Writing Our Story
From the very beginning of the pandemic, Georgia World Congress Center Authority’s (GWCCA) priorities have focused squarely on the well-being and safety of our team members and guests. As the live events industry continued to evolve, spurring more business erosion entering fiscal year 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021), we added another priority: survival. Survival in a new organizational structure using limited resources that would keep us viable for events. Survival by managing the use of our cash reserves. Survival of our organization’s culture and values after just being awarded “Top Workplaces 2020” by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

An enormous amount of work went into every aspect of surviving the fiscal year. That hard work produced a wide array of stories and information that we felt compelled to share. We shifted gears away from our traditional annual report that historically features a broad array of topics and a deep dive into financials and economic impact to a year in review with focus on stories and initiatives that mattered most to GWCCA as an organization and to its team members.

From customer retention and overall satisfaction to facility connectivity and cleanliness to community engagement and team member well-being, you will learn how we led the nation as pacesetters for recovery and, at the same time, served our community in ways we never could have imagined. You also will learn the extent to which GWCCA leadership and team members went to in order to keep our championship campus viable.

While the last year didn’t unfold in the way any of us had planned, the Authority leaned in to weather the storm and reimagined in a new normal. And, the story continues…

Frank Poe
Executive Director
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PART I

Architecting a Path Forward
On Wednesday, July 8, 2020 – a mere week into the new fiscal year – GWCCA’s enterprise leadership team gathered in a room in Building C for an organizational staffing kickoff meeting. At stake was the future of the organization as a viable option for meetings and events following a global pandemic. With events on pause, the team took advantage of the “gift of time” to take a deep dive into all aspects of how GWCCA’s business was being run with the goal of resetting and preparing for the future.

Over the course of the next several months, the team defined its critical core functions and identified which of those functions were required to remain competitive in the marketplace and drive overall profitability. They tackled questions such as: What is possible with who we have? What does it cost to operate our facilities? What does it cost to operate our facilities with a singular event of up to 10,000 guests? What does rent include? Can any services be done more efficiently at less cost? Are we pricing correctly? The result was a line-by-line review of every department’s budget resulting in more than $1 million in expense reductions…and that was just the beginning. More about cost savings is shared later in this report.

On the commercial side of the house, GWCCA’s Sales team was busier than ever. With approximately 99 percent of scheduled events cancelled due to the pandemic, they found themselves on the phone all day, every day working with customers to alleviate concerns, manage risk, and, ultimately, rebook Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) to make good on their original commitment. The team quickly adopted the mantra “save every group!”

An already-strong partnership with Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) and the hotel community was taken to the highest level of collaboration through clear communication and total transparency as everyone worked together to reassure customers that they had a dedicated team in Atlanta to support their return. Fast forward 10 months, the team closed the fiscal year by hosting more than 50 site visits and planner meetings thanks to an increase in vaccinations, loosened travel restrictions, and GWCCA’s campus being open and its team being available. The pandemic’s fortuitous timing also created a boon for the Authority as film and television production scouts discovered GWCCA’s almost 4 million-square-foot campus was wide open and available to them.

Keenly aware of its vital role in the Atlanta hospitality community, the Authority was laser focused on saving events because that meant saving jobs. Every department at GWCCA made its mission to do whatever it could to contribute to the cause; creativity, persistence, and thinking outside the box became priorities. The hard work put into architecting GWCCA’s future was in motion…now it was time for everyone to roll up their collective sleeves and get to work.
GWCCA executive director Frank Poe joins The Authoricast to discuss leadership during a pandemic.
Heading into the third and fourth quarters of the fiscal year (January – June 2021), youth sports began to heat up. Demand was high, but there were limited options available to event organizers, who wanted assurances regarding attendee well-being and safety. With a solid business return plan in place, GBAC Star accreditation for venue cleanliness and safety, and state leadership driving the importance of supporting not only lives but livelihoods, GWCCA was primed to meet this demand. Having made a commitment to its board of governors to service and support all events up to 10,000 guests with the remaining team member resources, the Authority was ready to put its promise into action.

