

A NEW INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION *in Georgia*

BY COMMISSIONER PAT WILSON

This year, as Georgia reaches historic milestones like the 50th anniversary of both the state's first international offices and the formation of the original Georgia Film Office, the state is celebrating another monumental achievement: Georgia has been ranked the Top State for Business for 10 consecutive years by *Area Development*. This ranking by a well-known publication for site selectors is an incredible recognition of our long-term, core mission of creating hope and opportunity for Georgians.

The seeds of economic prosperity were planted decades ago by visionary Georgia leaders, and the state's repeated honors in numerous areas of economic development

success have been reaped thanks to the continuous improvement of Georgia's business-friendly environment. Today, our priority is on planting new seeds that will flourish for generations to come.

We work daily to deliver on our reputation for maintaining a cooperative and responsive state government—and are constantly working to take it a step further. Beyond the initial attraction stage, Georgia is a partner to business. That's because by working together at every level of government to respond to the needs of Georgians and the communities they call home, we are seizing new opportunities and becoming part of solutions that improve lives here and around the world. Because Georgia's "service after the sale" approach works through helping Georgia prod-

ucts reach new markets, by improving efficiencies, and by innovating within and beyond industry ecosystems, we are helping businesses of all sizes create jobs.

Georgia's formula for success is working. By understanding where Georgia's priorities lie alongside state and local partners in the public and private sectors, we continue to employ proven models that leverage the advantages that helped us get here. We adapt to where business is going and invest in the resources required to help us evolve for a future that's at our doorstep.

Georgia's acclaimed hard assets in logistics and infrastructure have yielded dividends to communities in every corner of the state. Our extensive rail systems and highways make the benefits of having the world's busiest airport and the fastest-growing deepwater port in the United States exponentially greater.

In higher education, Georgia's celebrated HOPE Scholarship has kept our best and brightest here at home. We boast two Top 20 public universities and 10 of the most highly esteemed historically black colleges and universities in the country. The Technical College System of Georgia covers every community in the state, working directly with local business and industry to provide a workforce pipeline that is trained and ready.

Our economic developers can tell you: these are difference-makers in attracting high-quality companies.

From the Cyber and FinTech Academies to the Georgia Film

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Pat Wilson speaks at an event celebrating 10 years of Georgia being ranked the Top State for Business in the nation by *Area Development* magazine.

Credit: Georgia Department of Economic Development, South Atlanta Photography



Georgia-lensed “Heels,” a Starz Entertainment production, filmed in multiple locations around the state. Credit: Daniel Delgado, Heels © 2022 Starz Entertainment, LLC

Academy, first-of-their-kind innovative training academies are equipping Georgians for jobs— while securing new in-state spending and bolstering business recruitment. Gov. Brian Kemp’s recent Workforce Summit and GEORGIA MATCH direct college admissions initiative reinforced the message that Georgia’s tradition of aligning education with workforce needs is a priority. We will continue to innovate and lead in this area, too.

The best way to give people hope and opportunity is to make sure they can find a good job; we certainly have them here!

The recruitment of these companies to Georgia has already created a wave of private sector investment in mobility and cleantech. Our communities deserve great credit for their work to invest in the sites and infrastructure needed to get ready for the generational opportunities happening now.

Thanks to private sector goals, we are experiencing the new industrial revolution, and these industries will be some of the biggest job-creators for the next 50 to 60 years. As the economy transitions to electric and other innovative forms of mobility become the norm, Georgia is part of the answer. By pursuing the entire supply chain, our state has announced over \$27 billion in investment and more than 33,100 jobs created through more than 45 projects across the state since 2018.

Thanks to years of foresight and investment in speed-to-market solutions for businesses, Georgia has continued to meet company needs in the face of rapid change. Since Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant America broke ground on its \$7.59 billion electric vehicle and battery plant a year ago in Bryan County, a dozen suppliers have announced more than \$2.1 billion in additional investment, compounding the positive effects of this investment throughout Georgia.



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IDEAS

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Relationships like those that helped Georgia win the Hyundai Metaplant are fostered throughout decades. Since Georgia first established international representation in Japan and Europe in 1973, we've continued to pursue foreign investment in strategic markets and from key industries. The establishment of the state's Korea office in 1985 laid the groundwork for the future, including Kia's assembly plant in West Point, which opened in 2009. Since then, more than \$1.9 billion has been invested in Kia Georgia, with more than \$200 million on the way, thanks to the company's all-electric 2024 EV9 three-row SUV that will begin assembly here in 2024.

This fall, The Korea Society presented GDECD its signature honor, the Van Fleet Award, in recognition of the state's outstanding contributions to U.S.-Korea relations. Georgia's long-term commitment to diplomatic, cultural, and business engagement in Korea has supported transformative growth over decades, providing economic benefits for both countries.

Tourism generated an economic impact of \$73 billion and supported more than 442,600 jobs in 2022. We welcomed nearly 168 million domestic and international visitors in 2022—the largest number of visitors our state has ever seen—which resulted in a record \$39.8 billion in spending. With major events like FIFA World Cup 2026™ heading our way, U.S. Soccer's new headquarters, new and expanded state conference facilities, famous film destinations, National Championship winning teams, and more—Georgia's reputation as a travel destination is only growing on the map.

Each of these assets builds on each other, and one visit and positive experience in Georgia brings another. During FY22, the Georgia Film Office reported more than \$4 billion in direct spending by film and television productions. That's not a formula-based number, that's hard dollars spent in the state, support-

ing salaries and small businesses. Private industry is developing more stage and warehouse space to meet increasing demand, and Georgia is now second only to Los Angeles for stage space in the nation. In creating the Film Office 50 years ago, our state's leaders envisioned what might be possible.

Continued investment has made this a thriving Georgia industry with small businesses in communities across the state realizing the return on that investment.

Arts and culture are the heart and soul of Georgia. They bring visitors to our downtowns, deliver quality of life, and create experiences that feed the soul and inspire the mind. On top of that, our creative communities generate roughly \$29.2 billion in revenue and account for about 149,000 jobs in the state. The Georgia Council for the Arts last year helped more organizations than ever keep their doors open and make investments that will help them achieve long-term goals that make a difference now and educate the creative minds needed for the jobs of tomorrow.

Our department nurtures partnerships that empower our communities to reach their individual goals and encourage business success. The Center of Innovation creates new connections and provides expert insights into key industries. Our award-winning International Trade team works daily with small and medium-sized businesses to grow their business by delivering Georgia-made products to the world.

These are only a few examples of how we do it.

During this transformational moment for Georgia, we're utilizing the investments that helped us arrive here and preparing for the next 50 years. By harnessing our assets and driving opportunities, generations of Georgians will enjoy the fruits we are planting now.

Pat Wilson has been Georgia's Department of Economic Development commissioner since 2014.

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