The Columbus Times

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SUNDAY, NOV. 8 - SATURDAY, NOV. 14, 2026 WEEKLY EDITION DAILY NEWS AT COLUMBUSTIMES.COM

GEORGIA HOUSE

Columbus' Carolyn Hugley Is in Line to Be Georgia's First Black Woman House Speaker: Democrats Reach at Least 91 of 180 Seats in Unofficial Returns



State Rep. Carolyn Hugley of Columbus. GEORGIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — State Rep. Carolyn Hugley, D-Columbus, the House minority leader, is in line to become the first Black woman to lead the Georgia House of Representatives after Democrats reached the 91 seats needed for a majority in unofficial returns from the Nov. 3 election. She is not speaker yet, because the House elects its speaker by vote when the new Legislature convenes in January. Hugley herself has said she has no authority until she is elected, telling reporters, "If my colleagues say so, I could become the first woman elected Speaker of the House." Some later tallies, including Fox 5 Atlanta's, showed Democrats with 93 seats; the results have not been certified.

The results described here are unofficial and have not been certified, and a handful of House races remain unsettled. Hugley would be the first woman and the first person of color to hold the post, according to Atlanta News First. This report covers what has been announced, what remains to be decided and the dates that matter, without taking a position on any candidate or party.

WHAT THE UNOFFICIAL RESULTS SHOW

According to Atlanta News First, citing unofficial returns from the Georgia Secretary of State's Office, Democrats reached the 91-seat threshold in the 180-member House, their first majority in the chamber since 2004. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that Democrats unseated at least 12 Republican incumbents for a net gain of 10 seats. Republicans were poised to pick up one seat, in District 128, though that race had not been finalized.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/619***

FORT BENNING

Fort Hood Shooting Victims' Names Are Missing From the Global War on Terrorism Memorial at the National Infantry Museum in Columbus



A formation of Soldiers in dress uniforms carrying flags along a paved walkway, in a photo titled Heritage walk by the National Infantry Museum. THE NATIONAL INFANTRY MUSEUM AND SOLDIER CENTER / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY 2.0)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — The names of the 13 people killed in the Nov. 5, 2009, shooting at Fort Hood, Texas, do not appear on the Army's Global War on Terrorism Memorial at the National Infantry Museum in Columbus, according to a report published Nov. 5, 2026, by Army Times. The memorial and its online database also leave off the victims, and so does the Defense Casualty Analysis System, the Defense Department database the museum says it uses as its source. The report appeared on the 17th anniversary of the attack, and it raises a question many Columbus-area visitors may not know about: how the names on the memorial are chosen.

Twelve soldiers and a civilian physician assistant died and 32 people were injured in the shooting at the Soldier Readiness Processing Center, according to Army Times. Maj. Nidal Hasan was the shooter. The victims received Purple Hearts in 2015, but many are missing from major post-9/11 casualty records, the report said.

WHAT ARMY TIMES REPORTED

The Department of Defense referred questions to the Army, which did not respond to the reporter, according to Army Times. The museum says it takes its names from the Defense Department and the Defense Casualty Analysis System. That means the memorial in Columbus reflects the federal database rather than a separate list the museum compiles.

Retired Col. Kathy Platoni, who treated victims, told Army Times the shooting is still classified as workplace violence despite a 2015 defense authorization for the Purple Hearts. She wants it formally classified as domestic terrorism and wants line-of-duty benefits for 2009 to 2015. Sheryll Pearson, the mother of Pfc. Michael Pearson, who was 22 when he died, said, "These names should be everywhere," according to the report.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/631***

VETERANS

Columbus Renames Boxwood Recreation Center for Jerry "Pops" Barnes at a Nov. 13 Ceremony: 17 Years on Council, 20 in the Army and a Parade He Revived



The bandstand at Columbus Memorial Garden, close to the RiverWalk in Columbus, Georgia. DEUTSCHLANDREFORM / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 3.0)

BY PETRA GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — The city of Columbus will rename the Boxwood Recreation Center in honor of the late Councilor Jerry "Pops" Barnes at a ceremony at 1:30 p.m. Eastern on Friday, Nov. 13. The event will be held at the center, 1068 Enoch Drive, and the Columbus Consolidated Government has invited residents and members of the media, according to a WTVM report published Nov. 4. After the change, the building will be known as the Jerry "Pops" Barnes Recreation Center.

The renaming honors Barnes for his public service to Columbus, including his years representing District 1 on Columbus Council, according to WTVM. The city's website also posted a notice about the ceremony on Nov. 4. Neither source says how or when the renaming was approved, and neither gives a council vote date, so this report does not describe the approval process.

THE CEREMONY AT A GLANCE

The announcements do not list a program, speakers or parking instructions. Anyone planning to attend may want to call the contact above before heading out. The city has also said most of its services will be closed Wednesday, Nov. 11, for Veterans Day, so the ceremony falls two days after that holiday.

WHO JERRY "POPS" BARNES WAS

Barnes died April 14, 2024, at age 80 after an unspecified illness, according to the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, which reported on his memorial service on April 26, 2024. He represented District 1 on Columbus Council for 17 years. U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop told mourners that Barnes first won the seat in a 2006 runoff against incumbent Nathan Suber after knocking on every door in the district.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/613***

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COURTS

Kemp Names David Ranieri and Alex Shalishali to the State Court of Muscogee County, Filling One Vacancy and a New Judgeship



A courtroom in the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Gainesville, Georgia (a federal courtroom, not in Columbus). CAROL M. HIGHSMITH / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Gov. Brian Kemp has appointed two lawyers with deep Columbus roots to the State Court of Muscogee County. The governor named David Ranieri and Alex Shalishali on Friday, Nov. 6, according to WTVM. One seat is a vacancy created by a resignation, and the other is a brand-new judgeship created by a law passed this year.

WHO WAS APPOINTED

Ranieri is the chief judge of the Recorder's Court of Columbus, according to the report. He fills the vacancy left by the resignation of Judge Andy Prather. Ranieri was born and raised in Columbus, attended Columbus College and then Mercer University on an Army ROTC scholarship, and graduated cum laude in 1985 with a political science degree. He earned his law degree from Mercer in 1988.

Ranieri began his legal career in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Corps. He spent more than 21 years as a prosecutor across the Army, the Muscogee County Solicitor General's Office and the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office, followed by more than nine years in private practice, mainly in civil litigation. He is a past president of the Columbus Bar Association and a Rotary Club of Columbus board member. He is also a past chairman of the New Horizons Behavioral Health board and a Leadership Columbus graduate.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/634***

CITY COUNCIL

Columbus Council's Nov. 10 Agenda: Backyard Cottages, 4 Rezonings, "Tiny Houses" and $400,000 in Grant Funding



A historic former city fire department building stands in Columbus, Georgia. BLASTOIDS / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 3.0)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — The Columbus City Council held its regular meeting Tuesday, Nov. 10, at 9 a.m. in Council Chambers on the second floor of the City Services Center, 3111 Citizens Way. The agenda posted on the city's meeting portal lists seven ordinances on first reading, a Housing Authority bond resolution, a $400,000 federal grant request and a long slate of board appointments. Mayor B.H. "Skip" Henderson III is listed as presiding, and the agenda was subject to change at the meeting.