Team members representing Event Services, Facility Operations, Facility Management, Business Office, Human Resources, Public Safety, Marketing Communications, Sustainability and CSR, Executive Leadership, Parking, Sales, Project and Program Management, Business Intelligence, F&B, and IT Operations joined forces to implement GWCCA’s “all hands” event strategy. Regardless of their “everyday position,” every team member was responsible for helping create a compelling guest experience by pitching in wherever and however needed. Roles included event set up and break down, custodial duties, touch point cleaning, greeters, and floor and building managers. No job was too big or too small and job titles and egos were left at home to focus on the customers’ needs.

While it was hard for many, for others it was eye-opening to experience a day in another team member’s shoes – to appreciate every role at the Authority. It also provided GWCCA, as an organization and as individuals, the opportunity to learn more about its facilities, its customers and their organizations, and the live events and meetings industry. Most importantly, everyone learned to take nothing for granted and be grateful for every single day.

It’s said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Learn more about how GWCCA delivered on its brand service promise to create compelling guest experience on the pages that follow.
Youth sports, namely volleyball and cheerleading, paved the way for recovery at GWCCA. In early April 2021, GWCC hosted the Big South National Qualifier volleyball tournament featuring more than 1,500 teams competing on 199 courts across all three buildings. Attendance averaged 40,000 each day.
Film and TV production proved to be big business for the Authority during fiscal year 2021. Averaging 10 site visits and 10 new leads each week, the Sales team booked 26 productions which generated more than $1.5 million in rent and ancillary revenue. Season 2 of First Wives Club (BET+) was filmed entirely at GWCC; the six-month production included a full sound stage in one of its exhibit halls. Other notable productions that tapped into GWCCA’s championship campus included The Falcon and The Winter Soldier, WandaVision, and The Valet – all Disney Plus productions – and MacGyver.
From ensuring chairs were six feet apart to adhering to social distancing guidelines and cleaning high-traffic touchpoints to hauling trash and cleaning and restocking restrooms, GWCCA team members rose to the occasion event after event and showed the nation how safe events could be hosted.
1. Ron Miranda  
   Director of Human Resources

2. Alicia King  
   Financial Analyst

3. Parker Hendricks  
   Digital Communications Specialist

4. Sharde Glore  
   Administrative Assistant, Sales

5. James Hatcher  
   Housekeeping Supervisor

6. Matthew Williams  
   Engineering Services Manager

7. Dale Aiken  
   Executive Office Project Specialist

8. Frank Poe  
   Executive Director

9. Thomas Lloyd  
   Managing Director, IT Operations

10. Janet Sevilla  
    Sustainability and CSR Manager

Stuart Wade  
Director of Retail and Restaurants

Tim Trefzer  
Director of Sustainability and CSR
The Authority, in partnership with Rival Entertainment, was first to bring live music back to Atlanta as Centennial Olympic Park was the scene for Big Night Out, a socially distanced concert series taking place over three nights in late October. Health precautions, including temperature checks, masks, hand wash/sanitizer stations, and sanitizing of common touch points throughout event contributed to no negative health impacts reported. Attendees took to social media to share the event’s pod set-up and celebrate being outside under the stars.
Customer Satisfaction Second to None

The Authority’s “all hands” approach was recognized and appreciated by its customers during fiscal year 2021 as team members continued to go above and beyond for every event hosted on campus. With most events falling into the youth sports segment, customer surveys focused on meeting planners and with good reason – planners were under pressure by event attendees to deliver a clean, safe event environment and GWCCA was ready to deliver. Although there were fewer surveys conducted, overall satisfaction scores trended at a 5% increase over the previous fiscal year and major service categories saw increases or held steady. The scores and customer feedback reflected the Authority’s dedication to and passion for its brand service promise to create compelling guest experiences.

