

# MEAG POWER **current** COMMUNITIES

## ELBERTON, GEORGIA

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# ELBERTON

## Rolling Out the Red Carpet for Manufacturers

In 2010 and 2011 in the midst of a struggling U.S. economy, most small Georgia communities — miles away from a major transportation artery — were working double duty to grow their economic backbone. Such was the case in Elberton and Elbert County and their work paid off!

First came German plastics manufacturer MollerTech, LLC. A division of the MöllerGroup, MollerTech makes injection molded plastic parts for auto customers.

“We looked across different states and were very pleased to settle in Elberton,” said company CEO Wolfgang Bruns.

Local leadership played a big part in making the project work. The city and county bought a suitable building, creating a lease back deal for MollerTech. The company then invested \$9.75 million in the existing facility and is now producing parts for the BMW brand.

A year later, a second German company, Hailo, a manufacturer of components for wind turbines, was looking for a new U.S. home. Once again, success resulted from sound economic development legwork. Leaders prepared the necessary site infrastructure, tapped grant dollars for workforce development and made a personal sales call to corporate headquarters. Mayor Larry Guest and Economic Developer Anna Grant Jones traveled to Germany to deliver their offer, listen to the company’s needs and answer questions. Was the effort a success? You bet. Hailo USA is now the latest addition to the Elberton Industrial Park with an opportunity for 200 jobs.

*Local  
Commitment To  
Economic Development  
Is Successful*





# FAST FACTS ELBERTON



**POPULATION:** 4,653

**COUNTY:** Elbert – Population 20,166

**UTILITIES:** Electricity, Natural Gas, Water/Sewer, Cable TV, Internet and Telephone

**TRANSPORTATION:** The primary highway access to the airport from the east and west is via Georgia Highway 72. Other highways in the vicinity are Georgia 77, 17 and 368.

**NOTABLE EMPLOYERS:**

- Bubba Foods – Packaged meat
- Eagle Granite Company – Granite products
- Elbert Memorial Hospital – Healthcare
- Keystone Memorials – Granite products
- MollerTech South, LLC – Plastic auto parts
- Pilgrims Pride – Poultry processing
- Pinnacle Bank – Regional bank operations
- Star Granite Company – Granite products
- Walmart – Retail

*“We are very proud of our city and the success we have had nurturing what makes us special while convincing great companies to call Elberton home.”*

– Mayor Larry Guest

- **The Georgia Guidestones**, a granite monument and local tourist attraction, are often referred to as America’s Stonehenge. Six granite slabs almost 20 feet tall weighing more than 100 tons are inscribed, in numerous languages, with a set of rules to live by. The four main stones radiate like spokes on a wheel from the fifth stone, which stands in the center of the ring. A capstone lies on top of the five slabs. Local lore explains it was erected by a mysterious stranger in 1979.
- **Elbert County High School’s football field** is known as The Granite Bowl. The stadium was remodeled in 1961 with rows of granite seats that encompass the entire field. The stadium has a seating capacity of 20,000 and is one of the most unusual high school sports arenas in the country.
- **“Meet You On The One-Way.”** For the locals in Elberton this is a common salutation. McIntosh Street, with lively restaurants and shops, is one of the busiest destinations in downtown Elberton.
- **The Granite City Multi-use Trail** begins downtown and winds through the woods and Sutton Park, one of three city-maintained parks. The three-mile trail features easy parking for walkers and joggers, plus decorative lighting for safety and ambiance.

# BUILD IT. **SAVE IT.** TREASURE IT.

**Elberton is a city rich with infrastructure, historic buildings and a dogged determination to save the flavor of what makes the community special.**

“We have so much opportunity to grow,” explains Mayor Larry Guest. With sound management and a utility infrastructure that helps pay the freight for redevelopment and growth, Elberton can map an aggressive future. The city generates revenues from city services such as electricity, natural gas, cable TV, Internet and others.

“Our utilities are the lifeblood of what we do,” adds City Manager Lanier Dunn. A recent project strung eight miles of fiber optics to the local tourist mecca, Richard B. Russell State Park. It is a premier destination on a 26,000-acre lake with a golf course, cottages and offices that now have broadband services for employees and guests. In 2010, the fiber system grew 45 miles in a major expansion to residents and businesses.

Across the downtown district of Elberton there are ornate historic buildings thanks in part to a flourishing granite industry at the turn of the 20th century. The city leadership is at the heart of a restoration effort partnered with a citizenry committed to historic preservation. Structures like the Samuel Elbert Hotel, the 1904 William O. Jones Building and others are aching to be restored.

The Elbert Theatre, ripe for demolition, was bought by the city. Then funded by the largesse of local citizens and businesses, the theater has been restored to its original 1940 art deco splendor. It is now home to dinner theater productions. A neighboring 1930s auto dealership has become the Elberton Arts Center, a restoration work in progress where local artists can produce and display their creations.

On the town square, the turn-of-the-century William O. Jones Building is the target of a \$700,000 restoration and modernization project, and a short walk across the square finds a classically restored 1937 gas station and auto shop which is the unique home of the Elbert County Chamber of Commerce.

The effort by the Elbert County Historical Society to save a 70-year old granite structure, now fondly called the “Rock Gym”, was finally realized after nine years. The society raised \$1.57 million to renovate the old gymnasium, which is now a conference center and museum.

Elberton has the will to treasure the historic beauty of its past and the wisdom to nourish it with a utility infrastructure that supports 21st-century opportunity and growth.



Historic preservation abounds downtown. The Samuel Elbert Hotel (right) is across from the granite monument marking the BiCentennial — further evidence of respect for the past.





The Georgia Guidestones



Downtown Elberton exhibits local granite.



# More About HOMETOWN ELBERTON

## The Story of Elberton Granite

Granite products from Elberton can be found across most of the states in the U.S. and in several foreign markets. For decades, Elberton has been known as a leader in the granite industry.

Elbert County sits upon a subterranean bed of granite formed more than 300 million years ago in the Piedmont region of Georgia, identified at the turn of the twentieth century as the Lexington-Oglesby blue granite belt. It measures roughly 15 by 25 miles and is likely two to three miles deep.

During the 1920s, skilled laborers from Italy and the Northern U.S. came to Elbert County to pursue good fortune in the granite business. Among the many new arrivals were Charles C. Comolli, founder and owner of the Georgia Granite Corporation, and Richard Cecchini, a highly skilled stone sculptor. Ultimately, it was following World War II that the granite business became the industry of choice for many entrepreneurs and became the economic engine for Elberton.

What was first viewed as a nuisance for those citizens seeking a living in cultivating crops became an opportunity for a livelihood crafted around granite memorials, markers and mausoleums and in more recent years, countertops and other applications.