

## **Historic District Grows Morgan County's Economy**

By: Jessica Wurst

As the second largest historical district in Georgia, Morgan County attracts more visitors every year. In addition to the monuments scattered throughout the county, Madison City specifically offers a wide range of boutiques and restaurants to each passing guest.

With 440 employees in the tourism and hospitality sector, Morgan County has an unemployment rate of just 3.3 percent according to the Madison-Morgan Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

“Full employment is four to five percent. So, by the textbook definition, we’re fully employed,” said Bob Hughes, the president and economic development director of the chamber of commerce.

In Hughes’ opinion, the small-town environment is largely to thank for the low unemployment rate in Morgan County. When visitors experience this slower pace of living, they find it difficult to leave.

“We have some people who will come through and just fall in love with Madison, and then want to move their operations here,” said Hughes.

One operation that reflects this trend is the Madison Produce Deli and Provisions. Nine years ago, Andy Oller yearned for a quaint town to start his business.

“I was getting tired of driving to Atlanta, and the whole rat race,” he said. “I wanted to move to Madison.”

He was not the only one. Morgan County experienced an 8.9 percent increase in food service employment between January 2018 and June 2018, according to the BLS.

“You can find just about anything you want to eat and none of these are chains, they’re all individual entrepreneurs and their restaurants. They came and saw this as a great place to come,” said Hughes.

Thanks to upcoming developments Morgan County’s growth will continue to increase. The chamber of commerce expects to see upwards of one million visitors within a five year period.

Oller looks forward to increasing his sales. However, he expressed concern about a change in the culture of Morgan County.

“As a business owner I feel great about it, but as a homeowner, kind of wishy-washy. I like it the way it is,” he said, “it’s wonderful out here.”