Striving for 5: Overall Guest Satisfaction

“Our experience was that of a first-class facility that truly cares about their clients and goes out of their way to make you feel welcomed and important. The cleanliness of the facility was the best we have experienced in over 10 years, especially the bathrooms and exhibit hall. Outstanding service!”

~ Lauri D., Lil Big South

“Thank you for going out in front and leading the Convention Center industry in hosting events again! It was impressive to witness the mentality of ‘all hands on deck,’ with staff members willing to pitch in and do work previously designated to others. You are on the right path as this country emerges from the pandemic, and I wish you abundant favor in the months ahead.”

~ Bonnie G., Capitol Hill Classic

“Given the circumstances, an incredible job by the GWCC. Overall, very proud of what we accomplished together. Thank You!”

~ Jeff F., Cheersport
PART III

Living Our Mission
As the Authority’s way of doing business changed throughout fiscal year 2021, so, too, did its mission of enhancing the lives of every Georgian. Under the renewed and refocused pillars of Better Community, Better Environment, and Better Leaders, GWCCA sustainability and corporate social responsibility (SCSR) pivoted to new opportunities and initiatives better suited for the current climate and culture of the organization.

GWCCA’s championship campus served its most important role for the community to date during the pandemic as it answered the call from Gov. Kemp to help relieve the burden on area hospitals and healthcare resources by converting one exhibit hall in GWCC’s Building A into an alternate care facility (ACF) for treatment of patients with mild to moderate illness levels. Across the campus, Mercedes-Benz Stadium converted many of its concourses and clubs into a COVID-19 vaccination site, which administered 300,000 vaccinations over the course of six months (Jan. 4 – June 7, 2021).

Better leaders are created when organizations are more intentional about investing in their own talent as well as that of future generations. To that end, the Authority hosted a virtual career series with Marietta City High School featuring GWCCA team members as guest speakers discussing careers in the live meetings and events industry; more than 175 students participated. GWCCA also solidified its diversity and inclusion commitment with activation of the JEDI Council. An acronym for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, JEDI seeks to build on its legacy by inspiring others to choose behaviors that demonstrate civility and respect; identifying pathways for celebrating distinct skills, experiences, and perspectives; curating access to resources and opportunities; and serving as ambassadors to the campus, the city, the state, and the industry.

Committed to being a good neighbor, community partner, and steward of the environment, GWCCA strengthened its relationship with the American Red Cross by hosting blood drives on campus; established a new relationship with the Westside Future Fund, a non-profit organization dedicated to revitalizing Historic Westside neighborhoods; and focused on Centennial Olympic Park beautification.

Despite the unusual changes and challenges brought about by the pandemic, Team Authority demonstrated resilience by establishing a greater connection with the community – one that will continue to grow in the years that follow. More SCSR highlights are on the pages that follow.
Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility Highlights

453
Number of homes in the Historic Westside that received fresh produce packed and delivered by GWCCA team members during volunteer days in December 2020 and May 2021

4,000+
Number of books and NCAA Final Four promotional items donated to schools and charitable organizations across Metro Atlanta

204
Estimated lives impacted through three blood drives held on the Authority's campus

1
Marriage proposal GWCCA team members helped coordinate in Centennial Olympic Park; “operation proposal” was a success... she said YES
166 Pounds of honey produced by the Authority’s 150,000 honeybees; in total the littlest of GWCCA’s team members flew more than 9 million miles to create the honey harvest

810 Number of flowers planted in Centennial Olympic Park on one day by team members as part of GWCCA’s Earth Day “Outdoor Acts of Kindness” event

98 Number of team members who participated in waste diversion training as part of GWCCA Earth Month activities

20+ SCAD students and faculty partnered with local coffee company Refuge on a 10-week course in which students researched and developed concepts for a new retail coffee shop in GWCC’s Building A
Doubling Down on Championship Campus
Believing that the live events industry will rebound stronger than before, the Authority doubled down on its facilities during fiscal year 2021 as more than $615 million in planned capital investments forged ahead without interruption.

