asset** currently **underutilized**
 - In 2024, SCAD had **~15,800** full-time enrollees including **~380 industrial design students**¹
 - **1,440+ design-related graduates in Chatham County**² coming from SCAD, South University, Savannah State University, and Savannah Technical College
 - **36% of US-based SCAD alumni reside in Georgia** (primarily ATL)²; **200+ SCAD alumni-owned businesses** in Savannah that could be leveraged³
- The region's **robust industrial environment** creates a unique opportunity for **industrial design talent**
- **SCAD is the largest art & design school in the US** – it produces a significant talent pipeline being lost to creative hubs (ex. LA, NYC, ATL)
- **Design**⁴ **marries technology and creative** and may be more used more broadly in industry than other creative disciplines

RECOMMENDATION

Attract An Anchor Firm

- **Prioritize developing incentives** and **recruiting** an anchor design firm
- Focus on **design consulting** and **marketing communications** firms
- Example Target Firms: Oglivy, VML, IDEO, Designworks, frog, Pentagram⁵
- **Leverage industrial sector** to attract industrial design firms (e.g. aerospace, auto)

Create A Design Incubator

- Aims to **cultivate design concepts** while **retaining** talent in the region
- Structured program focused on **design incubation**
- **Develops creative start-up environment** and **support concepts** via 1:1 mentors, business development
- Critical investment to **continue building** start-up culture

Develop A Maker Space

- Aims to **break collaborative barriers** to **scaling operations** for start-ups
- Builds on incubator concept with a **physical maker space** to foster collaboration
- Supports product **testing, development, and scaling** through physical assets
- Engages **broader creative pipeline** than incubator – existing / future businesses

HOW DOES IT CONNECT?

Design opportunities can stem from **robotics / automation / tech**

Use case for developing more physical space and building out the knowledge-based sector

Opportunity to build "right brain" by strengthening creative industry and character of life

1. Source: SCAD Fact Book 2024 – 2025

2. JobsEQ 2023; degrees in graphic design, web & digital interface design, commercial & industrial design, interior design, all other designers

3. Source: Deloitte Stakeholder Interview

4. Design: graphic, UI, UX, game development, interior, industrial, advertising and branding, marketing, motion media and production, visual experience, service, sustainability, etc.

5. Oglivy (marketing comms, ~17.5k employees), VML (marketing comms, 30k+ employees), IDEO (design consultancy, ~600 employees), Designworks (design consultancy, 130+ employees), frog (design consultancy, 2k+ employees), Pentagram (design consultancy, ~200 employees)

Phase 3 | Deep Dive: Developing Incubator & Maker Space

These programs further build up the start-up environment in the Savannah region while focusing specifically on the design industry

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SCAD+

-  **SEDA** served as **primary financial donor**, partnering with SCAD in efforts to retain SCAD alumni
-  Participants chosen **lacked discipline diversity** (primarily animation and fashion related)
-  Final concepts **lacked investor buy-in**
-  Cohort members **left SAV for larger creative hubs**
-  Program framework was **limiting** due to number of participants (8) and program tenure (1 year)

OUR INCUBATOR RECOMMENDATION

-  **Center around design**¹ both boosting the region as a design hub and **bolstering the growing start-up ecosystem**
-  Not exclusively affiliated with an institution – focused on **broader creative talent retention**
-  **Expansion** of critical resources to support entrepreneurs through challenging start-up environment (e.g., costs, space)
-  Focus on **new concept and product development** that have strong use cases for regional challenges
-  Broader framework regarding timeline and participant pool to **increase ability to develop outputs**

MAKER SPACE CASE STUDY: THE GARAGE

Overview: Located at the Georgia Cyber Innovation & Training Center in Augusta, GA. The makerspace includes:

-  **Messy Prototyping Zone** - digital and traditional fabrication tools to create physical prototypes
-  **Electronics Zone** - software-oriented project development space
-  **Collaboration Zone** - collaboration space available for individual bookings
-  **Small Pod** - space for workshops, classes, and group events
-  **Equipment** – broad variety including 6 types of 3D printers for rapid prototyping, drones, CNC machines, laser engraving, etc.

Publicly available at **monthly rate** of \$10 for students to \$60 for community (*volunteers use for free*)

Fabrication service rates are offered for community wanting to have products made for them



1. Design: graphic, UI, UX, game development, interior, industrial, advertising and branding, marketing, motion media and production, visual experience, service, sustainability, etc. Developed for Savannah Economic Development Authority.

Phase 3 | Make the Savannah region a design hub

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Signs of success with implementing this recommendation will include:
 - **Improved retention** of regional creative graduate
 - Target efforts to aid in successful attraction of **“anchor” design firms**
 - Establishment of **start-up incubator** and **maker spaces**
 - **Integration of local institutions** with creative program into SEDA’s attraction and marketing efforts
 - **Development of knowledge-based space** with design projects in mind
- **Focused on creating an environment that fosters start-up activity**
- The **“return on investment”** may appear differently than what SEDA is used to with its past initiatives

PRELIMINARY TIMELINE MILESTONES



Estimated Timeline To Implement: *1-2 years*



Estimated Timeline To Results: *3-5 years*

Phase 3 | Expand the knowledge-based work ecosystem

WHY?

