

MEAG POWER **Current** COMMUNITIES

CRISP COUNTY, GEORGIA

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CRISP COUNTY Job Ready Commitment

Education is the key to economic development and no community knows that better than Crisp County. “We have made a major commitment to education,” says Bob Evans, a local banker and member of the Industrial Development Authority. The result of that commitment is the recent opening in Cordele, the county seat, of Darton State College a part of the University System of Georgia. The \$9 million Darton facility is truly the result of a concerted local effort. The needed investment came entirely from community dollars, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) dollars and the generous donation of land from property owners Louis Perlis and Charles Wells.

The County plans to grow the downtown campus, a satellite location of Albany-based Darton State College, and believes it will soon enroll 1,000 full-time students. The college is offering courses in accounting, computer science, and statistics as well as history and English. The Cordele campus is also concentrating on health science and has classes leading to an associate degree in nursing.



FAST FACTS

CRISP COUNTY



POPULATION: Crisp County 23,679

UTILITIES: Electricity

TRANSPORTATION: Crisp County is located on Interstate 75 and two U.S. Highways (US 41 and US 280), which run through the center of the county. The community is served by CSX, Norfolk Southern and Heart of Georgia Railroad.

NOTABLE EMPLOYERS:

- Big Tex Trailer Manufacturing & Sales – utility vehicle manufacturer
- Board of Education Crisp County – school system
- Crisp Regional Hospital – healthcare
- Goldens' Foundry and Machine Company – manufacturer of cast iron components
- Harris Waste Management Group – equipment for waste, scrap and recycling industries
- Helena Chemical Company – herbicide and pesticide producer
- Marvair, a division of Airxcel, Inc. – HVAC manufacturer
- Norbord Georgia, Inc. – manufacturer of wood-based panels
- Stella-Jones – manufacturer of pressure-treated wood panels

“The Darton State College addition, along with the Inland Port initiative, gives our county tremendous opportunities to grow as we provide multiple enterprises with skilled employees and a cost-efficient way to move goods to and from Georgia’s ports.”

– Power Commission Chairman Charlie Denham

- In 1925, a group of local civic leaders conceived an idea to build a dam across the Flint River to generate electricity for Crisp County. The hydropower plant was finished in 1930 and is still generating electricity – one of the few of its kind in the country. It is owned and operated by the Crisp County Power Commission, which serves approximately 12,000 customers.
- Crisp County has more than 4,000 acres devoted to growing watermelons and ships more than 200 million pounds of the fruit annually – more than anyone else in the world. The local Watermelon Days Festival draws 30,000 visitors annually.
- Cordele was named for Samuel Hawkins’ daughter, Cordelia, in 1888. Hawkins was an early railroad baron with the Savannah, Americus and Montgomery Railway.

INTERSECT and CONNECT

Crisp County is a South Georgia community that clearly understands its connections. Rail, road and the river drive the economic well-being of the region as they intersect and connect with business as well as tourism. Today, logistical and natural resources provide jobs and opportunities in Crisp County.

In the late 1800s, Cordele, the county's largest city, earned the name "the Hub City" because it stood at the junction of several railroad lines. That enviable location is still true. Two major Class I railroads intersect here, Norfolk Southern and CSX, and a third, the Heart of Georgia Railroad, which covers 200 miles in the state. That railroad makes Crisp County the only Georgia county with a shortline to Savannah, home to the state's bustling seaport and an economic connection to the rest of the world.

That direct Savannah connection was the genesis for Georgia's largest inland port. In 2013, Governor Nathan Deal established Cordele as an inland port, a distribution concept that moves international shipments to and from Crisp County by rail, reducing truck traffic at the state's ports. Instead of trucks having to make the round trip to Savannah or Brunswick, drivers can now drop and retrieve their cargo at the inland port, allowing shorter hauls and more frequent turn arounds. The Cordele Intermodal Services handled 5,000 containers in 2013 and anticipates 10,000 and 20,000 in 2014 and 2015, respectively.

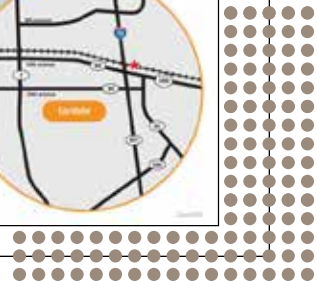
Couple the county's impressive rail infrastructure with access to Interstate 75, a major trucking artery that traverses the county, and businesses in the area continually discover efficient and cost-effective connectivity with both domestic and worldwide customers and suppliers.

Tourism, the county's second-largest industry, flourishes in part due to the excursion side of the rail business. The Southwest Georgia Railroad Excursion Authority operates a passenger excursion train crisscrossing rural counties and towns, giving its passengers

a taste of train travel from a bygone era. Also, each October, Thomas the Tank Engine, a children's favorite storybook character, draws parents and children to the shortline for a special Thomas excursion.

According to the Georgia Department of Economic Development, tourism is a \$39 million business industry in Crisp County. Along with the railroad, I-75 is a conduit for tourists with money to spend. There are 14 hotels in the county, with a total of 1,200 rooms.

And then there is tourism's crown jewel, Lake Blackshear, an 8,700-acre body of water popular with anglers, boaters and skiers. The lake was conceived in 1925, when the locals decided to build a dam across the Flint River to generate electricity. The county has developed three parks and numerous access ramps to the lake for recreational use. The important reservoir project not only provides electricity, it adds to Crisp County citizens' quality of life and offers fun-loving travelers an opportunity to connect with a beautiful destination.





Heart of Georgia Railroad



Cordele Intermodal Services, Inc.



Governor Nathan Deal

More About HOMETOWN CRISP COUNTY

- The county is the gateway to the Presidential Pathways Travel Region, with many attractions within easy driving distance. The Little White House, Plains (home of former President Jimmy Carter) and Andersonville Confederate Prison Site are a few of the historic attractions in this area, which draw 750,000 visitors annually.
- Georgia Veterans Memorial State Park is an 8,700-acre park on the banks of Lake Blackshear. It was established as a permanent memorial to the U.S. Veterans who served, fought and died for freedom.
- The Lake Blackshear Resort accommodates conferences, golfers, fine dining and water sports. The property boasts 10,000 square feet of meeting space.