HOUSING AND ZONING: THE BIGGEST ITEMS

The ordinance that may draw the most attention would add accessory dwelling units, often called ADUs or backyard cottages, to the city's Unified Development Ordinance. According to the agenda, the text amendment (REZN 08-26-1678) would place ADUs in the category of "Dwellings, Accessory" and set the requirements that apply to them. The agenda says the Planning Department and the Planning Advisory Commission recommend approval, and Councilor Toyia Tucker is listed as the sponsor.

A second housing-related ordinance would amend Articles III and V of Chapter 8 of the Columbus Code. The agenda describes it as adopting building code standards pertinent to "Tiny Houses" and updating certain references to the State of Georgia and International Property Maintenance Code. That item is also listed under Councilor Tucker.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/623***

PHENIX CITY

Phenix City Council Accepted a $2.395 Million Bid to Expand Its Municipal Building and Approved $530,000 for 60 Police Radios; a Nov. 17 Hearing Is Set on Demolition Costs



A 1939 aerial photograph of Phenix City, Alabama (left) and Columbus, Georgia, joined by bridges over the Chattahoochee River. NATIONAL ARCHIVES (U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS) / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

PHENIX CITY, Ala. — The Phenix City Council accepted a $2,395,000 low bid to build additions and renovations at the Municipal Building, 1119 Broad St., at its Oct. 20 meeting, according to the Citizen of East Alabama. The council also approved $530,000 for 60 new police radios and denied a request to remove a small piece of property from the city. A public hearing on two demolition cost bills is set for Tuesday, Nov. 17, the newspaper reported.

This summary relies on the newspaper's account of the Oct. 20 agenda, which said it would be updated with final votes after the regular session. The article did not state the vote result on every item, and where that is the case it is noted below. Residents who want official records can contact the city clerk or check the city's website.

THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING PROJECT

The council accepted the low bid from Ben B. Gordy Construction Company, Inc. for $2,395,000 to build additions and renovations at 1119 Broad St. The report did not say when work will start or how long it is expected to take. It also did not say how the project will be paid for.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/604***

RUSSELL COUNTY

Russell County, Ala., Closes Nov. 11 for a 10 a.m. Veterans Day Parade in Seale, Opens Fire Alarm Bids Nov. 13 and Keeps a 2050 Growth Survey Open



The Old Russell County Courthouse in Seale, Alabama. RIVERS LANGLEY SAVERIVERS / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 3.0)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

SEALE, Ala. — Russell County will hold its Veterans Day parade and ceremony at the Russell County Veterans Memorial in Seale at 10 a.m. Eastern on Wednesday, Nov. 11, according to a notice on the county's website. County buildings will be closed that day, and the commission will open bids two days later on a fire alarm system for the historic old post office. The county is also still collecting resident input through an online survey for its Comprehensive Plan 2050.

Nothing in this report is a new vote. The dates below come from the county's own notices and from the Citizen of East Alabama's account of the commission's Oct. 14 regular meeting, which are the most recent public records available as of Sunday, Nov. 8. Here is what residents of Russell County, which includes Phenix City, can mark on the calendar.

THE SEALE PARADE AND CEREMONY, NOV. 11

The county's announcement describes a parade followed by a ceremony at the Russell County Veterans Memorial, 65 Silver Run Drive, Seale. The banner on the notice is titled "2026 Veterans Day - Russell County Veterans Memorial Parade & Ceremony." The page does not list a program, speakers or a parade route, so anyone planning to attend may want to call ahead.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/603***

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Mark Gertjegerdes, Co-Publisher
Petra Ophelia Gertjegerdes, Co-Publisher
Photographers: Edward Lamboy, Linda Ryder
Website: Mark Gertjegerdes 706-575-0452
Writers: Mark Gertjegerdes, Emil Gertjegerdes, Petra Gertjegerdes, Carol Gertjegerdes

Past Publishers: Mr. Vernon Mitchell, Dr. Ophelia DeVore-Mitchell, Mrs. Carol & Mr. Helmut Gertjegerdes
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Mailing Address Only: 1400 Boxwood Blvd. 4111, Columbus, Ga. 31906
Phone: (706) 405-6518
E-Mail: news@columbustimes.com

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RETAIL

Peachtree Mall at 51: Columbus' Only Enclosed Mall Opened Aug. 5, 1975, With 809,653 Square Feet, 87 Stores and 4,200 Parking Spaces



The entrance to Peachtree Mall in Columbus, Georgia. MIKE KALASNIK FROM CHARLOTTE, USA / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 2.0)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Peachtree Mall, the enclosed shopping center on Manchester Expressway, opened on Aug. 5, 1975, which makes it 51 years old this year. It has about 809,653 square feet, 87 stores, four anchor stores and 4,200 parking spaces, according to Wikipedia's entry on the mall. After Columbus Square Mall closed and was demolished in the early 2000s, Peachtree became the city's only enclosed shopping center.

The mall's story is mostly a story of its department stores. Names such as Gayfers, Montgomery Ward, Parisian and Rich's have come and gone, and a beauty retailer now fills the largest former anchor space. This guide pulls together the numbers and dates that can be confirmed from published sources.

PEACHTREE MALL BY THE NUMBERS

A 2016 WTVM report put the number of other tenants at "more than 100," a higher count than Wikipedia's 87 stores. The difference may reflect different counting methods or different years. Store counts at a mall change often, so any single figure is a snapshot.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/606***

RESTAURANTS

Auburn Loses Its Last Hardee's and Its Shrimp Basket in Two Days: 800 Wire Road Closed Nov. 2 and 1651 S. College St. on Nov. 1



Downtown Auburn, Alabama. SAVERIVERS AT ENGLISH WIKIPEDIA / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 3.0)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

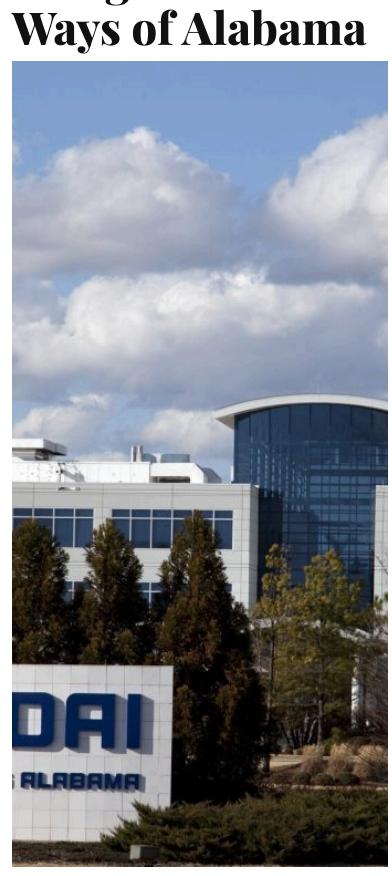
AUBURN, Ala. — Two longtime restaurants in Auburn, Alabama, closed within a day of each other at the start of November. The city's last Hardee's, at 800 Wire Road, shut down permanently on Monday, Nov. 2, and the Auburn Shrimp Basket, at 1651 S. College St., closed on Sunday, Nov. 1, according to WTVM. Auburn is in Lee County, which borders Russell County and the Phenix City area. The two closings affect people who live in the Chattahoochee Valley and visit Auburn.