After a year-long delay, GWCCA’s headquarter hotel Signia by Hilton Atlanta officially broke ground on May 18 as leaders in the Atlanta hospitality community, customers, key project partners, Authority team members, Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan, and Hilton representatives joined GWCCA’s executive team, board of governors, and overview committee to celebrate the occasion.

The Andrew Young International Blvd. pedestrian mall and transportation depot projects kicked off in March and April, respectively. Completion of phase one of the pedestrian mall took place just as the fiscal year closed; phase two, which includes updates and modifications to GWCC’s Building B entrance, is on track for a December 2021 completion. In full swing and on target for completion in spring 2022, the transportation depot will reimagine the arrival experience on GWCCA’s championship campus by improving trip times for attendees and creating an alternate Red Deck entrance.

More than 500 parking spaces were added with the completion of the Orange Deck furthering the Authority’s vision of a connected campus. Design and preconstruction pricing started on GWCCA’s important roof replacement project focused on Buildings A and B. To support GWCCA and Hilton sales teams, work began on transforming the former Falcons office in Building C into a Signia by Hilton Atlanta sales office complete with model rooms.

Some of the most important work that took place on campus during the fiscal year was done by GWCCA team members. From mid-October through mid-December, more than 70 team members were on campus twice weekly for various outdoor beautification projects. During March team members participated in the Authority’s version of “spring training” that focused on the interiors of the Congress Center with the goal of having the facility ready to host events beginning in April. Learn more about campus development, including the team’s facility stewardship initiatives, on the pages that follow.
In addition to increasing open spaces and providing seating areas close to interior spaces used for events, the pedestrian mall will offer customers possibilities for activations to enhance the attendee experience. The transportation depot will feature loading/unloading spaces for 10 buses at once; when not needed, it can be used for other activations such as a location for food trucks or other guest amenities.
Owned by GWCCA and managed by Hilton Management Services, Signia by Hilton Atlanta will overlook Mercedes-Benz Stadium and be connected to GWCC. Offering 75,000 square feet of world-class meeting space, a destination bar, signature restaurant, premium wellness amenities, and modern guest rooms, construction is expected to be completed by late 2023.
“GWCCA is more than just a job, it’s my family and my home away from home, so it’s only natural that I clean my own yard.”

“Being together as a team...as ONE...was my motivation. It’s amazing how and when we come together for the common good, assisting and showing the world nothing can change the experience of what we deliver to our customers through good and tough times.”

Over 70 percent of fulltime GWCCA team members volunteered for campus beautification projects last fall, saving the Authority more than $18,000. The facility stewardship continued into spring when, over the course of 22 days, team members tackled 130 building improvement initiatives and generated and completed an additional 139 work orders, including carpentry, engineering, electrical, HVAC, housekeeping, painting, plumbing, and fire protection.
GWCCA Service Awards

Every year the Authority recognizes team member milestones through its Service Awards program. These team members not only embody GWCCA’s brand service promise, but are celebrated for their talent, accomplishments, and commitment over the course of their career.

1 YEAR
Kimberly Allison
Atiba Cadore
Phillip Haynes
Shane Head
Jeffrey Kern
Xanett Mixon
Janet Sevilla
Kevin Snyder
Kenneth Stockdell
Shundra Thomas
Kevin White
Omoro Wynn

5 YEARS
Lidija Ahmetovic
Omar Benton
Erle Coleman
Charity Kinsey
Michelle Parris
Ardrina Porter
James Swafford

10 YEARS
Shannon Crider
Harry Duncan
William Miller, Jr.
Lindsay Strickland
Robert Vincent, Jr.

15 YEARS
Orlando Alexander
Chris Chadwick
Laymontz Clark
Alan White

20 YEARS
Daniel Johnson
Kevin Minosky

25 YEARS
Cory Waters

30 YEARS
Hal Rosser

35 YEARS
Jeffrey Croker

Legacy Gardens

In April, all GWCCA retirees were honored for their years of dedication and service with bricks in a permanent area in Centennial Olympic Park called Legacy Gardens. Each new retiree class will be celebrated on an annual basis.
Impact Through Digital Storytelling