- **Ties together existing assets** (e.g., “connective tissue”) from creative to supply chain / distribution/ logistics and serves as the missing puzzle piece in the region’s efforts to **provide high-wage, knowledge-based opportunities**
- The region has the unique opportunity to **draw on strong existing industries** to bolster attraction efforts for those industries’ corporate functions
- While headquarters may garner more intrigue, non-HQ professional projects (e.g., office, R&D, lab) **present the most attainable opportunity** to be accomplished given the region’s assets

RECOMMENDATION DETAILS

Recruit Companies With Existing Operations

- Actively recruit companies with strong operations in the region **to locate knowledge-based functions to the region** (e.g., logistics, manufacturing; trucking / shipping lines)
- Consider which firms already have knowledge-based functions in **other Southeastern hubs** as a more approachable first step

Develop More Physical Space

- Accommodate **current low vacancy** and competition with the hospitality industry
- **Partner with a developer** to develop speculative project(s)
- Consider incentivizing a developer and end-user to attract building development

Use Knowledge-Based Projects To Complement Other Recommendations

- Attracting more knowledge-based projects is a **complementary action to the rest of the recommendations** in this strategic plan
- Knowledge-based projects are a strong piece of “connective tissue” **amplifying the region’s assets**

Improve Flight Accessibility

- Continue working with SAV Airport Commission to increase **direct flight routes** to target hubs
- Current flight accessibility is a **potentially limiting factor** for executive talent

HOW DOES IT CONNECT?

Regional professional pipeline is going to ATL / other hubs **due to lack of opportunity in SAV**

Knowledge-based projects are a **lifeline** to maintain quality of life and elevate SAV’s **professional environment**

SAV’s strong existing industry presence makes a **compelling case for expanding corporate operations**

Phase 3 | Expand the knowledge-based work ecosystem

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- **Actively pursuing knowledge-based projects** with the understanding that the region has **gaps to close** to be considered over peers
- **Existing assets** (existing industry, the port, creative pipeline, etc.) will be leveraged to **attract targeted knowledge-based projects**
- **Actively supporting the development of physical space** to create supply that is currently acting as a roadblock to this initiative
- **Focusing on landing anchor firms in the specific industry areas** described in this recommendation (distribution, logistics, manufacturing, and design)
- Focusing on **developing the region's design industry** and **attracting industrial employers** who already have operations in the region but have their knowledge-based functions elsewhere

PRELIMINARY TIMELINE MILESTONES



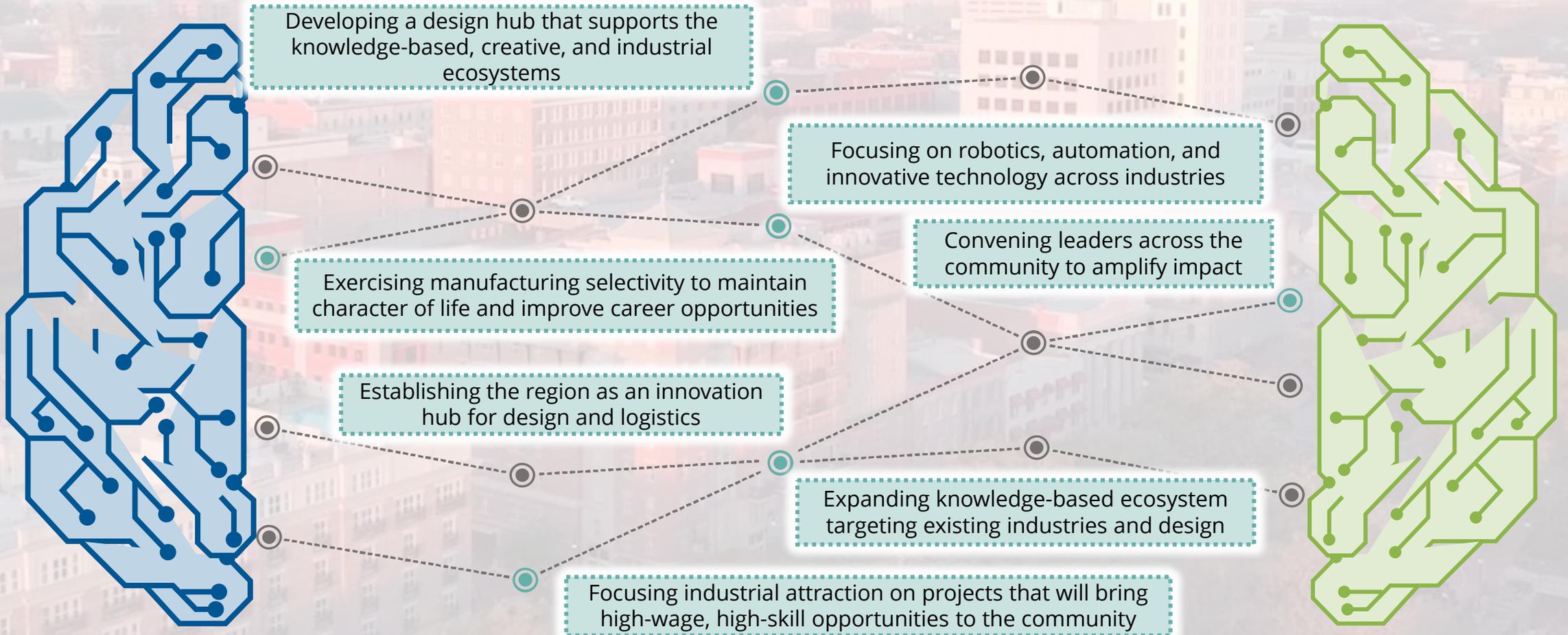
Estimated Timeline To Implement: *2-3 years*



Estimated Timeline To Results: *3-5 years*

Phase 3 | Tying It All Together

How do these recommendations tie together to form a cohesive, clear, and effective strategic plan?



SEDA's implementation of these recommendations can result in **building the connective pathways** critical to supporting regional growth that allows Savannah's existing assets to **reach their full potential**.

The recommendations are **interconnected** and implementing each one **supports the success** of the others