The reports do not say whether any restaurants in Columbus or Phenix City are affected. The companies involved described their reasons differently, and only one of them gave a specific explanation. Here is what each report says, as of Sunday, Nov. 8.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/605***

GIVING

Hyundai's Alabama Plant and Its Workers Pledge More Than $400,000 to United Ways of Alabama



Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama's plant outside Montgomery, Alabama, photographed in 2010. CAROL M. HIGHSMITH / LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama and its team members have pledged more than $400,000 to the United Ways of Alabama, the company announced Tuesday.

Representatives from United Way offices across the River Region will gather at the plant on Thursday, Nov. 12, at 10:30 a.m. for a formal check presentation. The event is at the plant's Administration Building, 700 Hyundai Blvd., Visitor Entrance 2.

The company said its team members "demonstrated their generosity once again," pointing to a record of giving in past years. Hyundai's advisory did not say how much of the total came from the company and how much from employee pledges, or how the money will be divided among the local United Way offices.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/628***

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ELECTION 2026

Democrats Win a 3-2 Majority on the Georgia Public Service Commission: What Changes for Columbus Georgia Power Customers



Two cooling towers at Plant Vogtle, a Georgia Power nuclear plant near Waynesboro, Georgia. GOODMAPD / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Democrats won both Georgia Public Service Commission seats on the Nov. 3 ballot, giving them a 3-2 majority on the five-member panel that regulates Georgia Power. Incumbent Peter Hubbard won a full six-year term, and Sheila Edwards won an open seat, according to Georgia Public Broadcasting and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. The Columbus area is in Georgia Power's service territory, so the commission's decisions on rates and power plants reach local households and businesses.

The results are unofficial until counties certify them and the state completes its count. Decision Desk HQ's tally showed Hubbard ahead by about 12.8 percentage points and Edwards ahead by about 10.7 points as of Nov. 5. News outlets called both races, but the sources reviewed for this story did not report final vote totals.

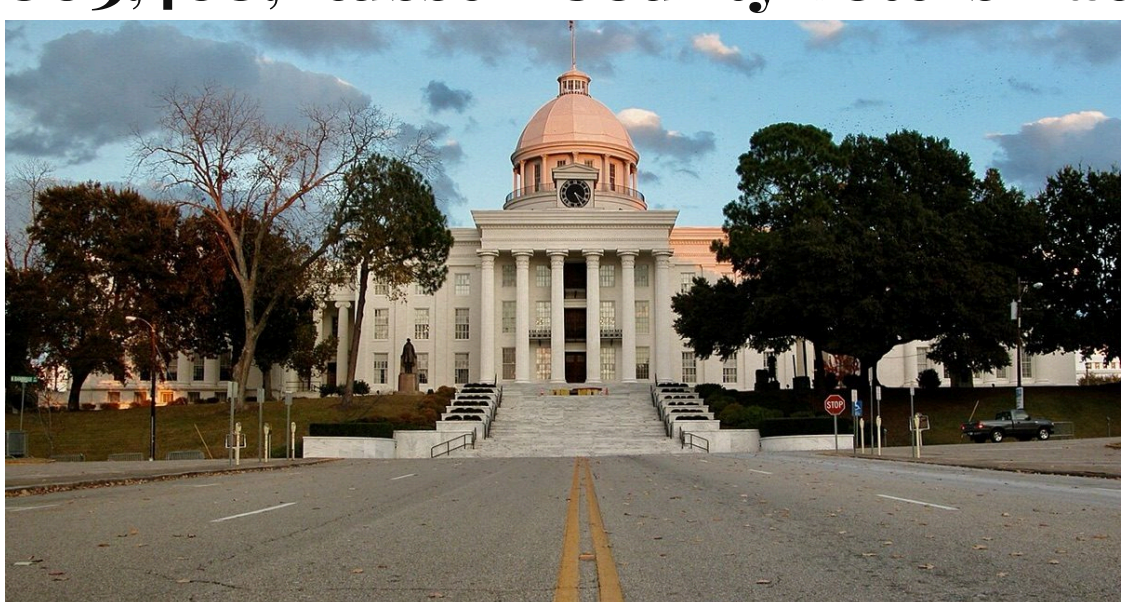
WHO WON

Hubbard, a Democrat, first won a one-year term in a 2025 special election, beating Republican Fitz Johnson. Johnson ran again this year in a rematch and lost, according to the AJC. The AJC reported that Democrats now hold three seats with Commissioner Alicia Johnson, who also won in 2025.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/629***

ALABAMA ELECTION

Tuberville Wins Alabama Governor's Race 872,561 to 803,468; Russell County Voters Back Amendment 1 by 71.7%



A wide view of the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery in late afternoon. INESTER726 / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 4.0)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

PHENIX CITY, Ala. — Republican Tommy Tuberville won Alabama's governor's race on Nov. 3, defeating Democrat Doug Jones 872,561 votes to 803,468 in unofficial results from the Alabama Secretary of State. The totals work out to about 52.1% for Tuberville and 47.9% for Jones, a margin of roughly 69,000 votes. All results in this report are unofficial, and provisional ballots could still change counts.