GWCCA’s award-winning social media channels play an invaluable role in telling its story to a variety of audiences throughout each fiscal year. Strong visuals of customer events and campus development coupled with GWCCA team members’ compelling community service activities resulted in more than 7 million views, bringing the world to championship campus when our events couldn’t.
Like its sister facilities on the Atlanta campus, Savannah Convention Center (SCC) met the challenges of the pandemic head-on during the fiscal year. Efforts of team members combined with growing customer demand from a variety of sectors enabled SCC to host 87 events, welcome more than 61,000 attendees through its doors, and generate more than 87,000 room nights for Savannah-area hotels.

After a pandemic-related delay, the SCC expansion project broke ground in March 2021 supporting Georgia’s economic recovery with the creation of more than 600 new construction jobs. In a few short months, progress was made in several areas, including concrete foundation and building pile installation, utility work, and installation of temporary stairs. The expansion will rank SCC in the top 75 convention centers in the country and is on track for completion in late 2023.
GWCCA was able to safely host the Capitol Hill Classic, a volleyball tournament originally scheduled to be played in Washington, D.C.

With two U.S. Senate seats up for grabs in Georgia, GWCCA became center stage for election coverage as FOX News, CBS News, and ABC News all reported from various parts of the campus.

In January, teams from as far away as California traveled to Georgia to participate in Cheersport 2021 National Championships, indicating the demand for live events even before a vaccine was widely available.

85 Events
Amateur sports and film/TV production led GWCCA’s recovery efforts comprising 47 percent of the 85 events held on championship campus during the fiscal year.

241,000+
The Authority welcomed nearly one-quarter of a million visitors during the fiscal year attending a variety of events, including those in the consumer, education, and government sectors.

Did You Know?
Fiscal year 2021 was unlike anything experienced by the Authority in its 45-year history. As mentioned earlier in this report, the focus was squarely on surviving the pandemic year and coming out on the other side set up for success for the future. As such, the financial story looks slightly different than in years past with a shift from typical revenue and expense breakdowns, in-depth economic impact numbers, and direct profit reporting.
During the Authority’s September board meeting, just three months into fiscal year 2021, GWCCA executives presented the first forecast update. The original revenue budget of $37.3 million and approximately 100 events had shrunk to $23.7 million and less than half the number of events due in part to no significant events taking place on campus through December, including parking, traffic management, and security income stemming from events at Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

**FISCAL YEAR 2021 REVENUE BUDGET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Rental</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FY21 Original Forecast</strong></td>
<td>106</td>
<td>$11.9 million</td>
<td>$5.3 million</td>
<td>$37.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FY21 Revised Forecast (Sept. ’20)</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>$5.8 million</td>
<td>$17.8 million</td>
<td>$23.7 million</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Wasting no time, GWCCA’s senior leadership team worked diligently on an in-depth analysis of what it costs to operate the campus, scrutinizing every expense along the way. In addition to the line-by-line department budget analysis resulting in reductions of $1 million, difficult decisions around fulltime staff reductions, furloughs, and the elimination of part-time resources resulted in personnel cost savings of more than $10 million. An additional $7.5 million in decreases to show labor, contract services, and other operating expenses brought the total to $17.5 million in expense reductions.

**FISCAL YEAR 2021 EXPENSE REDUCTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FT Salary/ Fringe</th>
<th>PT Wages/ Fringe</th>
<th>Total Personnel</th>
<th>Show Labor/ Contract Services</th>
<th>Other Operating</th>
<th>Total Non-Personnel</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$6.5 million</td>
<td>$3.5 million</td>
<td>$10 million</td>
<td>$2.8 million</td>
<td>$4.7 million</td>
<td>$7.5 million</td>
<td>$17.5 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GWCCA entered fiscal year 2021 managing against a budgeted loss of nearly $10 million. Diligent work to identify and apply various expense mitigation efforts throughout the year coupled with the availability of a COVID vaccine kept the Authority on target and improved its bottom line by $2.5 million by year’s end against a stretch goal of $1 million. A summary of the fiscal year financial story is shared below.

**FY21 FORECAST UPDATES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Original Budget</th>
<th>Updated 9/17/20</th>
<th>Updated 11/9/20</th>
<th>Updated 1/18/21</th>
<th>Updated 4/27/21</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$37.3M</td>
<td>$23.7M</td>
<td>$21.7M</td>
<td>$21.5M</td>
<td>$21.1M</td>
<td>$22.3M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expense</td>
<td>$47.0M</td>
<td>$33.4M</td>
<td>$31.3M</td>
<td>$30.8M</td>
<td>$30.2M</td>
<td>$29.6M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Loss</td>
<td>($9.8M)</td>
<td>($9.8M)</td>
<td>($9.5M)</td>
<td>($9.3M)</td>
<td>($9.0M)</td>
<td>($7.3M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GWCCA Board of Governors

Glenn Hicks, Chairman
First Beacon Investments

Brian Daniel, Vice Chairman
Carroll Daniel Construction

Doug Tollett, Secretary
Douglas Management Co.

Bill Rice, Treasurer
Rbh Lagrange, LLC

Steve Adams
Southeastrans, Inc.

Don Balfour
Waffle House, Inc.

Stan Conway
Majestic Reality

Ben Garrett
RA-LIN And Associates, Inc.

Bill Jones
Jones Petroleum

Aaron Mcwhorter
North Georgia Turf, Inc.

Jeff Payne
North Georgia Eye Clinic

Bill Russell
Russell Landscape Group, Inc.

Dexter Warrior
T. Dallas Smith & Company

Legislative Oversight Committee

Sen. Brandon Beach
Sen. Harold Jones
Sen. Butch Miller
Sen. Jeff Mullis
Sen. Bruce Thompson
Sen. Larry Walker

Rep. Matt Dollar
Rep. Chris Irwin
Rep. Jan Jones
Rep. Larry Parrish
Rep. Calvin Smyre
Rep. Ron Stephens
Our Mission, Vision and Values

Mission
The State of Georgia established the Georgia World Congress Center Authority to develop and operate the Georgia World Congress Center, Centennial Olympic Park, and related facilities. These facilities exist for the primary purpose of promoting and facilitating events and activities that generate economic benefits to the citizens of the state of Georgia and the city of Atlanta as well as enhance the quality of life for every Georgian.

Vision
To be recognized as the No. 1 convention, sports, and entertainment destination in the world.

Values

BE ONE: We achieve together. We focus on the big picture and think in terms of what’s good for the campus as a whole.

BE HONEST: We hold ourselves and each other accountable to high ethical standards. As state employees entrusted with public money and assets, we earn our reputation daily as both trustworthy and transparent.

BE STEWARDS: We are focused on safety and committed to serving our customers, community, environment, and each other. We demonstrate an unwavering commitment to quality and efficiency.

BE DYNAMIC: We seize the ever-changing, intense, and exhilarating environment in which we live and work. We recognize that our leadership position in the industry and across the state of Georgia is a privilege and requires us to continuously evaluate everything we do.

CREDITS
Georgia World Congress Center Authority’s 2021 year in review was written, photographed, and published by the Authority’s Marketing Communications department. Editorial oversight courtesy of Jennifer LeMaster, Chief Administrative Officer.

Additional photography and design renderings courtesy of Chris Helton, Gensler, and GWCCA team members.
GRAPHIC DESIGN: David Wells, DL Creative

Digital copies of this report and prior GWCCA annual reports are available for download at www.gwcca.org.