The AP declared Tuberville the winner shortly before 12:45 a.m. Eastern on Wednesday, Nov. 4, and Jones conceded that morning, WTVM reported. Tuberville will be Alabama's 55th governor, according to his campaign. He succeeds term-limited Gov. Kay Ivey, who has served 10 years.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/615***

COLUMBUS STATE

Columbus State Breaks Ground on $22.2 Million Pezold Center: $12.2 Million From the State, $4 Million From Its Namesake Donors and a Fall 2028 Opening



A bronze statue of a foundry worker pouring molten metal, at Heritage Park in downtown Columbus, Georgia. DEUTSCHLANDREFORM / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 3.0)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Columbus State University held a ceremonial groundbreaking Nov. 4 for the Jack and JoRhee Pezold Center for Emergent Technology, a $22.2 million building that will house robotics engineering and the Coca-Cola Space Science Center. According to the university, construction is expected to begin in early 2027, and the center is scheduled to open in fall 2028. The building will rise on the Main Campus beside Interstate 185 and the Elizabeth Bradley Turner Center.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/626***

RUSSELL COUNTY SCHOOLS

Russell County Schools Starts Hunt for a New Superintendent: 30-Day Application Window, 3 Finalists and Interviews Expected in Early 2027



The Raiford House, built around 1850, in Russell County, Alabama. UPSTATEHERD / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 4.0)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

PHENIX CITY, Ala. — The Russell County school board has adopted a plan to find its next superintendent, setting in motion a search that is expected to run into the new year. The board approved the plan Thursday, Nov. 5, at a special called meeting, according to WTVM. Current Superintendent Dr. Brenda Coley, who announced her retirement in September, has agreed to stay on until a replacement is chosen.

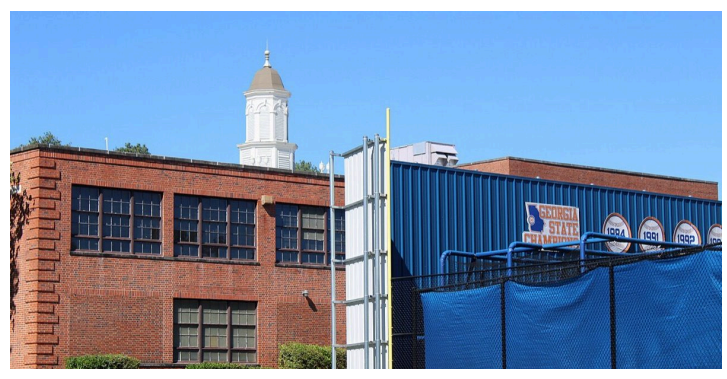
WHAT THE BOARD APPROVED

The board will use the Alabama Association of School Boards, known as AASB, to run the search, according to WTVM. Under the plan described in that report, the board gives the association its criteria for the job, and the association returns the top three candidates. The board may then hold a public hearing or other forum that lets residents take part, followed by its own interviews of those finalists.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/624***

MUSCOGEE SCHOOLS

Muscogee School Board Meets Nov. 9 and Nov. 16: How to Watch, Where to Find the Agenda and What Else Is on the Calendar



The front of Columbus High School in Columbus, Georgia. GABBY BRITO / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 4.0)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — The Muscogee County Board of Education has two public meetings on the calendar over the next week: a work session Monday, Nov. 9, and a regular board meeting Monday, Nov. 16. The work session runs from 5 to 7 p.m., and the regular meeting runs from 6 to 8 p.m., according to the Muscogee County School District calendar. Both are listed for the Board Room at the Muscogee County Public Education Center, 2960 Macon Road in Columbus.

The district's published agenda for the Nov. 16 meeting was not yet available as of Nov. 6, so the topics the board will take up have not been announced. The district's board rules, as described on its schedule materials, call for the agenda to be posted the Friday before a meeting, which would be Nov. 13. This guide explains what is scheduled, how residents can watch or attend, and where to look for the agenda once it posts.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/630***

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ECONOMY

Audi's Middle Georgia Plant: $958 Million in Incentives, a Possible $3 Billion Second Phase With 3,000 More Jobs and an End-of-2033 Deadline



An Audi Q8 e-tron displayed at the IAA 2023 auto show in Germany. ALEXANDER-93 / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 4.0)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Documents obtained by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution show that Audi's planned plant in Middle Georgia could grow well beyond the $4 billion, 4,500-job project announced on Oct. 24. A possible second phase would add $3 billion in investment and 3,000 more jobs, if Audi chooses to pursue it, according to the newspaper's Nov. 2 report. The records also put the incentive package for phase one at no less than $958.4 million.

The plant is planned for the roughly 1,500-acre Middle Georgia Megasite near I-75 on the outskirts of Fort Valley, in Peach County. The project is in another part of the state from Columbus, but its size makes it a story for workers, suppliers and taxpayers across the state. The figures below are the newspaper's account of local records, and the project was not final when the report was published.

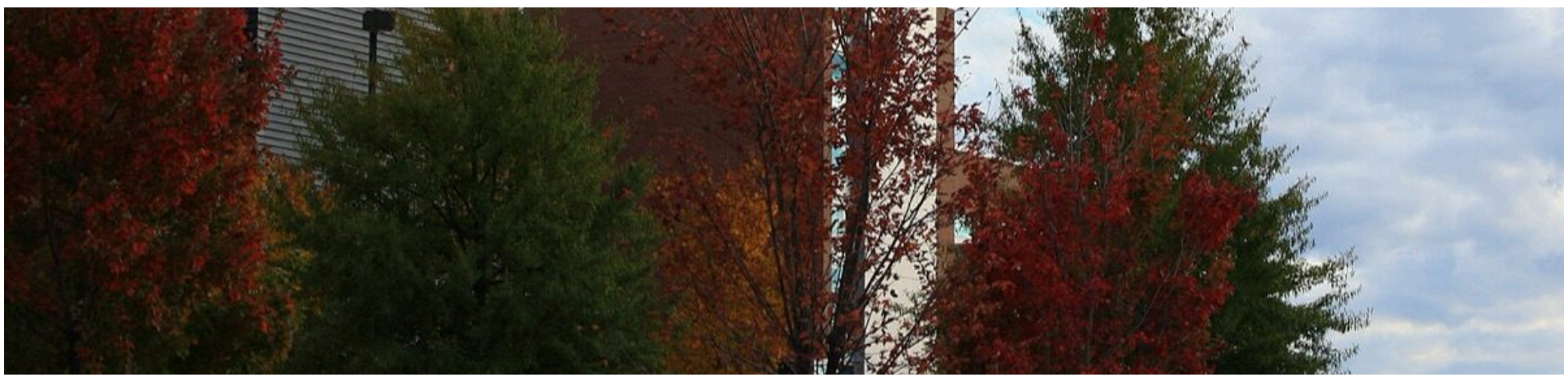
THE NUMBERS IN THE RECORDS

According to the AJC, the average salary is more than $63,000 a year, which works out to about $283 million in annual payroll at full employment, expected in 2031. Phase one and phase two together would total about $7 billion in investment and 7,500 jobs. The newspaper's headline referred to 6,000 jobs, a figure that does not match the phases it reports, so readers should rely on the phase-by-phase numbers.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/611***

STARTUPS

LaunchCon Pitch Competition Is Friday, Nov. 13 at Columbus State: Free Entry, $40,000 in Prizes and 4 Teams Pitching Live



The Cunningham Center on the Columbus State University campus in Columbus, Georgia, seen with autumn trees in front. DEUTSCHLANDREFORM / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 3.0)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — A "shark-tank style" pitch competition for local entrepreneurs is set for Friday, Nov. 13, 2026, at the Cunningham Center on the Columbus State University campus, and the public can attend for free. The sixth annual LaunchCon Pitch Competition runs from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. and offers $40,000 in total prizes, according to StartUP Columbus. The event is presented by Wells Fargo and organized with the D. Abbott Turner College of Business & Technology at Columbus State.

For anyone in Columbus, Phenix City or the Fort Benning area who has wondered where the next local company might come from, the evening is a chance to watch founders make their case in person. Attendees do not have to be investors, students or business owners, because the organizers describe it as a free event open to the public. Business casual attire is requested.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/618***

JOBS

Goodwill Holds a Hiring Event and Resource Fair at the National Infantry Museum Thursday, Nov. 12, With Jobs Starting at $17 an Hour



A sculpture of a soldier leading the way stands above the entrance to the National Infantry Museum near Fort Benning. GLENN FAWCETT / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY PETRA GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers will hold a hiring event and resource fair at the National Infantry Museum on Thursday, Nov. 12, the day after Veterans Day. The event runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the museum, 1775 Legacy Way, according to WTVM. It is aimed at veterans, military families and the general public, and employers and community resource providers will be on site.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/635***

GAS PRICES THIS WEEK

Area	Regular
Columbus metro	$3.34
Muscogee County	$3.32
Harris County	$3.39
Chattahoochee County	$3.50
Russell County, Ala.	$3.63
Lee County, Ala.	$3.57

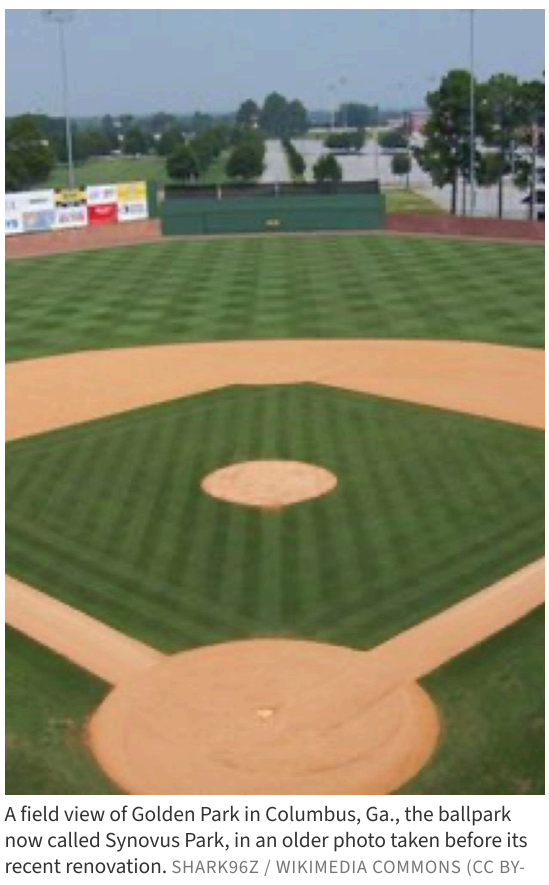
CHEAPEST POSTED PUMP PRICES

RaceTrac, 4399 Victory Drive, Columbus	$3.06
RaceTrac, 3423 MLK Jr Pkwy, Phenix City	$3.59
RaceTrac, 1155 Columbus Pkwy, Opelika	$3.54

AAA averages as of Wednesday, Nov. 11; RaceTrac posted prices checked Wednesday, Nov. 11. Prices change daily.

BASEBALL

Synovus Park Becomes Pinnacle Park in 2027: What Changes at Columbus' 1926 Ballpark, and the 69-Game Home Schedule Starting April 6



A field view of Golden Park in Columbus, Ga., the ballpark now called Synovus Park, in an older photo taken before its recent renovation. SHARK96Z / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 3.0)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — The downtown Columbus ballpark that opened in 1926 as Golden Park, and that has been called Synovus Park for the last two baseball seasons, will carry a new name next year. The Columbus Clingstones and Pinnacle Financial Partners announced on Sept. 6 that, beginning in 2027, Synovus Park will be renamed Pinnacle Park. The change reflects the 2026 merger of Synovus and Pinnacle, according to the announcement, and it arrives with the Double-A Atlanta Braves affiliate's 2027 home opener already set for Tuesday, April 6.

The release says more details on the transition, including new signage and branding, "will be announced at a later date." Here is what is known so far, drawn from the team, the bank and the Atlanta History Center. The schedule for the 2027 season, which the team announced Aug. 10, is covered later in this story.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/632***

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PRODUCT SAFETY

Three Home Safety Alerts to Check Before Winter: 5.9 Million Bodum French Presses, 4,726 Gas Boilers and Smoke Alarms Sold Online That May Stay Silent



A residential smoke detector. OLEG ALEXANDROV / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission posted three household safety actions on Oct. 29, 2026, that could affect kitchens, basements and bedrooms across the Chattahoochee Valley. They cover about 5.9 million Bodum French press coffee makers, 4,726 gas boilers sold through heating contractors and combination smoke and carbon monoxide detectors sold on Amazon and eBay. Each notice tells owners to stop using the product or change how they use it, and the notices spell out the steps.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/608***

HEALTH

Georgia's Medical Cannabis Card Rises to $75 for 5 Years on Dec. 5: The 18 Qualifying Conditions, the $79.88 Online Total and How to Apply



A close-up of a Cannabis sativa plant. SKALLE-PER HEDENHÖS / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 4.0)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

ATLANTA — The Georgia Department of Public Health announced Nov. 3 that it is raising the price of a five-year medical cannabis card to $75, effective Dec. 5, 2026, at 12:01 a.m. The new fee applies to new cards and to renewals of existing cards, according to the department. The change affects patients and caregivers across the state, including those in the Columbus area. The department has not said what the fee is today, so readers should check the registry page for the current price before paying.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/614***

MENTAL HEALTH

Phenix City's First Inpatient Mental Health Unit: 12 Beds, a $4.5 Million Renovation on 25th Avenue and a Bid Call Due by Early December



A U.S. 431 North overpass with signs for U.S. 280 West and Interstate 185 in the Phenix City area of Alabama. FORMULANONE FROM HUNTSVILLE, UNITED STATES / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 2.0)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

PHENIX CITY, Ala. — Integrea, the nonprofit mental health provider for four East Alabama counties, is moving toward construction of a 12-bed inpatient facility on 25th Avenue in Phenix City, the first of its kind in Russell County. The $4.5 million project includes $1.75 million from the State of Alabama, and the organization says it expects to put the work out to bid within 60 days of its early-October announcement, which points to early December. If the schedule holds, the unit would open in late 2027, according to WTVM and WRBL.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/620***

SAFETY

Georgia's Free Yellow Dot Program: A Sticker and a Folder That Tell Paramedics Your Medications and Allergies, and 4 Steps to Set One Up



A Grady EMS ambulance in Georgia, photographed in 2007. WILL.ALEXANDER AT ENGLISH WIKIPEDIA / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY PETRA GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Georgia's Yellow Dot program is a free, voluntary system that gives first responders life-saving medical information when a crash or emergency leaves someone unable to speak for themselves. A bright yellow sticker goes on the car window, and a folder in the glove box lists medical history, prescriptions and allergies, according to the Georgia Department of Public Health. WTVM reported in June that the program is free for anyone in Georgia, not only older adults.

The catch is that the program works only where local responders and hospital staff have been trained to recognize the sticker and find the folder. The Department of Public Health warns that counties that have not adopted the program have not been trained. This guide explains how the kit works, what goes in it and how to check whether it is available near you.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/607***

RESTAURANT INSPECTIONS THIS WEEK

LOWEST SCORES

Restaurant	Date	Score
Little Caesars 5762 Milgen Road	Nov 2	**90 A**
Waffle House #57 4005 Buena Vista Road	Nov 4	**91 A**
Wing Stop 2528 Weems Road Suite 1B	Nov 6	**91 A**
Kiku Asian Express 7000 Riffie Way	Nov 3	**92 A**
Assisted Living Dining Extension # 3 8601 Queen Bee Drive	Nov 4	**96 A**
Kfc 5615 Milgen Road	Nov 9	**96 A**
Country Club Of Columbus 2610 Cherokee Ave.	Nov 5	**96 A**
Garden Cafe 710 Center St.	Nov 5	**96 A**

PERFECT SCORES (100), INCLUDING SCHOOL AND CARE-HOME KITCHENS

Midtown Coffee; Gong Cha; Shaw High School; Boys & Girls Club of the Chattahoochee Valley; Morten's at Old Town; Anne Elizabeth Shepard Home; Dimon Elementary School; McDonald's # 6080; Gnome Grown Coffee & Ice Cream Bar; Chili Thai Uptown; Trevioli; Trevioli Food Trailer; Trevioli Octopie; Bernard's Bar Extended #2; Legacy Reserve at Old Town - Main; Legacy Reserve at Old Town / Base; White Water Bistro Extension #1; Baker Middle School; East Columbus Magnet School

Georgia Department of Public Health inspections, Nov. 2 - 10, 2026 (latest posted at press time). Inspections are snapshots of one visit. Look up any restaurant at columbustimes.com/restaurants.

FIRE SAFETY

How to Request a Smoke Alarm From Columbus Fire & EMS: Installs Are Tuesday and Thursday Mornings, and the Request Form Is Online

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Columbus Fire & EMS takes requests for a smoke alarm through an online survey on the city's website, and installations are scheduled a week in advance on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. The same page lets residents ask for a home fire inspection, a fire station tour or fire safety training. With colder weather arriving and more people running heaters and fireplaces, the online request forms are one of the quickest ways to check a home's basic fire protection.

The city's pages do not spell out every detail, including who qualifies, how many alarms are provided or whether there is a cost. This guide lays out what the department says, what it leaves unanswered and who to call. Anyone who is unsure about a detail can start with the phone numbers listed in the table below.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/622***

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VETERANS DAY

National Infantry Museum Marks Veterans Day Wednesday With an 11-Bell Ceremony, Heritage Walk Paver Dedication and Free Admission; Speaker Is Dancing With the Stars Finalist Noah Galloway



The Follow Me statue stands at Fort Benning. UNKNOWN AUTHOR / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — The National Infantry Museum will hold its annual Veterans Day commemoration on Wednesday, Nov. 11, with a bell-ringing, a paver dedication and a keynote from Army veteran Noah Galloway. The ceremony is free, parking is complimentary and museum admission is free that day, according to the museum's event page. It is one of several veterans events planned around the Chattahoochee Valley before and after the holiday.

THE CEREMONY

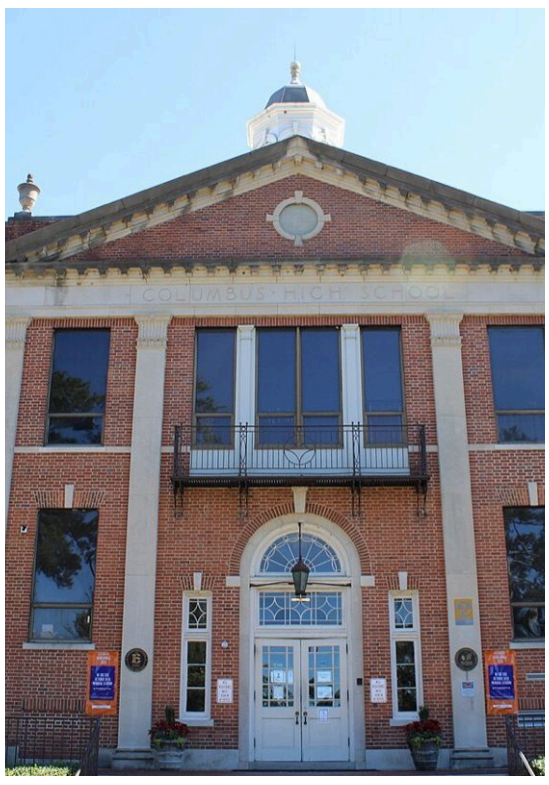
The museum lists the commemoration for 11 a.m. in Cavezza Hall at 1775 Legacy Way, Columbus. WTVM's roundup of local veterans events gave the ceremony start as 10 a.m., so anyone planning to attend should confirm the time with the museum at 706-685-5800 before heading out. The museum's own page lists the ceremony at 11 a.m., which is the time used here.

A handbell will be rung eleven times, a nod to the World War I tradition marking the end of fighting at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, according to the museum. Newly installed commemorative pavers on Heritage Walk will also be dedicated during the ceremony. The pavers are custom-engraved granite tributes to veterans and service members, according to WTVM.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/625***

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Columbus-Area Football Playoff Dates: Central-Phenix City (9-1) Hosts a 6A Game Nov. 16, and Georgia's State Bracket Opens Nov. 13



The front of Columbus High School in Columbus, Georgia. GABBY BRITO / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 4.0)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — High school football playoff calendars on both sides of the Chattahoochee are now set, and they run on different schedules. Georgia's state playoffs open Friday, Nov. 13, while Alabama's Class 6A plays its second round on Monday, Nov. 16. Central-Phenix City, the area's highest-seeded Alabama team, has a first-round bye and hosts a second-round game on that date.

The calendars matter for families planning travel and for fans deciding which stadium to visit. Georgia's rounds are one week apart, and Alabama's 6A rounds are Nov. 9 and Nov. 16. The dates below come from the two state associations and from Columbus Ledger-Enquirer reporting, and brackets can shift, so each school's athletics page has the final word on kickoff times.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/609***

TRAILS

Dragonfly Trails by the Numbers: 34 Miles, 500,000 Users a Year and a 65-Mile Master Plan That Has Built 9 New Miles for $17 Million



A Fall Line Trace mile marker, 4.5, in Columbus, Georgia. XNATEDAWGX / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 4.0)

BY PETRA GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Columbus has about 34 miles of connected off-road trails, and more than 500,000 people use them each year, according to Dragonfly Trails Inc., the nonprofit that promotes the network. The system links neighborhoods, schools, jobs and the Chattahoochee River, and it is still growing toward a 65-mile master plan. The numbers below show what exists today, how each trail got its start and where the next miles are headed.

THE NETWORK AT A GLANCE

Dragonfly Trails describes its system as interconnected, multi-use greenway trails for recreation and for getting around without a car. The trails are off-road, which separates them from the city streets. The group lists five existing trails and the year each one opened.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/627***

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Brunch in the Garden and Sunset in the Garden
Sun, Nov 8, 12 PM, Warehouse 9. Free

Rock N Roses Hair & Barber Battle
Sun, Nov 8, 6 PM. Free

Veterans Day parade and ceremony, Seale
Wed, Nov 11, 10 AM ET, Russell County Veterans Memorial. Free. Story 603

Veterans Day commemoration, National Infantry Museum
Wed, Nov 11, 11 AM, Cavezza Hall. Free. Story 625

Chattahoochee Valley Young Professionals Coffee & Conversations
Thu, Nov 12, 6:30 AM, Iron Bank

Goodwill hiring event and resource fair
Thu, Nov 12, 11 AM - 3 PM, National Infantry Museum. Free. Story 635

Boxwood Recreation Center renaming for Jerry "Pops" Barnes
Fri, Nov 13, 1:30 PM, 1068 Enoch Drive. Story 613

LAUNCHCON Pitch Competition
Fri, Nov 13, 5:30 PM, CSU Cunningham Center. Free

Elegance and Entertainment
Fri, Nov 13, 8 PM, Columbus Convention and Trade Center. Free

Anthony Hamilton + Leela James
Sat, Nov 14, Columbus Civic Center

Georgia youth and veterans duck days
Sat - Sun, Nov 14 - 15, statewide. Story 616

Approved listings as of Wednesday, Nov. 11, plus dated events from this week's stories (read them at columbustimes.com/story/ and the story number). Add your event free at columbustimes.com/events.

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OUTDOORS

Georgia Duck Season: Youth and Veteran Days Nov. 14-15, Opening Day Nov. 21 and the 6-Duck Daily Limit, Licenses and Stamps You Need



A mallard drake in flight. BAUER, ERWIN AND PEGGY / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Georgia's 2026-27 duck season opens Saturday, Nov. 21, and hunters under 16 and eligible veterans and active-duty service members get a head start the weekend before, on Nov. 14-15, according to published season guides. The state Wildlife Resources Division says the first segment runs nine days, from the Saturday before the late-November holiday through the Sunday after, which puts it at Nov. 21 through Nov. 29. Georgia has one statewide duck season with no zones, so the same dates apply in Columbus and Muscogee County as in the rest of the state.

This guide is a planning checklist, not an official regulation. The state's own page lists the opening date and the nine-day structure but did not list youth days, bag limits or fees when it was reviewed, so those figures come from a secondary season guide and should be confirmed with the Wildlife Resources Division before anyone hunts. Dates, limits and fees can change, and the state's rules control.

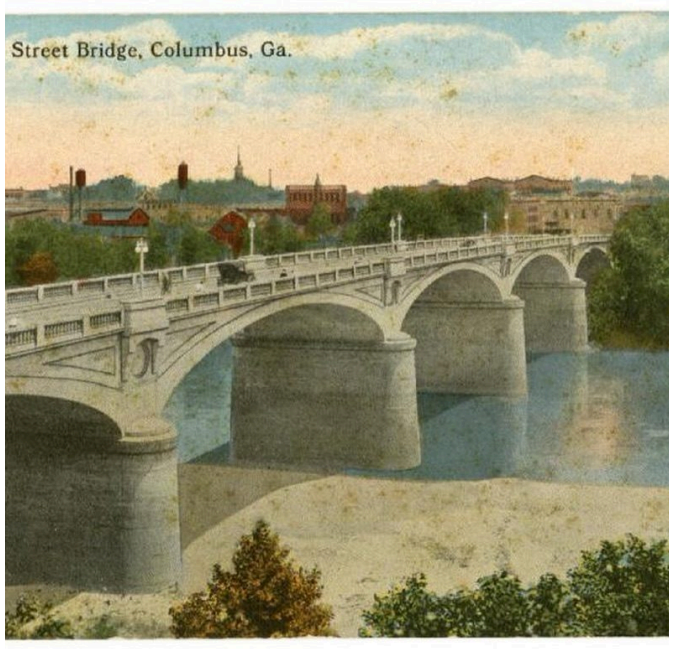
THE 2026-27 CALENDAR

The state's page does not list the second segment's 2026-27 dates, and sources disagree. One guide gives Dec. 12 through Jan. 31, which matches the 60-day federal maximum with one split, while another lists Dec. 5 through Jan. 24. Hunters should check georgiawildlife.com for the final dates before planning a late-season trip.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/616***

RIVER CROSSINGS

Columbus and Phenix City Are Joined by 5 Road and Foot Crossings: From an 1832 Horace King Covered Bridge to the 2000 Thirteenth Street Span



A vintage postcard showing the Dillingham Street Bridge over the Chattahoochee River in Columbus, Georgia. CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM (POSTCARD) / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — People cross the Chattahoochee River every day between Columbus, Georgia, and Phenix City, Alabama, and the connection has a history that stretches back to 1832. According to the Encyclopedia of Alabama, builders John Godwin and Horace King began the first covered bridge between the two banks that year, linking Columbus with the town of Girard, now part of Phenix City. Today the crossings include four bridges that carry cars or foot traffic through downtown, a fifth road bridge farther north, two rail bridges and a zipline, and each has its own story.

This guide walks through the crossings in order from south to north, using dates and details from the Encyclopedia of Alabama, Historic Columbus and the list of Chattahoochee River crossings on Wikipedia. Where the sources disagree, the differences are noted. Readers can use the table as a quick reference.

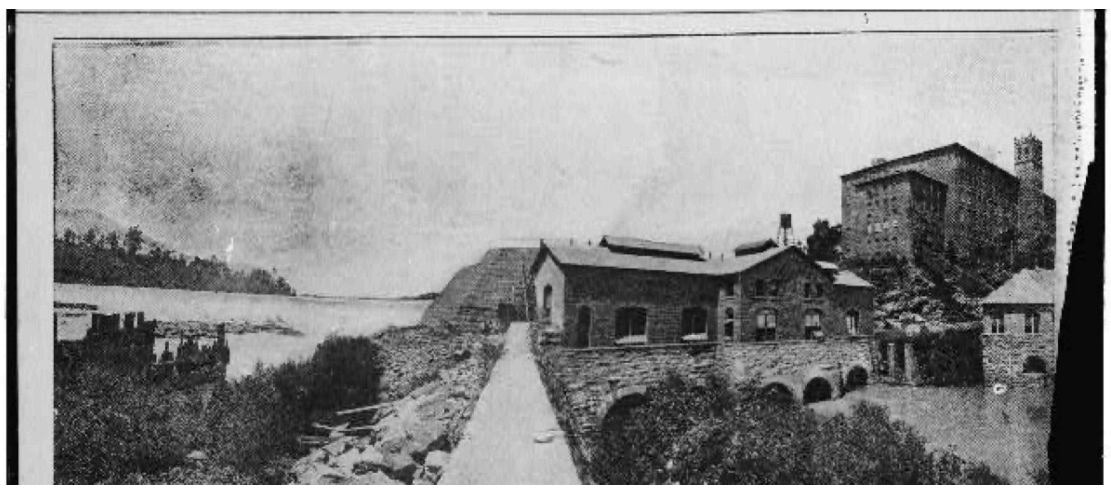
THE CROSSINGS AT A GLANCE

The river miles come from Wikipedia's list of Chattahoochee crossings, which does not give construction years. Dates in the table therefore come from the other sources. The Encyclopedia of Alabama counts five bridges linking the two cities, listing Dillingham Street (1912), 14th Street (1921), Oglethorpe (1963), 13th Street (2000) and the North Bypass.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/621***

HISTORY

How the Chattahoochee Powered Columbus: A 1899 Dam, a Rope Drive Used Until 1954 and Today's Georgia Power Hydro Chain



A historic clipping showing the North Highlands dam and power plant of the Columbus Electric & Power Company. U.S. GOVERNMENT (INDUSTRIAL INDEX CLIPPING) / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — For most of its history, the Chattahoochee River was Columbus' engine. The fall line between Columbus and Franklin has about 20 miles of waterfalls, which citizens used to power the first large-scale hydroelectric dams in the South, built between 1899 and 1924 at North Highlands, Goat Rock and Bartletts Ferry, according to the New Georgia Encyclopedia. By 1861, Columbus was known as "the Lowell of the South," the same source says, because the river drove its textile mills.

Some of those dams are gone, and some now make electricity for Georgia Power customers. Two were breached to create the whitewater course that draws rafters through downtown today. Here is a timeline with the dates the sources agree on, and the places where they do not.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/633***

FORT MITCHELL

Fort Mitchell, Alabama, by the Numbers: An 1813 Stockade, 15 Years of Federal Troops, a 1990 Landmark Designation and a 280-Acre Veterans Cemetery



The exterior of the reconstructed Fort Mitchell stockade in Russell County, Alabama. DOFFTOUBAB / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (CC BY-SA 3.0)

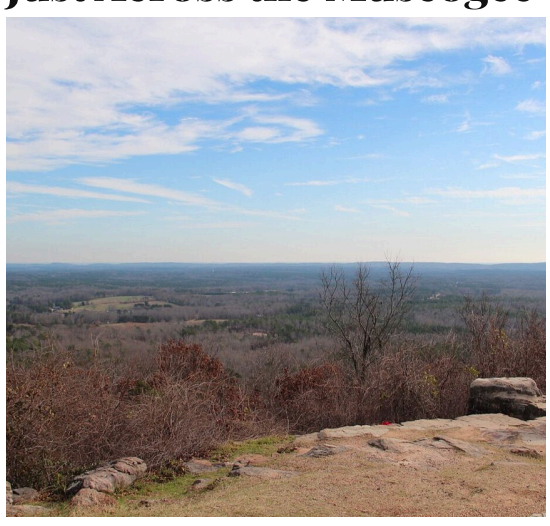
BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

PHENIX CITY, Ala. — Just west of the Chattahoochee River in Russell County, Alabama, sits one of the area's earliest military sites: Fort Mitchell. Georgia militiamen built a stockade there in 1813 to guard a trail that would become the Federal Road, and federal troops used a later fort on the site until 1840. The place is now a state-owned park with a reconstructed fort, a National Historic Landmark designation and, next door, a national veterans cemetery that covers 280 acres.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/610***

STATE PARKS

F.D. Roosevelt State Park by the Numbers: 10,874 Acres, 43 Miles of Trails and 115 Campsites Just Across the Muscogee County Line



Dowdell's Knob in F.D. Roosevelt State Park, Georgia. THOMSONMG2000 / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY EMIL GERTJEGERDES

PINE MOUNTAIN, Ga. — F.D. Roosevelt State Park covers 10,874 acres in Harris County, making it Georgia's largest state park, according to Georgia State Parks. The park sits next to Muscogee County, which makes it one of the closest large outdoor destinations for Columbus residents. It has about 43 miles of trails, two lakes, 21 cottages and 115 tent, trailer and RV campsites, according to the state.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/617***

LAKE EUFAULA

Walter F. George Lock and Dam by the Numbers: An 88-Foot Lift, a 12,128-Foot Dam and a 45,180-Acre Lake With 640 Miles of Shoreline



An aerial view of the Walter F. George Lock and Dam and the lake behind it on the Chattahoochee River. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

BY MARK GERTJEGERDES

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Downstream from Columbus, the Chattahoochee River is stopped by one of the biggest structures on the Georgia-Alabama line: the Walter F. George Lock and Dam. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns and operates the project, which includes a hydroelectric powerhouse, and the lake behind it has become one of the region's best-known fishing and camping destinations. The Corps' official data sheet gives a dam 12,128 feet long, a lock that lifts boats 88 feet and a lake of 45,180 acres at full summer level.

Alabamians know the lake as Lake Eufaula, while Georgians use the name of the dam. Both names point to the same water, which stretches about 85 miles north from the dam along the state line. The numbers below come from the Corps' Mobile District and are meant as a quick reference for boaters, anglers and anyone curious about the river that runs through Columbus.

THE DAM AND LAKE BY THE NUMBERS

AN 88-FOOT LIFT

The lock is the most unusual feature. Boats entering from the river below are raised 88 feet inside a chamber 450 feet long and 82 feet wide to reach the lake above, according to the Corps' pertinent-data sheet. The dam itself stands 68 feet at its maximum, and its top is at 215 feet above sea level.

Because the lake sits at a full-pool elevation of 190 feet, the Corps manages the level through a conservation range. The minimum conservation pool is 184 feet, and the sheet lists 36,375 acres at that level compared with 45,180 acres at full pool. The difference between the two levels is a storage volume of 244,400 acre-feet.

Full story: ***columbustimes.com/story/612***

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